Fall 2010

Who do I say I am? Evangelical identity and academic writing

Jeffrey M. Ringer
University of New Hampshire, Durham

WHO DO I SAY I AM?
EVANGELICAL IDENTITY AND ACADEMIC WRITING

BY

JEFFREY M. RINGER
BA, Lee University, 1998
MLA, Lee University, 2001
MA, University of Vermont, 2003

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

September, 2010

UMI Number: 3430775

UMI®

Dissertation Publishing

ProQuest®

This dissertation has been examined and approved.

Dissertation Director, Thomas Newkirk
Professor of English

Patricia Bizzell, Professor of English
College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA

Lawrence Prelli, Professor of Communication

Sarah Sherman, Associate Professor of English

Elizabeth Vander Lei, Professor of English
Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI

June 10, 2010
Date

DEDICATION

For Sarah, my wife, who understands

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks first to my dissertation committee: Thomas Newkirk, Patricia Bizzell, Larry Prelli, Sarah Sherman, and Elizabeth Vander Lei. I'm serious when I say that I couldn't have been happier, more encouraged, or more comfortable to work with such a fine group of scholars and mentors. This dissertation bears the stamp of each of you. Its successes are yours. To Tom Newkirk: thanks for your endless enthusiasm and support for my research interests. I came to UNH because I had read *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, the first rhetcomp book I encountered that argued for a more sensitive understanding of evangelicals and their writing. Thanks for showing me that what I wanted to explore was possible and for giving me the tools with which to do so. To Patricia Bizzell: thanks for being such a wonderful reader and for helping me think through some of the philosophical conundrums that arise when talking about evangelical identity and composition studies. To Larry Prelli: thanks for teaching me about Burke. I see his ideas everywhere, and they have changed the way I think about rhetoric. To Sarah Sherman: thanks for teaching me the history of American Protestantism, for pushing me to recognize key distinctions among terms, and for being such a wonderful sounding board. Finally, to Elizabeth Vander Lei: thanks for paving the way for research such as mine and for helping me design my methodology. To say that your suggestions were beneficial would be a gross understatement.

A special thanks goes to Austin, Kimberly, Brian, and Kathryn. It's not easy to talk with a perfect stranger about deeply personal issues, so thanks for taking the risk. I appreciate and respect each of you. This project would have been impossible without

the same PhD program. I think we both attribute that more to divine intervention than mere coincidence.

Halfway through writing this book, I took a job at Lee University in Cleveland, TN. A sincere thanks goes to my department chair, Jean Eledge, for making sure I had as much time as possible to write. Thanks also goes to Matthew Melton, Carolyn Dirksen, and Paul Conn for making my first year back a pleasant one. To all my colleagues in the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages, thanks for great conversations and collaboration over the past year. I look forward to working more with each of you! And to my students, especially those who took ENGL 110, thanks for your willingness to discuss and think critically about what it means to be an evangelical.

No small thanks goes to my family. To Mom and Dad, thanks for encouraging me to pursue graduate studies and for supporting me through the entire process. More important, thanks for training me up in the way I should go and for teaching me to be a critical thinker. To Jen and Billy and Jonathan and Breanna, thanks for being there, for caring about what I do, and for letting me be an Uncle. To my in-laws, Will and Prudence and the whole Barker clan, thanks for welcoming me into your family. I've benefited from all the conversations we've had about my work, and I've fed off your enthusiasm for it.

Finally, to my beautiful wife, Sarah, thanks for your patience, kindness, enthusiasm, and grace as I finished this project. Thanks for reading chapters and responding honestly. Thanks for believing in what I was doing when I doubted it. Thanks for listening to me reason through what I was trying to say. Thanks for your love and friendship. Thanks for understanding.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

WHO DO I SAY I AM?
EVANGELICAL IDENTITY AND ACADEMIC WRITING

by

Jeffrey M. Ringer

University of New Hampshire, September, 2010

This dissertation explores how evangelical Christian students negotiate their identities in

their academic writing. Specifically, this study addresses two overarching questions:

1. What happens to evangelical students when they write academically?

2. How are evangelical students' identities integrated into and implicated by their

    academic writing?

In answering these questions, this project seeks to bridge two key scholarly discussions in

rhetoric and composition, namely the discussions about writing and identity and about

evangelical discourse. This project also seeks to challenge reductive stereotypes about

evangelicals perpetuated in rhetoric and composition and in the academy at large. The

research for this project comes from case studies conducted with four evangelical

students—two undergraduates and two graduates. The case studies involved a series of

interviews and focused on the academic writing participants completed for their first-year

writing courses or their graduate programs in rhetoric and composition.

   The results of this study suggest that faith shapes academic writing in highly

idiosyncratic ways. Even pieces of writing that don't appear to have anything to do with

faith are often shaped by the motives and beliefs supplied by these students' evangelical

identities. Equally important, this study shows that the act of participating in academic

discourse—of writing academically—shapes these students' identities. Each participant acknowledged that they had to accommodate the conventions of academic discourse that led them to construct their identities in ways that don't align with their evangelical senses of self. These students' experiences speak to the truth behind Donna LeCourt's conclusion in *Identity Matters*: "academic discourse *does* influence the construction of self" (143). How it does so is the focus of this dissertation.

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARD NEW MEANINGS: EVANGELICALS, IDENTITY, AND ACADEMIC
WRITING

> "The evangelist is asking us to alter our orientations. He would give us
> new meanings."
> —Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*

> "We become what we write."
> —Don Murray, "All Writing Is Autobiography"

This is a book about writing and identity. More specifically, it's a book about how

students who identify as evangelical negotiate their identities in relation to the kind of

academic discourse often privileged in rhetoric and composition (which I'll call *rhetcomp*

for short). Briefly stated, "evangelicals" are Christians who believe the Bible to be the

inspired Word of God, emphasize the importance of a conversion experience, believe that

being a Christian means having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and strive to be

active witnesses in the world for their faith (Balmer and Winner; Claiborne and Campolo;

Marty; McLaren; Noll, *American*). As Lizabeth A. Rand has pointed out, evangelicals are

also Christians for whom faith is their "primary kind of selfhood" and comprises the lens

through which they "mak[e] meaning of their lives and the world around them" (350).

That's largely why evangelicals have become the focus of a growing discussion in

rhetcomp. As many writing teachers know, evangelicals are often not ashamed to

integrate their religious beliefs into their academic writing. Thus the discussion about

evangelical discourse and identity in rhetcomp has focused primarily on how to help such

students write and think academically.

1

What our field has yet to address fully is the question of what happens when such students do so. Anis Bawarshi opens *Genre and the Invention of the Writer* by articulating the question he hopes to address in his book: "what happens *to* writers that motivates them to do what they do?" (1, original emphasis). Though my primary goal here is not to explore the question of genre specifically, I am asking a similar kind of question: *What happens to evangelical students when they write academically? How are evangelical students' identities integrated into and implicated by their academic writing?* Not knowing the answers to these questions represents a significant blindspot for rhetcomp, especially when considering that the assumptions underlying academic discourse *á la* rhetcomp so often conflict with the major premises of evangelical Christianity.

The impetus for this book thus comes from my desire to address a gap in our scholarship. It also comes from exigencies outside the field—the continued prominence of evangelical Christianity in American public discourse, significant changes within evangelicalism itself, and growing numbers of evangelical students attending public universities and colleges. Perhaps my primary motive for writing this book, however, comes from my own experience and identity: I am a compositionist who grew up in a Pentecostal evangelical Christian family in the northeast. As an undergraduate, I attended an evangelical college in the southeast, a school that emphasizes the integration of faith and learning. Graduate school brought me to two different state universities in the northeast, neither of which value evangelical Christianity as part of their mission. And, as I write this book, I am teaching back at my alma mater in the southeast. Thus I have shuttled back and forth between evangelical and secular contexts. Though my beliefs

have changed since I started college—and, for that matter, graduate school—I still identify with many of the tenets of evangelicalism. This book represents a deeply personal inquiry.

My purpose in writing *Who Do I Say I Am? Evangelical Identity and Academic Writing* is to widen the conversation in rhetcomp about evangelical identity. I hope to do so in a few ways. As I have already mentioned, I see it refocusing the scholarly discussion about evangelical identity and discourse in rhetcomp towards the question of identity negotiation, of how evangelicals negotiate their identities in relation to the kind of academic discourse often privileged in rhetcomp. Related to this, I see this book as bridging two key scholarly discussions in rhetcomp—the discussions about writing and identity (Clark and Ivanič; Ivanič; LeCourt) and about evangelical discourse (Anderson; Carter; Goodburn; Perkins; Vander Lei and kyburz). Finally, I see this book working against reductive stereotypes about evangelicals perpetuated in rhetcomp in particular and in the academy at large. Too often, the term "evangelical" evokes images of hyper-conservative, reactionary fundamentalist Christians like the late Jerry Falwell, folks Sharon Crowley refers to as "apocalypticists" in *Toward a Civil Discourse*. To be sure, there are evangelicals who identify as such, but as I'll discuss later in this chapter, evangelicalism is far from monolithic. The diverse lives and commitments of the students I discuss in this book illustrate the fact that evangelicalism is a big tent—a tent that, in the early twenty first century, is undergoing significant changes.

In this book I discuss the experiences and academic writing of four evangelical students—two undergraduates students in first year writing courses (FYW) and two graduate students in doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition (DPRC). All four

students graciously agreed to share their writing and their time. I interviewed each student five times and analyzed dozens of pieces of their writing, some they produced for this study, others they wrote for their FYW courses or graduate programs. As I hope to show in this book, faith matters for these students in ways that shapes their academic practice. Even pieces of writing that don't appear to have anything to do with their faith are often shaped by the motives and beliefs supplied by these students' evangelical identities. Equally important, the act of participating in academic discourse—of writing academically—shapes these students' identities. They all acknowledged that they had to accommodate the conventions of academic discourse that led them to construct their identities in ways that don't align with their evangelical senses of self. These students' experiences speak to the truth behind Donna LeCourt's conclusion in *Identity Matters*: "academic discourse *does* influence the construction of self" (143). How that happens— and how evangelicals bring their religious identities to bear on their academic writing—is the subject of this book.

The Problem of Evangelical Identity

The scholarly conversation about evangelicals in rhetcomp has grown in recent years and, in many ways, has concerned itself with the identities of evangelical students. However, it has primarily concerned itself with how students act in the classroom and engage with assignments. What rhetcomp lacks is a thorough, ongoing consideration of how writing and thinking as apprentices to the type of academic discourse privileged in rhetcomp might influence evangelical students' identities. Ironically, one of the first contributions to the scholarly discussion—Chris Anderson's 1989 essay, "The

Description of an Embarrassment: When Students Write about Religion"—does raise a

list of questions that prompt consideration of identity negotiation:

> [I]f we change the *way* students write, change their language, we also
> change *what* they think, what it is possible for them to think. [...] If we
> teach students complexity and irony in form, if we teach them the values
> of academic writing, of good prose, are we not then changing the way they
> think? If we teach them to write with complexity and irony about their
> religious experience, for example, are we not then challenging their faith,
> their belief—not giving them the right to their own language but implicitly
> and explicitly offering a model of what we think of as a better, because
> more sophisticated, understanding of religious experience? (15)

Anderson raises these questions at the end of an essay about a situation familiar to many

writing instructors, that of receiving a student paper riddled with the language "of the

fundamentalist, of the testimonial, of *Guideposts* magazine and Sunday morning

television" (12)—something I often refer to as "Christianese." Though Anderson sees

"Cathy's" language as out of place, he is equally bothered by the dogmatic dismissal of it

by the student's instructor. Arguing from a social-epistemic perspective that all language

at some level entails a leap of faith or an appeal to an unprovable set of assumptions,

Anderson questions the tendency of antifoundational compositionists to be "absolutist in

their antiabsolutism" (13). In doing so, Anderson challenges the academy's predilection

to dismiss evangelical language and the FYW students who employ it.

At the same time, Anderson also realizes that helping evangelical students

become more academic, self aware, and ironic in their writing amounts to much more

than just teaching form and style. As the questions above suggest, it amounts to

"changing the way they think," even to "challenging their faith, their belief" (15). In

other words, what Anderson realizes is that teaching the values of academic writing has

the possible consequence of influencing evangelical students' identities. As he puts it

elsewhere in his essay, writing instructors are in the business of "recommending values, insisting on faiths" (15).

The implications of such influence might seem superficial and harmless. After all, what's wrong with becoming a bit more ironic and self-reflexive? Problems may arise, however, when students' identities are founded on beliefs and values that differ drastically from those privileged within rhetcomp. Thomas Newkirk provides an appropriate example. In *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, he muses on how an evangelical might encounter Donald Murray's advice to treat writing as a process of discovery in which students challenge their "most certain beliefs" (qtd. in Newkirk, *Performance* 14). Newkirk writes that many evangelicals likely "would find Murray's advice either mystifying or actually blasphemous" because of its ideological assumption that one's core beliefs and sense of self are open to revision (15). Because academic discourse often privileges this sense of openness, inquiry, and even skepticism (Downs 42; Swearingen 138-9), Newkirk recognizes that, "for many evangelicals, the college writing class is a foreign place" (*Performance* 15).

Underlying both Newkirk's and Anderson's arguments is an assumption that is no secret in rhetcomp: evangelical and academic discourses are generally perceived to be at odds with each other. Although this assumption has been challenged by some compositionists (see Carter, "Living"; Dively, "Censoring"; Goodburn; Perkins; Stenberg), there remains general agreement that at least some "gap" or "disconnect" remains between academic and evangelical Christian discourses (Carter, "Living" 573). Rhetorician Barry Brummett, for example, discusses how certain versions of what he calls "spirituality" are incompatible with academic epistemologies. Although he is not

writing specifically about evangelicalism, the tenets he lists can be applied to evangelical Christianity: belief in a knowable God, belief in a sacred text that transcends historicism, and belief that mystical or unmediated knowledge of God or of the spiritual realm is possible (128-9). As Brummett explains, such views find little room for belonging in an academy that "radically historicizes everything" and views all knowledge as contingent and mediated (128).

Such incompatibility often leads to resistance. In her study of a fundamentalist Christian student, for example, Amy Goodburn explores the beliefs that shape how a student named Luke reads, writes, and resists in her critical composition course. Namely, she discusses his appeals to authority, his understanding of sacred text, and his belief in and desire to defend absolute truth. Goodburn understands that Luke's religious beliefs and commitments comprise his identity and underpin his motives in her course. Similar to Goodburn, Priscilla Perkins, faced with teaching deep in the Bible Belt, seeks to understand the evangelical mindset in order to "build sturdier intellectual bridges" between leftist writing instructors such as herself and fundamentalist Christian students (596). In doing so, Perkins hopes to find ways of skirting potentially volatile conflicts between two sets of conflicting values and beliefs. By way of example, Perkins discusses how she helped Clifford, a fundamentalist student similar to Luke, use his biblical knowledge to help him read and write about texts that contradict his faith.

Goodburn and Perkins thus recognize what Rand would later articulate—many evangelical students see their faith, rather than their class or gender or race, as their "primary kind of selfhood" (350). And for Rand, research such as Goodburn's is essential: "In order to truly understand evangelical identity and the discourse of the

religious writer," she writes, "we must take a closer look at what the Christian faith asks of its followers" (Rand 358). She goes on to explore how tenets of evangelicalism, such as the call to serve as witnesses for Christ, shape the identities of evangelical Christian students in ways that both coincide and conflict with academic discourse. Other compositionists seek to value faith as a legitimate form of knowledge that can help students engage productively with academic ways of knowing. Shannon Carter offers her "pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity" to help students bridge the epistemological divide between their academic and evangelical communities of practice, while several scholars who contributed to Vander Lei and kyburz's *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom* sought to discover "new ways to think about the relationship between religious faith and the teaching of writing" (Vander Lei, "Coming to Terms" 3).

When it comes to answering the questions Anderson raised in 1989, though, the scholarship is much thinner. One study that does explore such questions is Stephen R. Barrett's stunning dissertation, *This Gonna Hurt Like Hell: A Pentecostal Student Enters the Academy*. In it, Barrett weaves together personal narrative, family history, and composition theory in an attempt to understand "what happens when a student who is constructed as antithetical to the academy enters the academy" (35). What he comes to understand is that learning academic discourse and its assumptions changed his identity in radical ways he did not anticipate:

> What I got was postmodernism. Stripped of belief. Stripped of
> community. I don't even have Christ to alleviate my aloneness. Persuaded
> that what I've experienced all my life as my self is only a closet filled with
> the costumes I'm asked to don to play the roles I'm asked to engage in.
> Persuaded that the discourses I participate in all preexist me, will all
> outlive me, and will all be ultimately little affected by me. (30)

8

Though Barrett does find ways his Pentecostalism coincides with trends in rhecomp about resistance and cultural critique, he ultimately "deconverts" away from the Pentecostal Christian faith in which he was raised. The conclusion readers are left with is that Barrett's evangelical Pentecostalism butted up against his academic learning in irreconcilable ways, ways that left him as a full-fledged member of *neither* community.

Carter provides a somewhat more hopeful picture in her essay. She discusses Alex and Mona, two PhD students in English with evangelical Christian roots for whom "Bible-based reasoning" is a central component of their families, their churches, and their identities (576-7). In graduate school, however, both come to realize that the Bible and "faith-based religious views" are not only *not* favored but also amount to a kind of heresy in academic communities of practice (577, 586). Alex and Mona must thus contend with what it means to belong simultaneously to communities of practice that hold "largely irreconcilable" views (577). Though Carter says little about *how* Alex and Mona reconcile their multimembership in such conflicting communities, she does note that Alex's ability to "mesh" her evangelical and academic perspectives derives from her "hyperawareness of context" (577) and that both students have been able to "maintain deep ties with both their religious communities and their academic ones" (574). Carter's research is significant because it suggests that there *are* narratives of identity available to students that, to some extent at least, allow them to identify as both evangelicals and academics.

Writing and Identity

What Barrett and Carter discuss little—and what rhetcomp has yet to consider fully—is how evangelicals negotiate their identities in their academic writing. This is a significant omission because writing academically always implicates one's identity. It does so in two ways. First, as Don Murray put it so succinctly, "all writing [...] is autobiographical" (67). That autobiography, as Murray explores in his essay, derives from the myriad experiences of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. "I have my own peculiar way of looking at the world and my own way of using language to communicate what I see," writes Murray. "My voice is the product of Scottish genes and a Yankee environment, of Baptist sermons and the newspaper city room, of all the language I have heard and spoken" (67).

Other theorists have echoed Murray's view. In *Writing and Identity*, for example, Roz Ivanič writes that "[a]ll our writing is influenced by our life-histories. Each word we write represents an encounter, possibly a struggle, between our multiple past experience and the demands of a new context" (181). She goes on to say that "[w]ho we are affects how we write, whatever we are writing, whether it is a letter to a friend or a dissertation" (181-2). The "who we are"—the autobiographical self a writer brings to the act of writing—is shaped by the writer's interests, ideas, opinions, commitments, literacy practices, sense of self worth, and voices (182-3). Arguing from a Vygotskian view of social constructionism, Ivanič sees these influences as constituting the writer's autobiographical self. In other words, implicit in any act of writing is a writer's identity—gender, class, regional affiliations, ability, sexuality, level of education, "home" discourses, past experiences, and, yes, religious commitment.

All writing is autobiographical in the sense that our stories—our faiths, our histories, our experiences—shape what we write and the discoursal decisions we make when we write. But all writing is autobiographical in a second sense, one that Murray speaks to when he maintains that "[w]e become what we write" (71). He cites postmodern novelist Don DeLillo on this note:

> I think after a while a writer can begin to know himself through his language. He sees someone or something reflected back at him from these constructions. Over the years it's possible for a writer to shape himself as a human being through the language he uses. (qtd. in Murray 70-1)

Murray is speaking here primarily of personal writing; DeLillo is talking about fiction. But there are others who suggest that Murray's point applies to academic writing as well as personal writing and fiction.

Etienne Wenger, for example, suggests that participating in a community of practice shapes identity. This occurs through the dialectical process of participation and reification, twin processes that occur in FYW courses constantly. Students produce a draft of, say, an analytical essay. Some will "get it" from the start; they will adopt the appropriate stance of analyst and its related attitudes (objectivity, tentativeness, rigor, neutrality) toward whatever subject it is they have chosen to analyze. Others, however, may adopt a stance that is less appropriate—say, that of editorialist or pundit or propagandist. The process of feedback and revision will entail evaluations aimed at the manner in which they have participated. Through written or spoken comments, writing instructors will aim to shift students toward adopting the appropriate stance. In doing so, instructors reify the kind of self they want students to be—a self that, as many compositionists have pointed out over the years, is never neutral but always ideological (Anderson, "Description"; Bizzell, *Academic*; Newkirk, *Performance*). Chris Anderson's

11

words are again appropriate: writing teachers are in "the business of recommending values, insisting on faiths" ("Description" 15).

Since the social turn of the 1980s, compositionists have come to agree *en masse* that writing and teaching writing are ideological endeavors that shape identity. This is so because education itself is a form of socialization. Learning is never a process of just adding to one's repertoire of knowledge but is rather an undertaking that changes one's conceptions of self, whether consciously or otherwise, in relation to whatever is being learned. James Paul Gee contends that learning literacy functions in this manner. For Gee, literacy is always attached to a Discourse (with a capital D), which he defines as follows:

> A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language and other symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting [...] that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network," or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful "role," or to signal that one is filling a social niche in a distinctively recognizable fashion. (*Social* 161)

Learning literacy thus amounts to much more than learning the "skills" of reading and writing; it entails learning the ways of being, thinking, valuing, believing, and acting that go along with the particular Discourse in question. Because they provide individuals with patterns of being in the world, Discourses function as "identity kit[s]" (155).

The ideological and identity implications of academic writing and discourse have thus become significant topics of scholarly discussion in rhetcomp. In *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*, for example, Patricia Bizzell argues that students are "fundamentally altered by participation in any new discourse" (208). Academic discourse, which Bizzell defines in terms of critical detachment and objective analysis, is no exception. Teaching students to write academically can alter not only the way they

think but also the way they relate to others and with other discourses (Bizzell 208-9). And this is so because, as James Berlin argues in "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class," knowledge and reality are social constructions that are impossible to know or to talk about except through language. Because language is always the product of a specific social, material, economic, political, and cultural situation, it is always inflected by biases and predispositions. Language is never neutral but always serving someone or something while simultaneously excluding someone or something else.

Kenneth Burke says something similar when he writes in *Language as Symbolic Action* that language is always a selection of reality that is at once a reflection and deflection of reality ("Terministic Screens" 45). This is the basic idea behind his concept of terministic screens: language—a new or different set of terms—allows individuals to "see" aspects of reality that had been previously shrouded or invisible. How one chooses terms to use—and which sets of terms that individual has at his or her disposal—is thus highly significant. Burke famously defined language as symbolic action because it has the power to influence attitudes, including how one "sees" the world. Because language always means imperfectly and partially—that is to say, because there is much more to reality than any set of terms can convey—one's choice of terms over another will draw attention to one aspect of reality while deflecting attention away from another. Language is an incipient act because it influences our attitudes toward a given aspect of reality, be it a speech, film, commonplace, or deeply-held belief.

The terms we have for "seeing" the world shape how we see ourselves and how we act in the world. Donna LeCourt puts it this way in *Identity Matters*:

> We learn our identities in discursive relations that mediate experience; we
> perceive our bodies in their material relation to the world via such

discursively constructed identities. Experience and discursivity work in a
dialectical relation. (19)

What LeCourt is getting at here is the idea that identity is both socially or discursively

constructed *and* lived materially, in what she calls the social real. "We don't live identity

as discourse," she argues; "we live identity within bodies" (21). That said, the terms we

have available to us to make meaning of our experiences lived in the real world matter a

great deal because they serve to position us into socially meaningful categories. LeCourt

talks about this in terms of encoding:

> Within a society that codes identities categorically, perceptions of one's
> own identity cannot escape such encoding. Our rhetorics of identity, in
> short, *are* us, and thus, inevitably affect our attempt to act upon the world
> and define self. While multiple options exist, we do not necessarily
> perceive them within the structures imposed upon our identity within the
> material world. (31, original emphasis)

LeCourt writes later in her book that while student writers tend to "perceive

academic discourse only as learning a particular linguistic act," what happens is more

complicated. Their "education opens up a site of discursive-material interaction that

further affects one's relations to other forms of social being" (40). In other words, how

students are taught to think and write influences how they construct their identities and

relate to others in the material world. This comes about through a process of

identification (in a Burkean sense) with the language students seek to use, followed by

identification with the subject positions available in a particular discourse (88). These

processes of identification begin with the act of writing, because it is through writing that

students are introduced to the subject positions available to them in the academy. It is

also through writing that "students are positioned *within* academic discourse, compelled

to resee their own subjectivities through this discourse" (133, original emphasis). As they

adopt new frames of reference, students come to identify with the subjective positions

offered by the "schooled language" or the written and spoken formulations of academic discourse that they employ (10, 59). Such identification leads to identity formation, a process in which individuals interiorize certain subject positions and reject others "in order to mark the boundaries by which we might constitute self" (146). Though LeCourt hopes that students in the academy will construct hybrid subjectivities that value various aspects of their identity, she admits that such a possibility is difficult to attain. LeCourt does not speak directly about evangelicals, but the implications here apply: forging an evangelical identity in the academy poses challenges as well as opportunities.

In positing the act of writing as a chief means through which students are socialized into academic discourse, LeCourt's views accord with Romy Clark and Roz Ivanič's theory of writing, ideology, and identity as set forth in *The Politics of Writing*. For Clark and Ivanič, writing offers certain "possibilities for selfhood" that constrain how writers position themselves:

> Interests, values, beliefs, and relations of status and power are all encoded into conventions, and by drawing on particular conventions a person takes on what is encoded in them. Individuals can only have identities that the conventions they are drawing on allow them to have. In other words, the practices people enter into position them in particular ways, and to some extent everyone is at the mercy of these possibilities. (137-8)

Though the act of writing by no means determines one's identity, it does position the writer according to the subjectivities sanctioned by academic discourse, a point similar to what Newkirk argues when he asks, "What kind of 'self' are we inviting students to become? What kinds of 'selves' do we subtly dismiss?" (*Performance* 6). In any writing task, certain possibilities for selfhood are legitimized while others are discounted, and students must at least temporarily internalize the subject positions offered by academic discourse in order to produce appropriate "schooled language" (LeCourt 132).

The practice of writing academically shapes identity. According to Wenger's community of practice theory, individuals always belong to multiple and potentially conflicting communities of practice, social groups in which members have shared goals and participate in common practices using socially sanctioned resources and methods (Barton and Tusting 1-2; Lave and Wenger 98-100; Wenger 45). Individuals belong to multiple communities of practice at any given time, and the various ways in which they are expected to participate in such a nexus of multimembership can produce conflict. Negotiating an identity among these multiple and potentially competing forms of practice involves the work of reconciliation, a process that Wenger sees as much more profound than simply making choices about what individuals hope to be or how they choose to act (160). Reconciliation is identity formation itself. It is the process of negotiating one's competing participations and memberships in order to decide which values, beliefs, attitudes, and meanings to incorporate into one's conception of self. Wenger is abundantly clear that reconciliation is ongoing and that it is not necessarily (rarely, in fact) harmonious, marked more often than not by tension, the presence of which "implies that there is an effort at maintaining some kind of coexistence" (160). And participation in one community will always have bearing on another. Writing academically will shape one's identity and practice as an evangelical Christian.

Given these assumptions—that all writing is autobiographical, that there are significant conflicts between academic and evangelical discourses, and that, as LeCourt puts it, "academic discourse *does* influence the construction of self" (143, original emphasis)—several questions follow: Which aspects of religious identity, if any, do evangelical Christian students bring with them to their academic writing? Which aspects

are implicated when evangelical students write academically? How does learning to write and think academically shape the identities of evangelical Christian students? What is at stake for evangelical Christian students who seek to become literate in academic discourse? What subject positions are available to evangelical Christians who seek to bring their religious identities to their academic writing? In what ways do the conventions of academic discourse as privileged in rhetcomp allow for or militate against subject positions that meld the evangelical and the academic? Finally, what possible "trajectories" or "narratives of identity" (Wenger 154, 156), if any, are available to evangelical students who seek to negotiate identities as members of both academic and evangelical Christian communities of practice? My hope is that answering these questions will help compositionists develop a fuller understanding of evangelical identity and discourse as it emerges in academic writing—an understanding that, given our current historical situation, our field sorely needs.

A Much Needed Perspective

It is no secret that evangelical Christianity is alive and well in the United States. The significance of the evangelical voting block in the 2004 reelection of George W. Bush attests to this. Most exit polls from that election showed that "values voters" carried the day. And even though the more socially conservative John McCain and his openly-evangelical running mate Sarah Palin lost in 2008, President Barack Obama's appeals to evangelical voters indicate that they still play a prominent role in American civic life. Arguably, one of the most memorable moments of the 2008 presidential race occurred when both McCain and Obama agreed to meet at Saddleback Church and field questions

from the California megachurch's well-known pastor and evangelical spokesman, Rick Warren. Obama's later selection of Warren to give the invocation at his inauguration received much criticism (he has views on homosexuality that many liberal voters oppose), but was seen as further proof that evangelicals still matter to American politics and public discourse. Obama defended his choice of Warren by arguing that he was elected to be president of *all* Americans, a significant portion of which consists of evangelical Christians like those who attend Saddleback.

In fact, evangelicals still make up the single largest religious tradition in the United States. According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's *U. S. Religious Landscape Survey* published in 2007, more than a quarter (26%) of the total population identifies as "evangelical Protestant." A report published in 2004 by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA indicate that these numbers hold up in America's colleges and universities. In fact, HERI found that the percentage of incoming first year students who identified as "born again" was also 26%, with the majority of these students claiming affiliation as Baptist or nondenominational Christian. The HERI report also notes that this "Other Christian" category is one of the fastest growing. It is worth pointing out that, of the nearly 100,000 freshmen HERI surveyed, two-thirds (66%) attended a public college or university while only a fraction (3%) attended an evangelical Christian college, suggesting that a significant number of incoming students at public institutions will identify as evangelical.

The result of the growing numbers of evangelicals in higher education is that, as sociologist D. Michael Lindsay puts it in "Evangelicalism Rebounds in Academe," America's universities "are looking more like America." Lindsay, who is also the author

of *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*, goes on to say that though evangelicals "are still underrepresented on major university campuses compared with their size in the U. S. population, […] the tide is turning." Because of this, he argues, it is imperative that American universities and colleges "come to grips with this dynamic." Education theorists Peter Magolda and Kelsey Ebben Gross argue something similar in their book, *It's All about Jesus: Faith as an Oppositional Collegiate Subculture*, a two-year ethnographic study of an evangelical campus ministry. They argue that though evangelicals are a significant presence at state universities, surprisingly little scholarship exists about their experiences in higher education. Citing R. Eugene Rice, they argue that even though discussions about evangelical Christianity can be difficult in scholarly communities, remaining silent about these students and their discourse is no longer an option (15; see also Rice, "Faculty"). The same remains true for rhetcomp. We need insight into the experiences and identity negotiations of evangelicals because, in any given composition class during any given semester, they are likely to be present. Of course, a compositionist is far more likely to interact with evangelical Christian students if she teaches at a state university in the Southeast or Midwest than in the Northeast or Pacific Northwest, but there are evangelicals in all of these locales. The first year students I discuss in this book attend a public university in the Northeast, and they share many of the same beliefs with the students I teach at an evangelical university in the South.

One result of the lack of research about evangelical students in the academy is that negative attitudes towards such students persist. Recent research suggests that college itself can still be a foreign, if not hostile, place for evangelicals. Consider, for example, three of the major findings from a 2007 report by the Institute for Jewish and

Community Research (IJCR) about the religious beliefs and behaviors of American university faculty:

1. Faculty feel warmly about most religious groups, but feel coldly about evangelicals and Mormons
2. Faculty feel most unfavorably about evangelical Christians
3. Faculty are almost unanimous in their belief that evangelical Christians (fundamentalists) should keep their religious beliefs out of American politics. (Tobin and Weinberg 2)

Regarding the second of these three points, Tobin and Weinberg note that evangelical Christianity "is the only religious group about which a majority of non-evangelical faculty have negative feelings" (2). Later in their report, they note their surprise regarding "the level of negativity faculty showed for Christian fundamentalists and Evangelicals. If not outright prejudice," they write, "faculty sentiment about the largest religious group in the American public borders dangerously close" (15). Tobin and Weinberg go on to pose a question that pertains to rhetcomp: "What are the implications of the negativity that faculty feel about Evangelical Christians?" (15).

One implication might be that evangelicalism remains misunderstood within rhetcomp. Part of the problem is terminological. "Evangelical," "fundamentalist," "Pentecostal," "religious," and "Christian" are terms with significantly different meanings (Cox, "Warring"), but they are often used vaguely or even interchangeably in rhetcomp. One case in point is a panel I attended at the 2008 convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in New Orleans. The panel was a discussion about Sharon Crowley's *Toward a Civil Discourse*. At the outset of the discussion, both the presenters and the audience seemed cautious about their terms. They used the term "fundamentalist" or "apocalypticist" in reference to the kind of Christian faith that Crowley discusses in her book. By the end of the discussion, though, any

20

qualification about what kind of Christians we were talking about was out the window.

Not only did the terms "evangelical" and "fundamentalist" become conflated with the

much broader term "Christian," but those terms were soon replaced by the even vaguer

"religious." This resulted in a distinct lack of *stasis*, and it struck me as representative of

the discussion about evangelical identity in rhetcomp as a whole. Although there

certainly are attempts to parse out these terms and understand the characteristics of

individuals who are labeled by them, there remains a tendency to conflate evangelicalism,

Christian tradition, and even religion into a kind of fundamentalist straw man that is easy

for academics to deplore. It's easy for liberal compositionists to dismiss Jerry Falwell and

Pat Robertson. It's much harder to do the same with liberal-leaning evangelicals like

Tony Campolo and Jim Wallis.

But evangelical identity is often misunderstood in composition studies for another

reason. By virtue of the very subjects compositionists have selected, we have reified a

particular view of evangelicalism within the field's consciousness. Many of the essays

about evangelical identity published within composition studies focus on fundamentalist

Christian students who are resistant—"problem" students such as Goodburn's Luke,

Perkins' Clifford, Smart's "Frankenstein or Jesus Christ?" writer, Anderson's Cathy, and

Doug Hunt's Rob Campbell, to name a few. Lizabeth Rand has written persuasively that

rhetcomp trivializes evangelical Christian faith by appropriating its terms as derogatory.

I'd like to suggest also that we have trivialized evangelical faith by constructing a highly

limited view of it. To borrow from Burke, we've constructed for ourselves a terministic

screen that limits what we can see. By selecting certain kinds of evangelicals to discuss,

21

we have reflected a small portion of reality and deflected other, important aspects of evangelical identity.

I should clarify here that I don't mean to suggest that studies such as the ones I cited above are irrelevant or unimportant. Quite the contrary, such studies are essential to what compositionists know and need to know about many of the students in our classrooms. And, to be sure, these studies respond to what is often a pressing exigency— the desire to know how to work best with students who resist our best attempts to help them learn. What I am saying, though, is that these topic and participant selections only show part of the picture. I hope to demonstrate in this book that there is a much more diverse realm of evangelical identity than our scholarship gives credence. Put slightly otherwise, there is a much more complex and nuanced story to tell about evangelicals in rhetcomp, and I hope to share part of that story. It is a story that certainly sees evangelicals as at odds with academic discourse at times. But it is also a story in which evangelical identity converges with academic discourse, motivating students to write, think, and conduct themselves in ways that align with many of the values commonly held by compositionists.

A Troubled Term: Evangelical Christian

In the early twenty-first century, there are few terms more difficult to define than "evangelical Christian." There are a number of reasons for this. The first is that, because "evangelical" refers to a set of beliefs and attitudes that cut across doctrinal, denominational, and, increasingly so, political lines, it has *always* been difficult to define. Evangelical scholar Mark Noll, for example, writes that, "evangelicalism has always been

diverse, flexible, adaptable, and *multiform"* ("The Future" 424, original emphasis). Thus,

though the term "evangelical" often evokes the hardline, fundamentalism of Falwell, Pat

Robertson, or Tim LaHaye, it also includes the more liberal social activism of Ron Sider,

the founder of Evangelicals for Social Action; Jim Wallis, the founder of Sojourners and

an outspoken critic of the political agenda of the Religious Right; and Brian McLaren, a

minister and writer (not to mention former writing instructor!) who has questioned many

of the traditional assumptions of evangelicalism.

To be an evangelical Christian, then, does not necessarily mean that one needs to

be politically or even theologically conservative. It also does not necessarily mean that

one needs to be anti-gay, anti-abortion, pro-capitalism, or pro-war, though it is true that

many still identify as such. Noll identifies four characteristics commonly held by

evangelicals: they emphasize the need for conversion, a turning away from self and

toward faith in Jesus Christ; they see the Bible as "the ultimate authority for all matters of

faith and religious practice"; they work to spread the gospel message of salvation through

Jesus Christ and push for social reform; and, they see Christ's death on the cross and his

subsequent resurrection as the center of Christian belief (422). Other scholars' definitions

largely correspond to Noll's definition. Balmer and Winner, for example, define

evangelicals as Christians who emphasize conversion and take the Bible seriously,

though not necessarily in a literalist sense (22-3). McLaren outlines four trends among

evangelicals: they respect the Bible, they emphasize conversion, they believe that God is

knowable, and they desire to share their faith (129). And evangelical sociologist and

writer Tony Campolo defines an evangelical as "someone who believes the doctrines of

the Apostle's Creed," who has a "very high view of scripture though not necessarily

inerrancy," and who believes that salvation comes through a personal relationship with Jesus (Claiborne and Campolo 55). Other scholars, including Martin Marty and D. G. Hart, forward definitions that echo these traits.

The students I discuss in this book range the spectrum of evangelicalism. All four talked about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, recalled some form of conversion (often in their early years), held the Bible in high esteem, and aimed to follow Christian precepts in their lives. Of these characteristics, participants seemed to vary most widely on their views of the Bible. One graduate student, Brian, believes firmly in the inerrancy of the Bible, a perspective that aligns him with the more conservative end of the evangelical spectrum. Although the others held the Bible in high esteem, not all saw it as inerrant. Each student did understand Christianity to be a distinctly evangelical religion, the idea being that, as Jesus commands his disciples in Matthew 28, Christians ought to go out into the world and make disciples of all people. How this plays out in these students' lives—the manner in which they aligned themselves to this evangelical mission—differs.

One aspect that they all seem to share in common, though, is a sense that evangelism traditionally conceived—standing on a street corner and preaching hellfire and brimstone, for example, or going door to door and handing out tracts—is outmoded and thus something from which they seek to distance themselves. This was as true for the graduate students as it was for the undergraduates, and it corresponds to growing trends in evangelicalism. Magolda and Ebben Gross, for instance, note that the evangelicals in the undergraduate student ministry they observed promoted a "relational" form of evangelism that "emphasizes getting to know the other person, rather than just

transmitting the message of Jesus" (146-7). They quote one student's advice to less-experienced student evangelists:

> We have to remember, evangelizing is a slow process. It begins with friendship and eventually leads to faith. Friendship and faith build on each other. We just don't go up to someone and start spewing our faith. We have to show we care before we share the Word. ... Evangelizing is a lifestyle. We have to live the lifestyle. [...] We have to show we care and that God is showing His love through us. (142-3)

Each of the four students I interviewed aligned themselves with this relational, community-based form of evangelism (see also Webber, *Younger* 216-21). They largely reject what Kevin Roose, author of *The Unlikely Disciple*, refers to as "cold-turkey evangelism" (148).

In doing so, they distance themselves from the more separatist, militant cousins of evangelicals, namely Christian fundamentalists. Although *evangelical* and *fundamentalist* are often used interchangeably, they are not the same term. Though some scholars see fundamentalism as a subcategory of evangelicalism (see Marsden, *Fundamentalism*; Balmer and Winner), others see them as having significant differences. Harvey Cox, for example, distinguishes fundamentalists from evangelicals on the basis that the former "fiercely insist" on the inerrancy of Scripture while the latter take a less hardline stance ("Warring" 62). In *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, Robert Webber acknowledges the negative views that separationist fundamentalists had towards Billy Graham's evangelicalism in the middle of the twentieth-century (70-71). Even the late Jerry Falwell distinguished between evangelical and fundamentalist. Susan Harding points out that Falwell started to change this perspective in the 1980s when he began to define a "fundamentalist" as "an evangelical who was mad about something" (qtd. in Harding 16). By the 1990s, he was using the descriptor "evangelical" without hedging it (Harding 17),

but the point is that, though there is some overlap between evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity, they're not the same thing.

In fact, in *A Generous Orthodoxy*, Brian McLaren goes so far as to make a distinction between *Evangelical* and *evangelical*. While "'Big E' Evangelical" refers to the Religious Right—the highly politicized arm of evangelical Christianity in the United States known for being fundamentalist, pro-Republican, anti-abortion, and anti-homosexuality—lowercase "e" evangelical refers more generally to Christians who are passionate about following Christ, spreading the Gospel, and making the world a better place (128-32). McLaren thus sees *evangelical* as a much more "inclusive and positive" term than its more "sectarian and restrictive" cousin, *Evangelical* (133).

McLaren is not alone in making this distinction. In fact, he's partially writing in response to what Wheaton College professor Robert Webber discusses in *The Younger Evangelicals*. Webber writes in his introduction about the emergence of "a new evangelical paradigm," one in which "younger evangelicals" are "introducing vast changes into the evangelical way of thinking and doing the faith" (15). Much of that change involves adapting to the cultural differences brought on by postmodernism in general and events like 9/11 in particular. Webber explains that younger evangelicals' "commitment to construct an evangelical faith for a new cultural setting refocuses the way truth is presented, explained, and lived out" (17). The upshot, Webber tells us, is that "[e]vangelical Christianity is in state of change" (13). While Noll tells us that evangelicalism has *always* been difficult to define, current trends in evangelicalism— especially among younger evangelicals—suggest that doing so is becoming even harder. The students I interviewed for this study represent that change in different ways.

26

The Research

The research for this book comes from case studies I conducted with four

students, two undergraduate students enrolled in FYW courses and two graduate students

in PhD programs in rhetcomp. I'll introduce each one briefly below. I chose to focus on

both undergraduate and graduate students for a few reasons. First, working with students

in both of these contexts helped me develop a fuller picture of how evangelicals negotiate

their identities as apprentices to the type of academic discourse that is often privileged in

rhetcomp. Though colleges and universities are starting to develop undergraduate majors

in writing studies[1], rhetcomp as a field still tends to be focused in FYW courses and

graduate programs. I also chose to work with FY and graduate students because each

group offers a different vantage from which to view identity negotiation. In *Identity*

Matters, a study that focuses on the same two populations, LeCourt writes that FY and

graduate students "have special insight into the nature of academic discourse" (9). Both

kinds of students are being initiated into academic communities of practice, albeit at

different stages of educational, professional, intellectual, and even moral and spiritual

development.

The FY students I interviewed were able to talk as newcomers about how writing

and thinking shapes identity. They provided perspective on what it looks like for

evangelicals to enter a new community of practice and learn the ways of writing,

thinking, and knowing that will help them be successful in their undergraduate careers.

The graduate students, because they had spent several years navigating academic

discourse, were able to reflect on how socialization into academic ways of writing and

---

[1] See the Spring 2007 issue of *Composition Studies* (35.1), which was devoted to discussing the possibilities and implications of writing majors. See also Balzhiser and McLeod.

thinking had already shaped their identities over time. Too, the graduate students were able to talk about the negotiations they have made (and are making) to be both academics and evangelicals. My hope is that including both perspectives will provide a richer, more nuanced account of how evangelicals negotiate their identities at key moments of socialization into academic discourse.

I identified my participants largely through word of mouth and networking. All the FY students I interviewed belonged to one of the evangelical campus ministries at the midsized public university in the northeast where I was located. To locate potential participants, I talked with directors of various campus ministries, explained my project to them, and asked if they knew incoming FY students who might be interested in participating. From there, I would email students, explain my project, and invite them to participate. (See Appendix A.) In this initial email, I was careful to avoid terms like "evangelical," "fundamentalist," or "conservative Christian" when describing my study. My fear was that some students who fit the criteria of evangelical based on their practices and beliefs would nevertheless seek to distance themselves from such politically loaded terms. If they used the term to describe themselves, I would then use it.

Of course, because I was purposefully avoiding using these terms, I risked the chance of locating participants who did not fit my definition of evangelical Christian. To mitigate this risk, I initially designed a brief questionnaire that I planned to give to students in order to gauge their attitudes toward characteristics of evangelical Christianity. I wanted to ensure that they "fit" the category as I defined it. After talking with several colleagues about my proposed method, though, I began to feel that the questionnaire might come across as too harsh of a tactic, something that might be

perceived an inquisition, which Kathleen Norris in *Amazing Grace* defines as a question

to which the answer is already known (217). In place of the questionnaire, I decided to

have an initial discussion with each potential participant. For the FY students, this

meeting would occur in person; for the graduate students, it would occur over the phone.

In both cases, though, I took the opportunity to introduce myself a bit, explain the

research, and get a sense of their religious background. Again, in these pre-interview

discussions, I would avoid the use of terms like "evangelical" unless they brought it up

themselves.

This terminological problem was less significant with the undergrads than it was

the graduate students. This was the case for two reasons. First, since I was identifying FY

students who were voluntarily attending evangelical campus ministries, I felt safer about

assuming they fit the definition of evangelical. Second, I was communicating with

various campus ministers about my project, and they would refer students to me whom

they felt fit my description. In short, by the time I contacted any of the FY students, they

had already been through two informal "screening" processes. Still, I would arrange an

informal meeting to talk with each prospective participant. In that meeting, I would tell

them a bit about myself and ask them about their backgrounds, their involvement with

their campus ministry, the kinds of churches they had attended, and so forth. Though I

did not plan to do so, all three of my FY students ended up coming from the same student

campus ministry, the local chapter of a national evangelical collegiate organization. They

also attended the same church locally, a nondenominational evangelical church close to

campus that attracted a large number of college students.

In some ways, my "screening" process for the graduate students was similar to that of the FY students. I still depended on referrals from people who had personal contact with them, and I would avoid using terms like "evangelical" when inviting students to participate. In most instances I was communicating with their professors, not their campus ministers, so I did not know much about their faith background until talking with the students directly. Thus the pre-interview discussion took on a bit more significance with the graduate students. That said, there was only one instance in which I decided not to invite a student to participate based on that initial discussion. All of the other students seemed to "fit" my criteria. Some of them even used the term "evangelical" to define themselves.

In fact, there is one exception to my avoidance of the term "evangelical." When I was looking for graduate student participants, I emailed a compositionist at a state university whom I knew had worked with several evangelical graduate students. I explained my project to her and asked if she knew of anyone who might be interested in working with me. She kindly forwarded the email I had written her to her students—an email in which I had used the term "evangelical" to describe the kind of students for whom I was looking. When she told me she had forwarded my email to all of the graduate students in her department, I was afraid that my use of the term might backfire. I was wrong. Within hours, I had several responses from students who were interested in participating. Though many of them were not working towards the PhD in rhetcomp and thus did not fit my criteria, I did find one of my participants this way. Thus, "evangelical" was not off-putting for everyone, a fact that might have to do with the ways in which the subgroup it purports to define is in such a significant state of change (Webber, *Younger*).

Alternately, it might result from the fact that the email request came through a professor in their department.

Each case study consisted of five interviews spread out over a period of roughly two months. (See Appendix B for the full interview schedule.) I loosely followed Irving Seidman's suggestions for conducting multiple interviews. Though Seidman recommends no more than two weeks between interviews, circumstances such as conflicting schedules, seemingly ill-timed semester breaks, and unplanned contingencies sometimes disrupted that regularity. Though the specifics of each case study vary from individual to individual, I did follow a relatively stable progression in terms of the focus of each of the five interviews. That focus was largely determined by the writing prompts I asked students to respond to before or at the beginning of each interview. For interviews after the first, I also provided students with a series of excerpts from something they wrote or said. Having these "textual artifacts" helped build continuity from interview to interview, especially in cases where interviews were separated by more than two weeks.

For the first interview, which focused on students' religious and educational backgrounds, each participant responded to the following prompt:

> Write a brief letter (1-2 pages) to someone in [your FYW class or your graduate program]—either professor or peer—and describe yourself as a Christian. Some questions you might consider: What does your faith mean to you? What aspects of Christianity are most important to you? How does your faith influence who you are on a daily basis? How did you come to be a Christian?

I asked students to email me their letter at least 24 hours prior to our interview. Using a set of standard interview questions as a guide, I would then formulate specific questions based on what the student wrote. For example, Kimberly, one of the FY students I interviewed, wrote in her first writing prompt that she "grew up in household where faith

in God was a given." One of the guiding questions I wanted to ask each student in the first interview was how they had come to be a Christian. Kimberly's written response partially answered this question, but prompting her to talk more about the idea that "faith in God was a given" was a way of getting her to explore her religious background and her early conversion more fully. In this way, most of the questions I asked in the actual interview, though based on the guiding questions I had developed, were unique to each student.

The focus of the next two interviews also remained consistent across all participants. The second interview explored students' current educational contexts, and they did so by responding to the following writing prompt:

> Write a brief letter (1-2 pages) in which you describe—to the same person you wrote to last time—what it's like to be a Christian in [your FYW course or graduate program]. Some questions you might consider: What challenges have you faced? How has your faith made things easier/better/more difficult for you? How does your faith influence what you say, how you say it, and when you choose not to say anything?

There are a few reasons why I asked students to respond by writing a letter. One was that I agree with Sue Dinitz and Toby Fulwiler when they write, "[l]etter writing is as natural and easy as writing ever gets" (vii). I also agree with them that, because "letters usually have a clearly defined purpose and audience," they tend to elicit "focused, clear writing" (viii), a perspective they share with Wayne Booth ("Rhetorical"). I wanted students to think about and write for a particular audience, and I wanted it to be someone with whom they had had contact while negotiating their academic and evangelical identities.

I also wanted students to recall concrete experiences as much as possible. Writing letters to their professors or their peers seems to have done this. Though I did have to prompt students to go into further depth in each interview, the letters often illustrate the

32

extent to which students' evangelical and academic trajectories coincide and conflict in what Wenger would refer to as each student's "nexus of multimembership" (158). For example, in her first letter, Kathryn, one of the graduate student participants, wrote the following to "Mark," a colleague in her graduate program:

> I know we've had several discussions about our faith, about our respective Christian beliefs, and while I know we have many beliefs in common, I thought I would use this opportunity to try to delineate what I really *believe* and to explain who I am as a Christian. (original emphasis)

Kathryn here is tapping into an ongoing conversation with Mark. For Kathryn, then, this exercise—writing a letter in response to a prompt—became much more than an exercise. It merged with an actual ongoing conversation and thus functioned as part of a real rhetorical situation. The fact that she actually sent him the letter underscores the authenticity of her writing act. Though the level of authenticity varied from participant to participant, writing letters did seem to imbue their responses with a sense of focus and purpose.

Even though letters can be easier to write than other genres, they are still time consuming. And because all of my participants had busy educational and social lives even before they agreed to participate in this study, I didn't want to overburden them with preparing for each interview. For the third and fourth interviews, I asked students to do a directed freewrite for ten minutes at the beginning of the interview. The prompts for these interviews reflected the focus of each interview. For example, interview three was a text-based interview. In it, I talked with each participant about a piece of academic writing they had written either for their FYW course or in their graduate program. I had each participant email me the sample academic writing as soon after the second interview as

33

possible so I would have time to read it and formulate questions. The freewriting prompt

I gave them at the beginning of their interview was as follows:

> We've decided to talk about this particular paper you've written. Take
> about 10 minutes and freewrite about how (or if) your identity as a
> Christian influenced how you wrote this. What does this essay mean to
> you as a Christian?

I would sometimes change this prompt to reflect each student's submitted work. For

example, I would include the title of the paper in the first line.

Of course, my assumption underlying this prompt was that students' evangelical

identities often emerge implicitly in academic work. When students' academic essays

dealt directly with their religious identities, the prompt didn't seem appropriate. This

occurred most specifically with Brian, one of my graduate participants. Because the essay

he submitted was specifically about evangelical identity and graduate English studies, I

felt like asking him to respond to the prompt above would come across as uninformed, as

if I hadn't read the paper. Thus I asked Brian to respond in writing to a prompt that I

asked other students in their interviews. The passage I gave him comes from Romy Clark

and Roz Ivanič's *Politics of Writing*:

> Writers consciously or subconsciously adjust the impression they convey
> to readers, according to their commitments and what is in their best
> interests. These two forces may be in conflict, especially in situations like
> writing an academic assignment for assessment purposes. Writers often
> find themselves attempting to inhabit subject positions with which they do
> not really identity, or feel ambivalent about. (144)

I asked Brian to freewrite for 10 minutes about how his experiences writing his essay

coincided with or diverged from Clark and Ivanič's passage. Though this represents

somewhat of a departure from the sequence of writing prompts I gave to other

participants, the focus of the interview—to talk about how Brian's evangelical identity

emerged in and shaped a piece of academic writing—remained the same.

34

The fourth interview served in many ways as a follow-up to the third interview. The focus of the fourth interview would often remain on the student's academic writing. The heuristic writing students did for this interview was, admittedly, the most inconsistent. My original goal was to put the students in conversation with each other—I wanted to give the FY students an excerpt from one of the grad students and vice versa. This was logistically difficult. My first interviewee was Austin, an undergrad, and I had not yet worked with a graduate student. Instead, I asked him to freewrite in response to the following prompt:

> I'm interested to hear more about how your faith and identity as an evangelical Christian informs this paper. How does what you know as a Christian and how you know as one shape what you say in "Christian Schools"? Another way to think about it: What are you able to say in this paper that someone who isn't evangelical would not be able to say?

Once I did have material from both populations, I did go with my initial idea for the fourth writing prompt. The results weren't very helpful, though, largely because I didn't feel like I was able to provide participants with enough context for the particular excerpt I gave them. Because of this—and because of the fact that the third interview raised as many questions about students' academic writing as it answered—I steered the fourth interview to focus much more on their writing. Given the focus of this study, that emphasis proved helpful.

The fifth and final interview often served as a kind of catchall. Students wrote in response to the following prompt:

> Write a brief letter (1-2 pages) to one of your spiritual mentors—maybe a pastor, parent, sibling, friend, campus minister, or youth pastor—and tell her or him how you see your faith as shaping your education and your education as shaping your faith. Feel free to reference anything you and I have talked about over the first four interviews—your religious and educational backgrounds, your current educational context, your academic writing, and your reflection on others' experiences.

My goal here was to help my participants see their identity from a spiritual rather than academic vantage. It was also, as the prompt indicates, aimed at helping students reflect on the different threads of the study itself—what they had thought about and talked with me about over the course of their participation. Thus the questions I asked in the interview were far ranging and highly contingent upon each student's experience.

I recorded each interview using a digital audio recorder. Though I often took notes during the interview, I relied primarily on the recordings. Shortly after each interview, I would transcribe it as fully as necessary—that is to say, I would transcribe fully those sections that pertained to my research while only taking notes on those sections that did not pertain. Given that I had dozens of interviews to listen to and transcribe, this helped save time. On some occasions, I found it necessary to go back and fully transcribe a section for which I had only taken notes.

Organizing the Book: Telling Students' Stories

One of the hardest choices faced by a case study researcher is how to report the findings. One way is to proceed topically: once you've gotten the research and have developed categories, arrange your chapters according to topic. There are some advantages to this method, and it worked well in books like Beth Daniell's *A Communion of Friendship* and Donna LeCourt's *Identity Matters*. A second way is to organize the information by participant—to foreground peoples' stories, as it were, and tell them as such. One example of this type of organization is Anne Herrington and Marcia Curtis's *Persons in Process*. All three of these books have been influential in my research. In the end, though, I opted for the second organizational pattern, largely because I tried the first

pattern and it didn't work. I felt like I was losing much of the narrative that made each student's story compelling. Of greatest significance, though, was the fact that, since I was talking with these students over the course of two months or more, they often developed a recognizable trajectory in their academic communities of practice. These trajectories show up most overtly in the stories of Austin and Kimberly and directly impinged upon their senses of self and how they constructed their identities in their academic writing. Because we were talking primarily about the writing they were doing in one course, it is possible to see how their experiences writing one essay or interacting in class later impacted the way they would approach an assignment or construct their discoursal self. These were significant components of their stories that I felt would be lost if I pursued a topical organizational pattern.

Thus I devote a chapter to each of my participants. In Chapter 2, "Breaking the Silence: Austin, Casuistic Stretching, and the Search for Shared Values" I discuss Austin and the writing he did for his FYW course. Austin is a white, male, traditional FY student at a midsized state university in the northeast. He was deeply involved with an evangelical campus ministry and frequently exuded an enthusiasm about representing his faith at a public university. In this chapter, I focus on one essay Austin wrote—a researched persuasive essay that grew out of an in-class exigency in which his faith was challenged. In this essay, Austin attempts to defend his beliefs to an audience who does not share them. In the process of doing so, he achieves a degree of agency but ultimately stretches his original principle to the point where he identifies with a different set of values.

In Chapter 3, "The Evidence of Things Not Seen: Faith in Kimberly's Schooled Writing," I turn to Kimberly and discuss the reasons why she was often not able to see how faith might or did inform her schooled writing. Like Austin, Kimberly is a traditional FY student at the same midsized state university in the northeast; she is also active in the same evangelical campus ministry. Unlike Austin, she is a Jamaican-American female who was raised partly in Jamaica and partly in the northeast. To be sure, Kimberly's faith does emerge in and is implicated by her schooled writing. However, she is largely unaware that this is the case. In exploring Kimberly's experiences, I raise questions about how rhetcomp might better prepare students like Kimberly to see how faith fits into and is implicated by schooled writing.

Chapter 4, "Primary and Problematic: Brian, Antifoundationalism, and the Implications of Professionalization," shifts the discussion to graduate students. Brian is a white male graduate student enrolled in a PhD program in composition studies at a public university in the Midwest. He grew up in the South and completed his BA at a school affiliated with the Southern Baptist Church. Of the graduate student participants I interviewed, Brian was the most theologically conservative—he defined himself as a foundationalist and held a firm belief in the inerrancy of the Bible. In my discussion about Brian, I focus on a seminar paper he wrote for a course on postmodern rhetoric. The essay deals with much the same territory as this book. Brian argues that composition scholars need to be aware of the ways in which they marginalize evangelical Christian graduate students and their perspectives. In his efforts to argue for recognition of a perspective that is often maligned within rhetcomp, namely foundationalist evangelical Christianity, Brian draws on the same antifoundational premises he critiques. I thus use

38

Brian's experience as an opportunity to explore the challenges faced by graduate students in rhetcomp who seek to draw on their evangelical literacies.

Next, in Chapter 5, "The Limits of Academic Discourse: Kathryn, Ambiguity, and the Possibility of an Integrated Self," I discuss Kathryn, a white, middle-aged female who was raised in the south. Kathryn was returning to graduate school after having taught at the secondary level and in community colleges for several years. In part because of her "non-traditional" status in the PhD program in rhetcomp at a midsized state university in the south, Kathryn was reticent to let people know about her evangelical identity and heritage. Her desire for compartmentalization was largely breached by an autoethnography she wrote for one of her seminars, an essay in which she attempts to come to terms with her literate and evangelical upbringing. I focus in this chapter on the terms Kathryn selects to name her faith—terms that partially reflect her evangelical identity while simultaneously masking it in ambiguity. I use Kathryn's writing as a way of talking about the extent to which rhetcomp has—and still needs to—develop a language to address faith and spirituality (Daniell, "Composing"; Gere).

Finally, in Chapter 6, "Coming to Terms with Evangelical Identity in Composition," I conclude by identifying key observations about how evangelicals negotiate their identities in relation to the kind of academic discourse privileged in rhetcomp. My own identity emerges as a more significant focus in this chapter, and I consider my own response as a rhetcomp scholar with an evangelical background to these students' experiences and identities. I thus use Chapter 6 as a space to reflect on what is and is not possible for evangelicals and rhetcomp. And that, ultimately, is my hope in

Who Do I Say I Am?—to help others, myself included, better understand not only the identities of evangelicals, but also the limits and possibilities of our own field.

Compartmentalization and Convergence

Throughout this book, I'll use two terms to describe the processes students use to negotiate their evangelical identities in their academic contexts. These two terms are *compartmentalization* and *convergence*. By *compartmentalization*, I refer to the perceived separation, whether conscious or otherwise, of the different trajectories that make up an individual's identity. The act of compartmentalizing religious identity from academic practice results from the perception that faith is not relevant. This is a perception that emerged to differing degrees in each of my case studies, but most overtly with Kimberly and Kathryn. Compartmentalization also stems from another motive— fear. Each of my participants indicated some degree of fear in disclosing their identities as evangelical Christians. They recognized that doing so was inherently risky because, as I discussed earlier, academic discourse and evangelical identity are not necessarily happy bedfellows. Thus my participants sought either to shroud their religious identities (see Marsden, *Outrageous*; Stenberg) or to reveal them in carefully orchestrated ways.

What is also true, though, is that it is impossible to maintain such compartmentalization. The evangelical identities of each of my participants shaped the way these students participated in their academic practice. This is because such identities are integral to their senses of self. Thus the academic writing they produced bear the stamp of who they are as evangelical Christians. This is true even for those who consciously (or subconsciously) sought to compartmentalize their faith from their

schooled writing. I call this *convergence*, the phenomenon in which some aspect of an individual's identity influences or is implicated by a practice that, on the surface, doesn't seem to be related to that part of an individual's self. Convergence suggests that boundaries between compartmentalized aspects of an individual's aspects of self are not absolute—that, in Wenger's terms, participation in any community of practice will invariably shape the other trajectories that make up one's identity. To put this slightly otherwise, convergence suggests that an evangelical student's religious identity will shape his or her academic writing. It also suggests that participating in an academic community of practice will implicate that religious identity. Because of that, I argue that it is important for rhetcomp scholars not only to understand how and when this occurs, but also to acknowledge what the implications might be.

CHAPTER TWO

BREAKING THE SILENCE: AUSTIN, CASUISTIC STRETCHING, AND THE
SEARCH FOR SHARED VALUES

"I've never had a research paper that's been so near and dear to me."
—Austin on his researched persuasive essay

The research paper that Austin alludes do in the epigraph above is one he wrote

for his FYW course. It's a paper that, in many ways, demonstrates the kind of dualistic

thinking often associated with FY students in general and evangelical Christians in

particular (see Anson; Bizzell, *Academic*; Dively, "Religious"; Smart). In fact, the title of

the paper, "Christian Schools vs. Secular Schools," suggests that Austin was operating

from a set of either/or assumptions. As such, Austin's "Christian Schools" essay is not

unlike a paper Juanita Smart received from a student she identified as a fundamentalist

Christian. Smart notes that the wording of the title—"Frankenstein or Jesus Christ?"—

demands that readers "position [themselves] at either end of an uncomfortable extreme"

(11). She continues: "Given the choice that the writer poses, do I situate myself on the

side of the Monster or the Messiah, with the devil or the divine?" (11). Though Austin

does not ask his readers to choose between Monster and Messiah as directly as does

Smart's student, he is signaling a clean contrast between two opposing possibilities. It's

Christian versus Secular, black versus white, and there's little hope for any gray in

between.

Because of its dualistic title, a writing instructor might be tempted to dismiss

Austin's essay as overly simplistic. And, to be sure, there is plenty of room for greater

complexity in Austin's "Christian Schools" essay. It's not the most nuanced of arguments. There's a deeper back story to Austin's essay, though, and it's one that sheds light on why he chose to write this essay and how he went about doing so. In this chapter, I'd like to consider how Austin writes "Christian Schools" and negotiates his identity therein. In doing so, I'll focus on how he attempts to construct an argument that fulfills a number of purposes. Some of his purposes for writing relate to the assignment itself and to his identity as a student. Others, though, derive from his identity as an evangelical Christian who is responding to discussions in class that introduced negative attitudes toward religion in general and religiously affiliated schools in particular.

Thinking and writing as an evangelical opens up rhetorical possibilities for Austin while simultaneously bringing into question some of the core beliefs with which he identifies. Though he is able to identify himself as an evangelical and appeal to values he shares with his somewhat antagonistic audience, Austin does so by employing what Kenneth Burke in *Attitudes Toward History* calls *casuistic stretching*, a process in which an individual "introduces new principles while theoretically remaining faithful to old principles" (229). Specifically, Austin's citation of an Old Testament verse casuistically stretches one of his core evangelical values—the belief that salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone—and subordinates it to the pluralistic view that choosing not to believe the Christian message might be legitimate. As I'll show, this moment of casuistic stretching provides a window into Austin's early attempts to negotiate his identity as an evangelical in a pluralist context. Before discussing Austin's writing itself, I'll provide context about the exigency to which Austin responds.

Persuading His Audience: Exigency, Purpose, Silence

Austin wanted to accomplish a number of purposes with his persuasive essay. One purpose he had for writing "Christian Schools vs. Secular Schools" is a given for most FY writers: he's writing to fulfill an academic assignment. Though he and I did not discuss grading extensively, Austin did remark on several occasions that he wanted to earn a good grade. In our fourth interview, when Austin was struggling to finish his paper, he talked about the pressure of having to finish his essay in time to meet the impending due date. This pressure shaped how he approached the essay and developed his argument. As the epigraph to this chapter makes clear, though, Austin was arguably more invested in writing his essay than many FYW students tend to be. Much of this has to do with the fact that he is writing about a topic that relates directly to his identity as an evangelical Christian. In that way, Austin's experience writing "Christian Schools" illustrates Roz Ivanič's point that academic essays, when the topic and its attendant values are "closely bound up with" the writer's sense of self, can function as a kind of personal "statement" for the writer (222). Austin himself put it this way during an interview: "I've never had a research paper that's been so near and dear to me. This is something I really care about."

Indeed, Austin conceives of his overarching purpose for writing "Christian Schools" as divinely inspired. As our interviews progressed, Austin talked about how he felt that he was "called" to write an essay about God. That calling largely derived from an in-class exigency when one of his classmates voiced a disparaging comment about religion and religious schools. I first became aware of this moment when I read the letter Austin wrote in response to the prompt for our second interview. The prompt asked him

44

to describe his experiences as an evangelical Christian in his FYW course. I asked that he write his letter to someone in his class, and he decided to write to Chris, the student who had ridiculed religion. Here's the first paragraph of Austin's letter:

> In class the other day I remember we were talking about possible topics for our next paper and the idea of religious schools came up. You went on to say how you thought everything was just a big joke and there was no God. I'm not offended by your comment but would like to tell you about how being Christian effects my class work. When I'm given an assignment or have discussions in class, the morals and values I hold to be true do not waver because it is schoolwork. If anything I bring my faith into every situation I am in. My relationship with God is something I can never be separated from, no matter the circumstance.

Austin brings up several significant points here, not the least of which is the idea that he sees his faith, in the form of "morals and values," as influencing every aspect of his life, including his academic work. It's clear, though, that Chris's comment about religious schools was significant for Austin: it frames his entire response to the prompt for the second interview.

As Austin recalls it, the comment Chris made was more of an exclamation than anything: "Agh! There is no God! It's just fake!" When I asked Austin to talk more about what the conversation in class was like, he said the following:

> We were talking about just how religious schools have affected our society, and how some—because some schools don't teach sex-ed and things like that—that these kids are going out blind and they're not being taught the theory of evolution, and things like that. Which are—I can see that being a problem when you get into college, because, just, you wanna—just because you're at a Christian school doesn't mean you should be behind anybody on any, like, anywhere really. Even though—I think Christian schools should maybe, like, I think they should teach Darwinism but then counter it with Creationism, because that would give them the scientific background that would be expected among college students and out in the world. But also, if you counter with Creationism, it would give them leverage to say, "Hey, this is what I believe and this is why and this is how Creationism counters you."

What's interesting about this explanation is that Austin shifts quickly from describing the conversation to prescribing how Christian schools should teach. This suggests to me that Chris's comment struck close to home for Austin. Too, the shift seems to indicate that Austin was still struggling to come to terms with what Chris said and how best to respond.

Since it was evident Austin had a lot to say regarding this topic, I asked him if he had mentioned any of this during class discussion. His response illustrates the sense of risk he perceived in discussing such a volatile topic in his FYW course:

> I didn't. I walked out of class feeling very—almost down—because I didn't say anything. 'Cuz, well, one thing I was—I said I wasn't very offended there [in the letter to Chris]. I was actually, like, I wanted to flip out, to be honest. [...] But the way I was thinking, I was like, there's no way I can step out right now and be an effective witness if I am to act out aggressively right now. [...] That's how I felt. Like, I was—I get very defensive. And I didn't want to do that. And I was praying, like, "God, if there is a chance that I can jump into this conversation, please, just give me the words to speak, and..." It just, it never came. Or the opportunity came and I didn't see it.

Austin is defensive largely because he takes Chris's comment personally. He is not only someone who believes wholeheartedly in the Christian God; he is also someone who attended a Christian middle school for grades five through eight.

Austin's decision to remain silent in class is intimately tied to his identity and how he senses it should or should not emerge in an academic context. His silence serves as an instance of what George Marsden calls "self-censorship" (*Outrageous* 13). Though Marsden uses the term in relation to professors and their scholarship, the idea that religiously committed individuals in the academy sense risk in identifying as openly religious can apply more broadly to evangelical students in an academic context such as a FYW course at a public university. Shari Stenberg brings up a similar idea when she

discusses a graduate student in English, Whitney Douglas, who used the word "cloaking" to describe how she felt the need to hide her faith (qtd. in Stenberg 279). This notion also comes to the fore in Heather Thomson Bunn's work with students who identify as evangelical at the University of Michigan.

What's also interesting is that Austin uses the metaphor of sight to describe this moment. He was praying for a chance to intervene in the conversation but, as he put it, "[I]t never came. Or the opportunity came and I didn't see it." Austin was waiting for some sort of prompting from God or looking for a moment when speaking would have been appropriate. The act of waiting on divine inspiration before speaking up in the face of persecution is common among evangelical Christians and has biblical roots. According to Matthew's gospel, after selecting the twelve apostles, Jesus tells them that they "will be dragged before governors and kings because of" their association with him (10.18)[2]. Jesus then commands them how to comport themselves when speaking to hostile audiences:

> When they hand you over, do no worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (10.19-20)

This emphasis on one's words coming not from human motives but from divine prompting is prominent within Christian tradition. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, for instance, St. Paul writes that his "speech and [...] proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor 2.4). As Paul then explains, "the power of God" makes for a more compelling premise than "human wisdom" (1 Cor 2.5).

---

[2] All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Austin seemed to be operating under a similar principle: if God had prompted him to speak and had given him the words to say, then his interjection would have been successful. If, however, he spoke amiss—that is, out of human rather than divine motives—then speaking up could have done much more harm than good. There's also a sense in which Austin feared speaking out angrily, an act that would have conflicted with a verse that evangelicals often cite: "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness" (Jas 1.19-20).

Interestingly, Austin's motives for remaining silent in this instance point to a possible moment of convergence. Austin highlights his own inability to "see" possibilities for how he might have responded to Chris's comment. It's not that he's completely blind to the social codes of his academic context—he's well aware that saying what he wanted to say in that instance might have betrayed one or more of them. Rather, it seems as if his blindness and silence result from his inability to observe the means of persuasion that might be available to him in that given situation. Such blindness is tied to his identity. Austin has yet to negotiate a self that can remain true to his evangelical beliefs while speaking appropriately in his academic community of practice, one that, at this point in time, was still very new to him. There is thus a degree of rhetorical sensitivity here, a sensitivity that is at least partially constituted by his evangelical identity and literacy—to speak out of turn, to ignore the prompting of the Holy Spirit, would be disastrous. Speaking evangelically is a highly rhetorical act that requires a sophisticated understanding of one's audience and context.

And Austin is certainly aware of his social context—a classroom full of students who at best do not share his beliefs and at worst are outspokenly opposed to them. In fact, Shannon Carter's term might be appropriate here: Austin's choice to remain silent after Chris's comment results from his "hyperawareness of context" (577). Equally important, he seeks to present a self that is grounded firmly in his faith. As he puts it, there was "no way" to "step out right now and be an effective witness" because he felt he would "act out aggressively." Austin feared that such aggression would undermine his chances of identifying with his classmates. Because Austin's evangelicalism is relational and thus stresses connection with and not separation from his peers (Webber, *Younger*), speaking aggressively or defensively would have undercut Austin's desire to evangelize. From a purely social standpoint, challenging an assertion such as Chris's in an agonistic manner may have served to undercut the kind of self he wanted to present in class (Goffman). There is the sense, then, that Austin remains silent so as not to disrupt the possibility of identification with his classmates. To come across as agonistic in relation to a discussion about religion would have signaled to his peers that, in Burkean terms, Austin is of a different substance and is thus divided from them (*Rhetoric* 22). In other words, there's a sense here in which the convergence between his evangelical values and his awareness of context lead him to compartmentalize his faith from his academic community of practice.

Moreover, the fact that Austin conveys a self in his letter to Chris ("I'm not offended by your comment…") that is remarkably different from his admitted response to the situation ("…I wanted to flip out, to be honest.") seems to highlight what Clark and Ivanič say about how writers "consciously or subconsciously adjust the impression they convey to readers, according to their commitments and what is in their best interests"

(144). To my knowledge, Austin did not actually give the letter to Chris, and yet the act of writing a letter to Chris forced him to choose what kind of self he wanted to perform. In Austin's case, these two forces seemed to be in conflict. At the least, it seems as if in his letter to Chris, Austin was trying to identify as someone who has a thoughtful, reasoned reply—a contrast to the tenor of Chris's brazen comment and Austin's initial, emotionally-charged, but self-censored response.

A bit later in the second interview, Austin provided another reason for why he chose to remain silent:

> [I]f I had said anything, it would have, like, totally altered the
> conversation completely from talking about a paper to [...] deep
> discussions about God and religion. Like, is it true or whatever? And, um,
> I didn't know if that was a great idea?

Austin's fear that responding to Chris might have "totally altered the conversation" is significant, especially when considering the fact that he assumes his response necessarily would have directed the conversation toward "deep discussions about God and religion." Even more significant, though, is the fact that Austin presupposed such a discussion would involve the question of whether or not God and religion are "true." In his mind, then, the possibility of responding to Chris inevitably implicates one of the central premises on which his evangelical identity is staked, namely the unquestionable belief that Christianity is true and that the Christian God is the source of all truth. The commonplaces Austin draws on in thinking about how he might have responded to Chris stem from his membership in an evangelical community of practice. Equally important, they potentially conflict with the set of assumptions by which he is surrounded in his academic community of practice.

Given Austin's faith commitment and his educational and religious histories, it makes sense that the ways he might have responded to Chris are based in his evangelical identity. At the same time, it is significant that Austin recognizes that speaking from such a premise may not be "a great idea" in his FYW course. He is aware that the secular academy would likely deem such arguments as out of place. He has also not yet developed a language with which to respond in a meaningful or contextually appropriate manner; he's not yet able to invent rejoinders that would sufficiently address a schooled or secular academic exigency when his faith is in question. That's not to say that Austin gives up on the matter. Quite the contrary, he writes his researched persuasive essay about the benefits of Christian schools and, in doing so, attempts to work out a response that would be appropriate for his academic community of practice while remaining true to his deepest convictions—the values, beliefs, and assumptions that motivate much of his thinking and acting. Austin's "Christian Schools vs. Secular Schools" essay thus represents a compelling site of identity negotiation.

Austin's Writing and Sense of Self

Similar to the students Ivanič discusses in *Writing and Identity*, Austin believes he has a "real self" that is fixed, essential, and exists apart from discourse (24)—what Wenger refers to as "some primordial core of personality that already exists" (154). As social theorists, neither Ivanič nor Wenger agree that such an aspect of identity exists. Both see identity as socially formed. To an extent, Austin comes to understand identity as socially constructed, but his overarching concept of identity seems to be that it is

something given by God that exists prior to language and community membership. I'll

refer to this view of identity as Austin's "real self."

Austin's views about his real self emerged when talking about writing for

academic purposes. The following exchange took place in our third interview:

> *Austin*: When writers are presented with topics that they can relate to—
> really identify with—you get more of who the writer is, and not this fake
> writer, who's, like, just writing because they have to, and they were
> trained to write a certain way, so they're gonna do—they're just gonna go
> through the steps but not really. You're not gonna get who the writer is.
>
> *Jeff*: Why is it important to get who the writer is?
>
> *Austin*: It really gets—you get into their personality, who they really are as
> a person and not as a writer. Like, finding them—finding the person as a
> writer is important, but you can really get a lot about who a person is and
> where they stand when they're able to write something that, that really
> identifies their personality and what they believe. Like, when I write stuff
> about God and Jesus, it just comes from me. It's just something that's—
> it's not something I have to force, which I feel like sometimes I have to
> do, especially in English when you have to write that. And it's just the
> class, like, that's what you have to do. But when I'm out of class and I'm
> able to write stuff that I truly enjoy, that is when I feel my, you could say,
> my true colors come out.

What Austin is getting at here is the idea that writing for academic purposes does not

align well with what he thinks of as his real self. In Austin's experience, much of the

schooled writing he has done is, to borrow Ivanič's term, a kind of "exercise" (222). As

Austin points out, this disinterested attitude tends to manifest itself when the topic

doesn't bear any relation to his identity. What does align with his sense of self, though, is

when he is able to write about a topic in which he is personally invested. When he is able

to write about "God and Jesus," for example, he doesn't have to force anything. Writing

about God and Jesus allows his "true colors" to shine forth.

There are a few possible explanations for why Austin believes this. One is that, in

general, FY students seem to have an easier time writing expressively about their own

experience. Such language comes more naturally to them than does, say, the language of critical analysis or of academic argument. Another explanation might be that of social context. Whereas Austin struggles to write about and from his faith for a research-based persuasive essay, writing about God and Jesus as an expression of his own personal devotion is something that comes naturally to him. Prior to our first interview, he wrote a poem while sitting in the library listening to praise and worship music. He was eager to share this poem with me because he identifies with it—he sees it as an extension of his real self. It's called "Break the Silence," and I include it here in its entirety:

> I'm dying to stand in this silence
> And proclaim the love that is [flowing] through me
> My heart beats for You
> Lord shine Your light so all can see
> That You are the Alpha and Omega
> The beginning and the end
> Lord You're the only one that can save them
> For it was your love that saved me from death
> Savior you shook the earth
> You destroyed the temple
> Defeated fear of death and death itself
> Even when I was the one screaming for your death
> I was the leader
> I was the one you looked at and said be gone Satan
> And you still died for me
> I was the one that denied You
> I was the one that betrayed You
> Yet you still hung from that cross
> Pleading for me
> That I didn't know what I was doing
> I'm brought to my knees in conviction and adoration
> The praise on my lips in a lifetime cannot add up to what you deserve
> Abba, my Father, forever use my voice for those around me
> Let it ring with the beauty of Your love
> I cannot thank you enough for what I have in You
> Let me never [cease] to be for You
> Because Lord
> I am for You and You are for me

The initial "I" in the poem is clearly Austin. He's writing from his own personal sense of being implicated within the Christian narrative of guilt and redemption, sin and salvation. The audience here seems to be the Christian God as represented by the first two persons of the Trinity. Titles such as "Lord" and "Savior" refer to Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, while "Abba, my Father" evokes the first person of the Trinity. What's stunning about the poem is that Austin writes as if he were present in the historical moment when Christ was crucified. Some of the references—"I was the one you looked at and said be gone Satan" and "I was the one that denied You"—are evocative of Peter, the disciple who denied knowing Christ three times and was rebuked by Jesus. There's a distinct sense in which Austin is indeed "living inside the Bible," to borrow Shannon Carter's phrase (576). The Christian narrative as represented in the Gospels is not at all distant for Austin. Rather, it is present and imminent. Like many evangelicals, Austin takes quite literally the idea that his sins are the reason why Christ had to suffer on the cross. Austin is writing himself into the gospel story.

If this is the kind of writing that Austin feels flows out of him spontaneously—if it's the kind of writing that demonstrates his "true colors," announces his "real self," and doesn't need to be forced—then it seems safe to say that the subject position Austin is most comfortable inhabiting in his writing is one of evangelical commitment and devotion. More importantly, though, if this is where Austin feels most "at home" when it comes to writing, then writing academically about topics related to his evangelical identity may prove to be problematic. This is precisely what happens. Before he began, though, Austin anticipated that writing his "Christian Schools" essay would be different from past experiences writing papers in English classes. In the following exchange from

54

our third interview, Austin and I talked further about his comment that writers can show

their "true colors" better in some forms of writing than in others.

> *Jeff*: Is it possible to do that in an English class? Is it possible to let your true colors come out as you said?
>
> *Austin*: Yeah, especially now, like, in our [FYW] class, because we're able to choose our topics. It's not like a literary analysis. That's what I found mostly while I was writing in high school. What I wrote is so generic and I never really got into what I was writing until topics like [Pink Floyd's] *The Wall*. I really got into that. But especially now in my English class, I decided I am going to do the topic on Christian schools.
>
> *Jeff*: Oh, really?
>
> *Austin*: And there's, I have several different ideas that I'm working with and I have to type up my first draft by Tuesday. So I was trying to figure out what I'm doing there. But I feel like this will be the first paper that I've ever written that's really gonna show, like, what I think and what I believe.

Austin's hope that writing about Christian schools will allow him to show his

"true colors," to write in such a way that the audience will get a sense of who he *really* is

and what he believes. This hope seems to have two main sources. First, Austin believes

that, since he is able to choose a topic that is interesting to him, he'll be able to "really

[get] into" it, much like he did when he wrote about *The Wall* by Pink Floyd. Second, and

perhaps more important, Austin feels that writing about Christian schools will allow him

to write about a topic that taps directly into his evangelical sense of self. By writing about

"God and Jesus," Austin believes he will be able to show his "real self" in his academic

writing.

Despite this hope, Austin had already begun to realize that writing and identity are

both complicated affairs. Earlier in the semester, for instance, Austin had an experience

in which he realized that the self he was conveying in his writing did not match up with

the evangelical identity he sought to demonstrate. For the first assignment in his FYW

course, Austin was asked to analyze a debate. As an athlete, he decided to analyze the controversy surrounding Title IX and college sports. After writing his first draft, he realized that he had written an argument in a way that contradicted his sense of self.

> [S]ome of the things I wrote in there, I didn't quite—like, I said it because it kind of went with my essay. It didn't—it's not, like, 100% what I think. Cuz some people read it and were like, "Are you an antifeminist?" And I was like, "No, not at all." So I did end up changing my topic to the point where I wasn't attacking women's sports. I was talking about how Title IX hurts both men's and women's sports.

In *The Politics of Writing*, Clark and Ivanič note that "[w]riters often find themselves attempting to inhabit subject positions with which they do not really identify, or feel ambivalent about" (144). This seems to explain what happened to Austin. There's a sense in which he was caught up in his essay, that he did not have full control over what he was saying or how he was saying it. John Ramage offers a possible explanation of what might have occurred. In *Rhetoric: A User's Guide*, Ramage explains that, though writing a book is largely a "free and creative activity," it still has its fill of parameters (14-15). To begin with, there are genre and language constraints, but other restrictions arise as the writing progresses: "And once I actually begin writing, filling the blank pages with my thoughts, I find that each creative Act begets a train of restrictions" (15). Ramage goes on to say that committing to a theme, argument, or voice does not allow complete freedom "to change them at my will without violating an implied contract with my readers and with my subject" (15).

Austin seems to have been caught up in a similar "train of restrictions" when writing his Title IX essay. The voice and argument he had committed himself to channeled him into conveying a self that did not correspond with his "real self." His rhetorical choices early on—and his desire to fulfill the "implied contract" with his

readers—caused him to write in a way that he did not own. Later in the interview, Austin talked more about why he didn't feel that his early draft was a good reflection of his sense of self.

> I really didn't like my essay because it was getting to the point where I sounded like a terrible person. I really changed my topic because I was like, "I'm not going to sound like an antifeminist, because I'm not." Because I'm *not*. Like, I respect women. I just don't—I don't, like, I think the way Title IX is going about trying to help college sports, I think it's making it slightly worse in some aspects.

The dissonance here centers on Austin's realization that he "sounded like a terrible person" in his Title IX essay. In trying to point out some of the problems with the way Title IX had been implemented, Austin unintentionally wrote in a voice that peers who read the paper described as antifeminist, a view that Austin emphatically rejects. He had the benefit of getting feedback from readers who sensed a gap between Austin's autobiographical self and how he was representing himself in his essay. His desire *not* to be characterized as an antifeminist and to be recognized as someone who respects women caused him to revise his essay so that the self he conveys matches up with his sense of self.

This experience with his Title IX essay did not disabuse Austin of the belief that he has a real self that exists apart from discourse. In fact, even as he starts to write his Christian Schools essay, Austin strives to construct a voice that accords with what he believes to be his real self. At the same time, though, the realization that writers can convey different selves in their writing was a powerful one for Austin. Moreover, the fact that his Christian Schools essay is imbued with so much purpose—purposes that are academic, social, and divine in nature—caused him to take great care in how he constructed his discoursal self in "Christian Schools vs. Public Schools." As he quickly

discovered, though, negotiating his identity as an evangelical in his academic writing requires a complicated balancing act.

"Christian Schools vs. Public Schools"

In *Writing and Identity*, Roz Ivanič argues that "writing is an act of identity in which writers align themselves with interests [...], values, beliefs, practices and power relations through their discourse choices" (109). What becomes immediately apparent after reading the first paragraph of Austin's essay is that he is attempting to align himself with the values, beliefs, and practices associated with academic discourse. His first few lines introduce his topic in objective, impersonal terms. "Throughout the history of the United States," Austin writes, "Christianity in schools has been a significant part of its culture. However, during the past century, it has dwindled from the public school system." He's certainly drawing broad strokes here, but he's not saying anything that historians haven't argued (see Marsden, *Soul*). He goes on to say that "privately run Christian schools" were developed in part as an answer to the dwindling influence of Christianity in the public schools—a debatable idea, but one that could certainly be supported. By the end of his first paragraph, Austin moves appropriately from the general to the specific and offers his thesis: "Many argue that attending a Christian school takes away from an education, but because they are private learning [institutions], they are able to provide a stronger education while also teaching morals that students are able to apply to their lives outside of the classroom." Austin's thesis, written in the third person, forecasts the argument he will make: Christian schools provide a "stronger" education than their public counterparts because are private schools and they teach morals that are

applicable outside of the classroom. His objective voice, inclusion of a thesis statement, and use of subordination and the third person all signal that Austin is participating in and identifying himself with academic discourse.

For the most part, Austin is able to maintain his objective stance throughout the essay. He assiduously avoids the use of "I," and the personal experience he does incorporate into his essay is not his own but comes by way of interviews he conducted with other college students who had previously attended Christian schools. This represents a form of compartmentalization. Austin is certainly drawing on his evangelical identity to write this essay, but he is carefully avoiding any direct association with it. There are moments, however, when his language belies his evangelical identity. Such "Christianese" emerges as early as the second paragraph where Austin draws parallels between Christian and public schools. Though they "closely resemble" each other, he writes, the difference at a Christian school is that "prayer and faith in Jesus Christ is added." He goes on to say that homeroom usually includes a time of prayer where students "lift up their days to God." And prior to meals or athletic events, "teachers and students ask for God's blessing on the food" while "coaches and teams pray for God to strengthen them and for Him to receive the glory whether they win or lose." Though Austin is reporting on one of the key differences between Christian and public schools, the fact that he does not attribute this language to another source (or convey it using scare quotes) suggests that he identifies with such language and owns it for himself (Ivanič 190, 232).

The first argument Austin explores in his essay is largely an economic and pragmatic one. Because Christian schools are private institutions, he reasons, they tend to

be more selective and thus have better student-to-teacher ratios. Christian schools can afford students more "individualized attention" that can translate into success. In the same paragraph where Austin introduces this economic argument, he also cites a 2003 study that suggests that students with high levels of religious commitment score higher on academic achievement tests. Austin carries this idea into the next paragraph where he argues that private schools better equip students for college. To support this, Austin provides statistics related to the significant percentage of college students who graduated from private secondary schools. Other than the correlation between faith and academic success, though, Austin's argument through the first few pages largely centers on economic concerns. Likely, Austin selected this argument first so as to accommodate his audience's values. No doubt, his readers would value academic success. If Austin can make a convincing argument that Christian schools help students succeed because they are private schools, perhaps his audience will be more likely to accept his later arguments in favor of the faith-based perspectives promoted by such schools.

Halfway through his third page, Austin shifts his focus to a refutation of criticisms that have been leveled against Christian schools. The first critique he tackles is that Christian schools fail to teach alternative perspectives. He argues that they do teach competing views, including "the theory of evolution, the Big Bang theory, alternate religions, and secular views on Christian principles." They do so, he points out, by filtering them through biblical principles. Austin also argues that teaching multiple worldviews is essential to getting a "well rounded education," an argument that his intended audience would likely value. This part of his essay also reflects some of his initial attempts to process the class discussion in which Chris made his disparaging

comment. For instance, in our second interview—the one in which Austin and I first talked about how he might have responded to Chris—Austin said the following:

> I think people almost see Christians as unintelligent in that regard. Because we're so—it's almost like we're *so* conservative—and I'm not saying that in a bad way—I'm just saying that if, that it would be a good idea if we were to know our other—other sides of the argument. 'Cuz we're always told our side of the argument, and then all these other people are being taught both sides, and then we come out and just get absolutely torn apart.

What Austin attempts to do in his essay, then, is show that this is not necessarily the case—that students in Christian schools *do* understand multiple perspectives, including those that challenge the premises underlying evangelical Christianity.

Austin does this by citing interviews he conducted with other college students who previously attended Christian schools. Incorporating interview-based research into the essay was not something the assignment called for, but Austin felt that it would "make [his] argument stronger" if he "interviewed people who were knowledgeable on the topic." ("Cuz it's actual people," he explained. "It's not like just going and just Google searching it.") He mentions one student, for instance, who "stated that she was not only taught alternate theories to creation, but also exposed to the philosophy of other world religions." He then concludes that even though "these topics were not taught as truth, it still gave students an opportunity to understand different worldviews, thus providing the student with a well rounded education."

Austin uses more interview data to refute another criticism of Christian schools. He represents that critique as follows: "Some claim that students who are in Christian schools do not connect with the ideas being taught to them, making their schooling experience a waste of time." The perspective he's responding to here seems to be related to the cynicism he associates with Chris's in-class comment. To argue against this

61

perspective, Austin quotes from an interview he had with Sarah, another student at his university who attended a Christian secondary school. Although she does admit that she was "not one of the most enthusiastic people when it came to discovering the presence God had in [her] life," she eventually came to embrace the perspectives her Christian school was teaching. Austin writes, "When being exposed to the Bible and the morals taught be Jesus Christ, Sarah found that although they were irrelevant to her at the time, she later found that it was the driving force that turned her life around." To support this point, Austin quotes Sarah:

> I am so amazed with the work God has done in my life and He continues to amaze me everyday. Yes of course I have tough days where I screw up and take steps backwards or I feel like God isn't there, but He is and that is the reason I make it through my daily struggles and make it to my next step in life.

This language is similar to what Chris Anderson describes as "that of the fundamentalist, of the testimonial, of *Guideposts* magazine and Sunday morning television" (12). By citing this interview material without qualification, Austin aligns himself with language that is decidedly evangelical.

It is significant, though, that Austin never discusses his own experience attending a Christian school. The personal experience in his essay is not his own. It's all owned by someone else. Here's Austin explaining why:

> *Austin*: I felt like if I used personal experience, it would just be extremely biased. And by going and finding other people who went through Christian schools, it would just make my argument stronger. Cuz when you use "I," it's just—I could say anything.
>
> *Jeff*: Was that something your instructor talked about in class?
>
> *Austin*: It's just something I learned from writing papers unless it's a personal narrative. Don't use "I." Like, don't say, "I think," and things like that. It's just kinda—it just weakens your argument.

There is a sense for Austin, then, in which the practice of writing a research-based essay precludes one's own perspective. The subjectivity of the author is in question and ultimately threatens the integrity of an academic argument.

Such a perspective is, by many accounts, an outdated one in rhetcomp. Compositionists largely agree that complete objectivity is a myth and that even the most "academic" writing is informed by the subjectivity of the writer (Berlin, "Rhetoric"; Bizzell, *Academic*; Faigley). Valid as that conception of writing may be, it is not something that Austin concedes as he writes. In his estimation, academic writing should be objective. No "I." As I'll discuss in Chapters 3 and 5 below, this belief that the personal does not belong in academic writing—an assumption arrived at through socialization into academic discourse—plays a significant role in why evangelical students view their faith as irrelevant to academic writing. In the same way that Austin sees mentioning his personal faith as disruptive to his argument in his Christian Schools essay, Kimberly (Chapter 3) and Kathryn (Chapter 5) compartmentalize their faith from their academic writing. In Austin's case, it is not just the awareness of writing a schooled assignment that shaped how he wrote his essay. What loomed much larger for him were his purposes for writing, the most prominent of which centered on his desire to persuade a hostile audience to be more accepting of Christian schools.

Achieving that purpose—and balancing it with his desire to construct himself as an intelligent evangelical—proved more challenging for Austin than he imagined. After Austin had begun drafting his essay, he reflected on the process of writing it to that point. He confessed that it had been "a lot different than [he] thought it was going to be." Whereas he imagined the process of writing being similar to the kinds of experiences he

had while writing devotionally, drafting "Christian Schools" turned out to be "much more difficult than [he] thought." At the end of our fourth interview (which occurred a few days before the final paper was due), Austin talked about how difficult writing the essay had been: "Yeah, I almost feel everything I said in that last interview I've totally contradicted with this right now. I said, 'Oh, yes I think it'll be easy, really good to write about this paper.' And now I'm here saying, 'It's so hard! I can barely write this!'"

The problem seemed to involve several factors. One of those factors was invention or, as Austin put it, "finding coherent points to say why Christian schools are better [than public schools]." Of course, how Austin conceives of his argument—as a compare and contrast argument on a grand scale—no doubt plays a role in how difficult he finds it to come up with a cohesive argument. But throughout our interviews, what Austin identified as his biggest challenge in writing his essay had to do with inventing arguments in favor of Christian schools that would appeal to his audience. Here's what he said while he was still writing the paper:

> It's really hard because right now I feel like the things I'm saying in my paper are really watered down, and I don't want to do that. [...] I want to put, like, me in this paper, but this is, like, what I think. This is like, I want you guys to see, like, the love of Christ in me. I really, I love Christian schools because they teach this, but because you don't believe it, it's really hard to get that across to people. You know? [... T]hat's just the hardest part about it, is writing it for non-Christians. I was telling this to [my professor], saying, I want, I could go into really deep spiritual, theological things here, but I feel that that would really detract from my argument. Because [...] people would automatically say, "That's not true." You know, I'm trying to get at it in a way that's, that takes a biased view but not a forced, like, shove-it-in-your-face [view], because that's what a lot think that Christianity is very—it is very in your face, but in a way that's not like, in your face, but you have to believe this.

One senses the frustration Austin experienced in communicating with an audience who does not share his beliefs and values. Much of that frustration stems from the fact that

two of Austin's goals for writing his essay seem to be in conflict. On the one hand, he wants to convey a self that accords with his identity as an evangelical Christian. On the other hand, however, he fears that "go[ing] into really deep spiritual, theological things" "would really detract from [his] argument." What he is left with—what is available to him given the circumstances—is an argument that doesn't fully accord with his sense of self, one that he senses is "watered down."

One way of looking at this is to conclude that this is the reality students like Austin face. At some point, they will have to write for an audience that does not share their values and beliefs. If they desire to identify with or persuade that audience, there must be some compromise, some movement towards values they might not share. As rhetorician and philosopher Henry Johnstone reminds us, arguing—for the "open-minded person," at least—always entails the risk of "having [one's] belief or conduct altered" (3). Johnstone is certainly right. At the same time, Ivanič writes that students can "decide how far they will be true to themselves in appropriating [their readers'] values and meeting [their] expectations" (245). They can choose to accommodate their readers' values or resist them. Austin's concern was centered on the twin problem of how to identify with and persuade a non-Christian audience while remaining true to his evangelical calling and sense of self. In his own words, he wanted to write in terms his audience would understand without "taking away" from his own faith. Those purposes culminate in a paragraph towards the end of his essay where Austin cites a verse from the Old Testament book of Joshua, an instance of biblical citation that implicates his evangelical identity is significant ways.

Casuistic Stretching and the Freedom of Choice

As I have been arguing throughout this chapter, Austin's "Christian Schools vs. Public Schools" essay represents the convergence of multiple purposes. Two of the most significant goals include Austin's desire to 1) persuade his non-Christian audience to change their views about Christian schools and 2) convey a sense of self that corresponds to his evangelical identity. Regarding the second of these goals, Austin spoke on several occasions about his desire to cite the Bible in his essay. In the interview before Austin finished his Christian Schools essay, for example, he said the following:

> I think [citing the Bible] would bring a lot of weight to my paper. Because it's saying, like, this is what's in the Bible, and this is what Christian schools are doing, or—something along those lines. I'm not sure how I'm going to incorporate it. I don't even remember exactly what I was going to use it for.

Granted, there's a sense here in which Austin is citing the Bible to cite the Bible. He's doing what many first-year students do: coming up with the argument and then finding the evidence that supports it. Because he's citing a sacred text, though, Austin's move might be even more questionable. Many scholars would deride his move as mere proof-texting. And it certainly might be. He wrests a verse from its original context and uses it to support his own ends. By many definitions Austin is setting himself up to stretch the principle of the verse as forwarded by its original context to fit a radically different one.

At the same time, though, to dismiss Austin's biblical citation outright would be to overlook three key points. First, Austin chooses to cite the Bible because of his belief that doing so would bolster his argument, or, as he puts it, "would bring a lot of weight to my paper." Again, it is important to keep in mind that Austin had a sense of having to water down his argument because he felt he could not speak in theological terms. Citing the Bible was a way that Austin could substantiate his identity as a Bible-believing

evangelical Christian. Second, as I'll show, the biblical passage he cites allows him to

draw on a value he shares with his non-Christian audience. His focus on understanding

and appealing to his audience's values is an important consideration for writing

instructors. It is one I will return to in the conclusion to this chapter and in my final

chapter. Third and finally, in the process of citing the Bible casuistically, Austin is

shaping his own identity in ways that both accord with his evangelical sense of self and,

potentially, lead him away from it. To an extent, Austin is able to draw on a common

evangelical practice (that of biblical citation) in order to further his argument and even

appeal to a shared sense of values with his audience. At the same time, his citation of a

biblical text brings up significant questions about how he is positioning himself.

The verse Austin cites appears late in his paper and comes from the New

International Version of the Old Testament book of Joshua:

> In the Bible, it states that it is in your own free will that you choose to
> believe or not believe in God's Word. In the book of Joshua in the Old
> Testament of the Bible, Joshua, one of the leaders of the Israelites at
> around 1200 B.C., states, "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to
> you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (The Holy
> Bible, Joshua 24.15). As said in the Bible, God does not force people into
> believing in what He says. Since Christian schools are based upon the
> Bible they should follow the same criteria and not force these ideas on
> their students.

It's important to note from the outset that Austin demonstrates a healthy sense of respect

for his audience. The manner in which he introduces Joshua 24.15 suggests that he

understands his readers may not know that Joshua appears in the Old Testament, or even

that the Old Testament is part of the Christian Bible. But there's a deeper understanding

of audience here, one that is evidenced by the principle undergirding the verse he cites.

That principle can be understood as one of human free will. The warrant underlying

Austin's argument in this paragraph could be stated something like this: *People ought to*

be free to choose what they believe. Or it could be stated in negative terms: *It is bad to force people to believe something*. The value he's drawing on here—that freedom of choice is good, even when it involves (not) choosing a religion or particular belief—is one that has traction in both his evangelical and academic communities of practice.

Indeed, Austin often spoke about his belief that people can't be forced to believe. This is a principle Austin derived from his own life. In our first interview, for example, Austin noted that neither God nor his parents forced him to adopt a certain set of beliefs, arguing instead that human free will is God given. In a later interview, Austin draws a correlation between coercive force and resistance:

> God doesn't force us to believe. [...I]t's almost naturally, when we're told to believe something, told to do something, we don't want to do it. But because my parents were very—they let me figure out my own faith. And I found Jesus on my own. Like, my parents were very encouraging.

Austin attributes a similar kind of freedom of belief to his experience attending a Christian school. In his words, faith "was never forced on us." He continues:

> We had a Bible class, but it was like you can—people weren't shoving down, like, "Oh, you, if you're not a Christian, you're not good enough." And some parents were like that. And, like, some parents I know really turned off kids in my class from actually becoming Christians or wanting to explore further, just because they're just these Bible thumping Christians, that were just so—like, they were the people that turned people away from Christianity. Which is sad. 'Cuz it's like, we're supposed to act like Jesus, and that's not how Jesus would act.

At one point in our interviews, Austin talked about his belief that evangelism should be modeled after Jesus's life and teaching. He admitted to being frustrated with the fact that people wouldn't convert after he told them about Jesus—the kind of evangelism that Kevin Roose in *The Unlikely Disciple* calls "cold turkey evangelism" (148). After attending a conference on evangelism, Austin realized that he had to model himself after Jesus, who "came down onto people's radars, into people's levels of

understanding." By way of example, Austin mentioned the scene in the Gospel of John where Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well. Austin told me that Jesus "moved down onto her level. He spoke to her, like, not [as] this high and mighty rabbi." That realization shifted Austin's style of evangelism to one that emphasizes connection and friendship. It also influenced how he wrote his "Christian Schools" essay.

> And that's what I was trying to do in an academic setting. I really wanted to portray my faith in an academic way but it didn't take away from—it's, like, I didn't wanna say like, "You read the Bible and you'll be okay." [...] But I tried to portray my faith in an academic way, and that's difficult because I've never really done that before.

Austin's emphasis on the freedom of choice is held in tension by another motive, namely the desire to see all of humanity come to know Jesus Christ as savior. Austin articulated this desire when reflecting on Jesus' crucifixion:

> He was pleading for the forgiveness of the Roman soldiers who were persecuting him, just saying, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." I look at that now and it's just so piercing. And just how, no matter what you do, Jesus is up there praying for you, saying, "God, please, just forgive these people. Save them." I feel Jesus gives that to us as Christians to be praying for those who don't know Him, and just knowing that if they aren't saved, they are going to the worst place imaginable. It breaks my heart. I don't want to see that happen to anybody.

The use of "you" here is significant because it signifies a mode of witnessing. Austin wasn't referring to me, his interviewer, but rather to "you" in a much, much broader sense—presumably, all who have not accepted Christ. This "you" is signified by the terms "all" and "them" in the poem he shared with me that I cited earlier. Austin writes, "Lord shine Your light so *all* can see" and later adds, "Lord You're the only one that can save *them*" (emphasis added). The idea that Christ is the only means of salvation for humanity, a possibility expressed by John 14.6, is a central concept of evangelicalism. It is also a central component of Austin's evangelical identity. At various times, Austin

articulated this desire as part of his identity as a college student. During our first interview, for instance, when Austin was reflecting on the evangelism conference he had recently attended, he said, "we just came back to campus just so on fire to go and just tell everyone on campus. Like, being bold about Jesus."

This potential conflict of purposes—that people should be free to choose to believe or not believe and that evangelicalism emphasizes the belief that Jesus Christ is the sole means of salvation—emerges as a series of subtle shifts in focus that occur in his writing immediately before the paragraph where he cites Joshua 24.15. In leading up to this paragraph, Austin is making the point that Christian schools teach more than just Creationism. They teach multiple perspectives, including evolution, in order to provide a balanced education. Again, this focus on a balanced education is one of Austin's central claims as to why Christian schools are better than public. In the first line of the paragraph in question, Austin seems to be making sure his audience knows where he and his conception of Christian schools stand: "Creationism is always taught to be true and the Bible is the Word of God." He's declaring what he believes, reminding his readers that, amongst the various perspectives, this is the one he holds to be true. Austin is taking a stand, but because he knows his audience will not be impressed by any claims to the veracity of the Bible, he immediately shifts to an audience-based appeal in the second sentence: "Even though these things are regarded as truth, students are never forced to believe them." He knows his audience would not value coercion, indoctrination, or brainwashing, especially when it comes to matters of belief.

In citing Joshua 24.15, Austin uses a verse that allows him to appeal both to his sense of identity and purpose as an evangelical *and* to his audience, who, in Austin's

70

estimation, would value the freedom to choose, especially in matters of religious belief. In other words, he's able to meet his readers' values, based as they are on pluralism and free will, with his own evangelical values, based as they are on the Bible and his relationship with God. There is, then, a significant moment of convergence in his essay when he is able to invent an argument that shares a premise with both his evangelical and academic communities of practice—that it's not good to be forced into believing anything. Given the often-contrary nature of the relationship between academic and evangelical epistemologies (Anderson; Barrett; Brummett; Carter, "Living"; Dively, "Religious"; Perkins), this common ground is significant. To an extent, using this verse from Joshua allows Austin to exist in both communities. It validates his sense of self as an evangelical who is attempting to identify with a non-Christian audience; it creates space for him to identify with both communities in non-threatening ways.

Equally important, there's something rhetorically powerful, even masterful, about what Austin accomplishes in citing Joshua 24.15. In addition to drawing on a value he knows he shares with his non-Christian audience, what's particularly powerful about this move is that Austin is able to find a way in which his readers might be able to identify with him—to envision, if only for a moment, that reader and writer are consubstantial (Burke, *Rhetoric* 22). By using Joshua 24.15 to make his case, Austin invites his readers to see the value of free will through a biblical lens. He's allowing his audience space to identify with a sacred text that represents much of the authority of the Christian tradition and much of the basis of his own evangelicalism. In this way, citing Joshua 24.15 allows Austin to achieve several of his purposes. He is able to identify with his audience by

appealing to a value he shares with them while conveying an evangelical self by engaging

in a practice his evangelical community would value, that of biblical citation.

At the same time, the fact that Austin is wresting a single verse out of context

brings into question the legitimacy of the way he uses his evidence to support his

argument. The likely question for rhetcomp scholars to ask has to do with the contextual

and historical situatedness of this verse. To what extent is Joshua 24.15 forwarding the

same principle that Austin purports to be drawing on? Joshua 24.15 is part of a larger

story in which the Old Testament character Joshua convinces the tribes of Israel to

abandon the many gods they had worshipped in Egypt and turn back to Yahweh alone.

Joshua tells this by appealing to the collective memory of the Israelites. He recounts

significant moments when the God of Israel worked on behalf of the Israelites—leading

Abraham to the land of Canaan, sending Moses and Aaron to help deliver the Israelites

from Egypt, helping the Israelites defeat various enemies, including the Amorites. What's

particularly interesting, though, is that Joshua speaks this history as if he were speaking

for God, preceding his recounting of these events with, "This is what the Lord, the God

of Israel, says" (NIV, Josh 24.2). The recitation of significant events is wrapped in

quotation marks. The "I" that speaks represents the God of Israel speaking through

Joshua.

It's also interesting to note that Austin doesn't include the entirety of Joshua's

declaration, which reads as follows:

> Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the
> gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and
> serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then
> choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods
> your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in

whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve
the Lord. (NIV, Josh 24.14-15)

Joshua begins by issuing a command to follow the Lord and abandon the other gods and

ends with his own family's declaration, that they will serve Yahweh. It doesn't seem too

much of a stretch to say that Joshua had quite a bit of ethos. Not only was he the leader of

the Israelites, but he had just spoken on behalf of God. Thus for him to declare that he

and his family will serve Yahweh indicates that he wasn't as much offering a choice as he

was saying, "You should choose to serve God." By speaking as God, Joshua stacks the

deck *against* choosing not to believe. Following from Burke's notion that there is an

"*objective* difference" between saying something in the name of God as opposed to

nature (*Rhetoric* 6, original emphasis), the argument could be made that Joshua was not

actually offering a choice here. In fact, Joshua's audience unanimously agreed to serve

and obey Yahweh, a decision that was sealed by a covenant (see Josh 24.16-27).

Therein lays the rub. There's a significant difference between the kind of choice

that Joshua 24.15 offers and the kind of choice that Austin promotes for his secular

readers. That difference can be understood in terms of what Kenneth Burke calls

"casuistic stretching," which I defined earlier as a process in which someone "introduces

new principles while theoretically remaining faithful to old principles" (*Attitudes* 229).

Though Burke sees casuistic stretching as present in all language, he also writes that there

are versions of casuistic stretching that are more impure than others. According to Burke,

casuistry is pure when the different purposes its enactment seeks to fulfill are more alike

than not (*Rhetoric* 155). However, when there is a significant disparity between the

purposes or between the new and original principles, the degree to which one must

stretch the original principle increases. Burke calls such casuistic stretching impure and

notes that it comes at a potentially high cost, namely demoralization away from the original principle (*Attitudes* 229).

Perhaps Burke's concept of casuistic stretching is best illustrated by way of example. Inscribed on the Dimond Library at the University of New Hampshire, one can find the words, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (NIV, Jn 8.32). The words are attributed to Jesus. Contextually, the original principle that Jesus is getting at centers on a particular kind of truth and its related freedoms: Jesus is presenting himself as the truth. Knowing me, Jesus tells the Jews to whom he is speaking, you will also know my Father, who is God. And if you know me, then you know the truth, and you will be free from the burdens of sin and of the law. In short, Jesus is making a claim regarding his own authority and the ability of the truth he represents to set people free. When one considers the principle that is communicated by inscribing Jesus' words on a university library, a much different picture emerges. The thinking seems to be something along the lines of this: If you study the knowledge that is in this library, you will be free to think for yourself. There's a kind of Enlightenment-style appeal here, one that might be summed up well by Kant's use of the Latin phrase *Sapere Aude!*, which translates as "dare to know" or "have courage to use your own understanding." There's a much different appeal at work. In the original, Jesus points to his own authority as the Son of God. In the new use of the verse, the idea is most likely taken as a challenge to traditional authority—perhaps even the authority represented by Christianity. At the least, the appeal is to a different kind of authority—the kind of authority possessed by individuals who have the courage to think for themselves.

Like the library's inscription of John 8.32, Austin's citation of Joshua 24.15 casuistically stretches the original principle of the verse to the point where it is largely unrecognizable. The difference between "one has the freedom to choose" and "one should choose to serve the Christian God" is significant. Austin's casuistic stretching may not quite represent what Burke would call a "perversion of casuistry" (*Rhetoric* 154), but the distance between the original and new principles is significant. To achieve the multiple purposes he has in "Christian Schools vs. Secular Schools," Austin stretches the original principle to encompass a new one, one that doesn't match up well with the original. Austin certainly appeals to a value he believes his audience espouses, but he does so at a cost. To be sure, academic writers often cite brief passages out of context to establish some form of meaningful connection. Epigraphs like the ones I have used at the beginning of each chapter are a common example. This is not the way Austin uses Joshua 24.15, though. The citation appears in the middle of his paper in a paragraph in which he's arguing that Christian schools do not force students to believe. He's citing Joshua 24.15 not as ornamentation for his argument but as support for it, as evidence.

I noted above that Burke sees casuistic stretching as leading to demoralization. By "demoralization," Burke means an undermining of the morals or principles that an individual or a group holds. In *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke discusses demoralization in terms of the kind of compromise necessary in parliamentary debate, noting that the term is as "dyslogistic" as the derogatory act of "[h]orse-trading" (187). The result of casuistic stretching is thus a distancing from one's original principle, value, or belief. In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke equates casuistic stretching with latitudinarianism, a term that refers specifically to Anglicans in the seventeenth century who stretched church doctrine

in order to accommodate dissenters. More broadly, the term refers to a wide tolerance or latitude of views and opinions. Casuistic stretching leads to demoralization because it represents a movement away from an original principle or belief.

What bearing does this have on Austin's identity and how he negotiates it in his academic writing? In casuistically stretching Joshua 24.15 to encompass a value he believes his audience espouses, Austin aligns himself with a pluralistic principle that effectually demoralizes him from a belief that rests at the center of his identity as an evangelical Christian, namely the belief that salvation comes through belief in Jesus Christ. As Austin put it in the poem I cited earlier, "Lord[,] you're the only one that can save them." Granted, Austin does believe that people need to be free to choose, but he also believes that choosing Christ is necessary for salvation. There's an impasse here, one that pits Austin and his evangelical belief against the pluralist perspective that it is okay not to choose to believe in Christ. In citing Joshua 24.15 the way he does, Austin accommodates the perspective held by his audience, and he does so in a way that leaves open the possibility for seeing his own faith in latitudinarian terms—a prospect that would be troubling for many evangelicals.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that Austin's citation of Joshua 24.15 is rhetorically savvy. This is because Austin provides his audience the opportunity to identify with a sacred text that, according to his reading of it, allows for the freedoms of belief and of choice. He's inviting his audience to see an Old Testament passage in terms of a value that they hold as non-believers and as opponents of religious education. The problem is that this act cuts both ways. In the same way that Austin invites his audience to see Joshua 24.15 in terms of the freedom (not) to choose, he must also see this text in

that way. Put slightly otherwise, Austin's attempts to persuade his audience result in the possibility of self-persuasion. The new way of seeing that Austin has developed implicates his faith and potentially contradicts his belief that salvation comes solely through belief in Christ.

Chapter Conclusion

I began this chapter by discussing the dualism that Austin enacted in the title of his essay, "Christian Schools vs. Secular Schools." I'd like to close this chapter by suggesting that Austin's casuistic citation of Joshua 24.15 indicates a movement away from what William G. Perry, Jr. calls "basic duality." In *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, Perry defines basic duality as a position in which "a person construes all issues of truth and morality in terms of a sweeping and unconsidered differentiation between in-group vs. out-group" (59). In Austin's terms, people align themselves with Christian schools or with secular schools; they are either saved through faith in Christ or remain unsaved. By accommodating his audience's perspective regarding the choice to follow Jesus Christ—or, in this case, *not* to follow Christ—Austin has stretched the latitude of his belief. Thus, although he set out to defend Christian schools as a better choice than their non-Christian counterparts, he concurrently opens up a question that has much larger soteriological implications, namely the question of whether or not Jesus Christ is, to cite the biblical text often cited by evangelicals, "the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14.6).

He does this through accommodating and even forwarding a pluralistic perspective. As Perry explains, it is an individual's encounter with pluralism that can lead

to the question of whether or not absolute truth exists (68). That questioning is not one in which students will immediately abandon a dualistic perspective for a relativistic one. Perry writes that dualism "is first modified and loosened by a series of accommodations necessitated by its assimilation of the pluralism of both peer group and curriculum" (61). These accommodations lead individuals to acknowledge what Perry calls the "potential of legitimacy in otherness," the view that there are legitimate perspectives other than one's own (64, 71). Interestingly, Perry and his researchers found that initial encounters with such pluralism occurred not in academic contexts but in social settings such as dormitories (69). Of course, what I've been discussing in this chapter is Austin's encounter with pluralistic perspectives in his FYW course. And yet, this academic setting had distinct social overtones. In writing his essay, Austin is seeking to work out ways of responding to and identifying with his non-Christian peers. He wants to persuade them toward his point of view, but, as he does so, he is hyperaware of his performance of self. The social significance of "Christian Schools vs. Secular Schools" cannot be overstated.

In short, I'm suggesting that Austin's writing of "Christian Schools vs. Secular Schools" coincides with a tension he faces as an evangelical Christian in a public university setting. That tension has its source in the confrontation between the worldview he espouses as an evangelical Christian—a worldview that, as his poem demonstrates, embraces a clear distinction between right and wrong, sin and salvation—and the pluralistic perspective he must address in his secular, academic context. It is unclear as to which position on Perry's scheme Austin was shifting, though the likely possibility would be a version of multiplicity or early relativism. Based on his strong identification with his essay even after writing it, though, Austin seemed to be unaware that he had

accommodated his audience's pluralistic values at all. What seems evident, though, is

that his Christian Schools essay, with its casuistic stretching of Joshua 24.15,

demonstrates movement away from dualism and its concomitant claim to absolute truth.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN: FAITH IN KIMBERLY'S SCHOOLED
WRITING

"God plays a major role in English 101 every time I walk through the
door."
—Kimberly on her FYW course

"I just don't see the place for it."
—Kimberly on faith and schooled writing

Kimberly and Austin share several similarities. They're both first-year college

students enrolled in their university's FYW course, and they both identify as evangelical

Christians. They belong to the same evangelical campus ministry and, together with

many other students from that group, attend the same nondenominational evangelical

church near campus. As evangelicals, both also place a premium on participating

regularly in practices aimed at helping them become better Christians. They have daily

quiet times or private devotions. They pray with others when the opportunity arises, lead

Bible studies, and desire to live morally pure lives. They're also both involved in their

university's Greek system. Kimberly decided to pledge a sorority during her second

semester of college, and, like Austin, sees her involvement in the Greek system as an

opportunity for evangelism. Along with Austin, Kimberly belongs to an evangelical

campus organization that has the specific aim of spreading the Christian gospel to the

Greek system. Like Austin, then, Kimberly often talked about the challenges associated

with being an evangelical Christian in an environment where her values and beliefs are

frequently put to the test.

That may be where their similarities end. While Austin is a white male who grew up in the South and Northeast, Kimberly is a student of color who was raised by her grandparents in Jamaica before moving to the northeastern United States to live with her single mother. And their experiences as evangelicals in FYW courses are quite different. These differences are apparent in their schooled writing. Whereas Austin sought ways to integrate explicitly his evangelical beliefs and identity into his schooled writing, Kimberly refrained from doing so. On the surface, her schooled writing bears little to no trace of her religious identity. That's not to say, though, that Kimberly's faith does not matter to her schooled writing and her academic practice. It does, and it's precisely the way in which her faith matters to and is implicated by her schooled writing that I'd like to explore in this chapter.

At the heart of my exploration in this chapter is a contradiction that seemed to emerge from my interviews with Kimberly. That contradiction is evidenced in the two epigraphs that open this chapter. The first quote, "God plays a major role in English 101 every time I walk through the door," appeared in the letter Kimberly wrote prior to our second interview. She addressed the letter to her instructor and used the opportunity to tell her professor about how her faith informs her academic practice in FYW. At one point in the letter, Kimberly writes that her "growth as a writer" has been "a definite journey," one in which her faith has played "a big part." Later in the letter, she even goes so far as to attribute her success as a writer to her faith: "I will not take the credit because I owe it all to God. He has strengthened and molded me into the writer that I need to be." In a later interview, though, when I asked Kimberly about the role her faith might have played in her researched persuasive essay—an essay about a controversial vaccine that

encompassed potentially rich territory to explore in terms of her evangelical faith—she admitted that she "just [didn't] see the place for it."

In this chapter, I'll discuss Kimberly's schooled writing in terms of this contradiction. I'll do so by considering the metaphor of sight that she invokes. While Kimberly "sees" her faith as significant to every aspect of her life, she consistently has a difficult time "seeing" how her faith matters to and is implicated by her schooled writing. In this way, she seems to have developed what Kenneth Burke refers to as a "trained incapacity," a "state of affairs" in which "one's very abilities can function as blindnesses" (*Permanence* 7). She's an adept student writer, but, in the process of learning to write academically, she has been conditioned to compartmentalize her faith from her academic writing. Unfortunately, Kimberly's FYW course only served further to reify her belief that religious perspectives are suspect when it comes to schooled writing.

Despite this compartmentalization, Kimberly's faith, because it is such an integral part of her sense of self, does influence her schooled writing. To borrow Nancy Welch's term, Kimberly's evangelical identity is *excessive*. Thus, despite her best efforts, her evangelical identity emerges in subtle ways in the two essays I'll discuss—a personal essay called "The Discovery" and a persuasive essay called "HPV Vaccine Prevents Cancer." As such, convergence exists between Kimberly's evangelical and academic trajectories. Because of this, Kimberly's evangelical identity is also implicated in both essays. I'll first discuss "The Discovery" and then move to "HPV Vaccine Prevents Cancer."

Faith and "The Discovery": The Evidence of Things Not Seen

Kimberly wrote "The Discovery" to fulfill a standard FYW assignment, a personal essay in which Kimberly was supposed to, in her words, "just track how—your growth, basically. Just your journey from what you were before compared to after." Specifically, the assignment called for students to select and write about a 15-minute experience that somehow transformed them. The moment Kimberly explores is an experience meeting a young, hearing-impaired boy named Stephen while volunteering at an elementary school. She opens the essay by describing a busy scene in the school cafeteria. It's there that she spies "a figure sitting alone at the far end of the cafeteria" who was wearing "an undersized Spiderman shirt and faded navy blue sweatpants." Kimberly then describes Stephen's deafness:

> I sat across from his unopened boxed milk, while his eyes shot lasers into the ground. Without emotion he gave me a quick glance, and returned his gaze upon the tiled floor. "So, what's your name?" I asked with a cheerful, bouncy tone. No response. "I hear these are the best oatmeal cookies on the market!" No response. Dimming my voice to a casual tone I inquired, "Are you on timeout?" Once again more silence.

Kimberly is "mildly confused" by Stephen's stony reaction until a teacher informs her that the boy is deaf. She describes her sense of shock, followed by a "flush of emotion and sympathy" as she "tried to imagine this boy's solitude." She ends up painting with Stephen, an activity they both enjoy and that allows them to communicate without speaking. The result is mutually positive: Kimberly grows excited as they paint and, once they're finished, Stephen beams "a wide smile on his face and delight in his eyes."

In her essay, Kimberly also flashes back to two experiences she associates with meeting Stephen. The first is an encounter in fifth grade with Karina, a hearing-impaired classmate who lashed out because Kimberly was staring at her hearing aid in class. The

second is an instance when Kimberly's mother called her "deaf and dumb" after a moment of disobedience that resulted in several broken dishes. All three of these experiences allow Kimberly to reflect on the extent to which prejudice toward the hearing impaired influences her and society. By the end of her essay, she is able to conclude that meeting Stephen has helped her better understand that the "words that are used to identify and label us can never override the spirit within us." This is because "the diversity in all of us [...] makes us similar."

On the surface, "The Discovery" likely would not strike readers as distinctly evangelical. Kimberly certainly does not write in a way that signals anything contrary to evangelicalism, but her evangelical identity does not emerge explicitly at any point in her essay. Her faith does play an implicit, motivational role in "The Discovery," though. At the beginning of our third interview, I asked Kimberly to write for ten minutes about how or if her identity as an evangelical influenced how she wrote "The Discovery." I also asked her to reflect on what this essay meant to her as an evangelical Christian. Here's her response, with surface errors emended for ease of reading:

> The essay touches on an experience that opened the avenue for so much more than expected. Being a Christian, I try to love everyone regardless of anything. The boldness that I had in the first paragraph was just me stepping out on faith and knowing that God would guide me through the situation. The emotions experienced were all guided by the values I hold as a Christian. I was able to humble myself and empathize—trying to feel what Stephen himself felt. This essay shows the depth of not judging others even at first glance. Being a Christian the importance of that is essential to our worth as believers of God. God is the only authority that could judge and taking that into our own hands makes us flawed. There is so much human pain that people do not care to see or be open to. This essay demonstrated the approach I take on a daily basis on campus.

From this freewrite, it's clear that Kimberly sees her personal essay as shaped by her faith, namely the Christian values of universal love, humility, empathy for the marginalized, stepping out on faith, and withholding of judgment.

Though Kimberly does see the connections between her faith and her personal essay, this was not something she was thinking about while she was writing her essay. When I asked Kimberly if she was aware of the relationship between her faith and her writing of "The Discovery," she responded as follows:

> *Kimberly*: Not when writing it. Looking back on it. But I guess it's probably just the subconscious of the value that I have as a Christian to not judge others and to approach the situation being open to whatever they have to offer.
>
> *Jeff*: So even if you weren't thinking about [your faith] specifically, because this is kind of who you are, that was kind of coming out.
>
> *Kimberly*: Yeah. Mm-hmmm.

Kimberly reiterates two of the values she holds as part of her evangelical identity—not judging others and maintaining openness to the possibility that everyday experiences might be infused by the divine. What's also significant is the fact that she sees these values as subconsciously shaping her actions. Her evangelical identity is such a central part of her sense of self that it shapes the way she interacts with Stephen and constructs her discoursal self in "The Discovery." Even more important, though, the values that Kimberly espouses as part of her evangelical identity are what *allow* her to write a successful personal essay. In identity terms, Kimberly's evangelical background attitudinally predisposes her to inhabit a subject position of transformation that, as I'll discuss below, is characteristic of personal essay assignments.

In saying this, I do not mean that what Kimberly is doing in her essay is distinctly evangelical. The kinds of moves she makes could certainly be made by a non-evangelical

Christian or, for that matter, by someone who espouses a different faith or no faith at all. What I am say is that the values Kimberly espouses as an evangelical match up to the values she is expected to embrace in her personal essay. This is what I mean by convergence. Given that much of the discussion about evangelical identity and discourse focuses on how such students' values differ from those of academic discourse (Anderson; Anson; Brummett; Dively, "Religious"), identifying such moments of convergence is significant. What Kimberly values as an evangelical helps her inhabit a subject position that academic readers value in personal essays.

Kimberly's "Turn"

In *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*, Thomas Newkirk argues that writing instructors often have an implicit set of criteria regarding which subjectivities they will "take seriously" in personal essay writing (11). Newkirk writes,

> In order to construct this subjectivity, the student writer needs to negotiate convincing "turns" in the writing, shifts from rendering to reflection that point to the "significance" (a key word in personal essay assignments) of the experience being rendered. It is a way of dealing with the "so what?" question—what meaning does this have for the reader? (12)

In "The Dogma of Transformation," Newkirk argues that personal essay assignments often ask for a "turn" that invite students "to view their self-development as a series of pivotal moments that result in qualitative changes in their value systems or identities" (264). He goes on to say that the pedagogies underlying these assignments exhibit a kind of "developmental anxiety" and "often call upon religious language to describe the changes a composition course should promote" (265). Such religious language, including terms like "conversion" and "redemption," are often attached to utopian ideals of a hoped-for society (265). In *Performance*, Newkirk explains that such transformation

positions students within a certain set of parameters regarding which subject positions are acceptable. What's unacceptable is an essay in which students fail to reflect on how they change in relation to a particular situation. As long as the writer attempts to make "reflexive turns" to position herself as having "achieved a measure of self-understanding and moral growth" (13), then even shocking disclosures (such as shooting horses for fun) can be redeemed.

In many ways, Kimberly's essay is a textbook example of the turn. For one thing, her title, "The Discovery," suggests that Kimberly has learned something new about herself and her world. As she put it, the title highlights her process of "discovering [...] what was wrong with Karina, what was wrong with Stephen, and how that played into a discovery of my own self." Thus Kimberly uses the essay to explore her own sense of guilt in how she responded to two different experiences with the hearing-impaired. In doing so, she performs the kind of self she is expected to perform: she shows herself as open to change and inhabits the subjectivity of someone who is "open to the potentially transforming effects of a life sensitively encountered" (Newkirk 13). There's an ideological move here, and Kimberly has been subsumed within it. But it's an ideology of the self with which she willingly identifies. When I asked her, for example, if she is comfortable with the kind of self she conveys at the end of the essay, she answered with an emphatic "Definitely."

> [S]ometimes I just go to the dining hall by myself and planning to eat alone and then I see someone sitting alone and I approach them. And sometimes I think, you know, what wouldn't I get from this person if I just went and sat by myself like I intended to anyway? Sometimes I just learn so much. And I feel like people have a way of revealing more to strangers than probably [to] their friends. Probably because they will never see me again in a sea of 14,000 kids. But, and, you know, sometimes there are similarities, sometimes there's not. Like, I don't initially go seeking out a

friendship, just to sit and talk to someone and just to see how their day is going or understand where they're coming from.

Kimberly doesn't mention her faith here specifically. In fact, she told me that she never brings up the Bible or Christianity in these encounters because, like Austin, she espouses a form of evangelicalism that emphasizes relationship and connection over "cold turkey evangelism" (Roose 148; see also Webber, *Younger*). Though she is eager to talk with people about her faith, she doesn't want to alienate anyone by coming across as an overzealous Bible thumper. At the same time, these encounters are related to her faith and her identity as an evangelical:

> I feel like a lot of times I just step out on faith and see what happens. And just the result of stepping out on faith, it's just this whole new relationship, and a whole new perspective and point of view for me to just see how awesome [Stephen] was. And a lot of times [...] when I'm in certain situations, I'm like, God, allow me to humble myself and step into this situation and not, you know, think [myself] higher than anyone else. I feel like I try to empathize and try to see how [others are] viewing the world.

In describing how she negotiates these encounters, Kimberly circles back to some of the values that she named in her freewrite about "The Discovery," including humility, boldness, and empathy. She discusses these values in terms related to her faith. Regarding her desire not to think herself "higher than anyone else," Kimberly alludes to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans: "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith God has assigned" (12.3). She's also echoing Paul's Letter to the Philippians: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (2.3-4). The fact that she e terms from her evangelical community of practice to discuss a form of participation in her academic

88

community of practice (e.g., writing an essay for her FYW class) indicates the presence of convergence. Kimberly's evangelical and academic trajectories are intertwined, whether she is aware of it or not.

The inseparability of these two trajectories emerges in the actual turns she makes in her essay. The first turn occurs after she has recounted her experience with Karina. She makes the turn somewhat abruptly, with no transition, and does so by quoting a sentence from Thomas J. Gerschick's essay, "Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender," which she read for a Women's Studies course the previous semester. The sentence she quotes reads as follows: "The greatest impediment to a person's taking full part in this society are not his physical flaws, but rather the issue of myths, fears, and misunderstanding that society attaches to them" (186). Kimberly uses a standard academic move to initiate the turn: after presenting her experience, she uses theory in the form of an expert voice to reflect back on that experience. She does this in a way that signals she identifies with the values and beliefs that Gerschick promotes (Ivanič 216). In an interview, she commented further on her decision to cite an academic text in her personal essay:

> I was just skimming through [Gerschick's] chapter [...], and it just stood out to me that, because of the preconceived notions we have towards people, they're not able to fully participate in life because of our hindrance of them. Or our cap on their capabilities. And just something that [in school] in looking back at how Stephen—if I had treated him how [...] his other teachers may have treated him, or Ms. Jones was treating him—I wouldn't have been able to see what he was capable of and discover all that he had to offer.

Given that Kimberly is an occupational therapy major who is concerned with peoples' abilities, her identification with Gerschick's essay makes sense.

But it also makes sense because Kimberly identifies as an evangelical Christian who has a well-honed sensibility towards recognizing the ways in which she has—and

here I cite a verse that evangelicals often cite—"sinned and fall[en] short of the glory of God" (Ro 3.23). This sensibility is something she alludes to when she uses the term "flawed" in the freewrite I cited above. It's also something that she talked about in relation to her reading of Gerschick's essay. In fact, she admitted that his essay "hit [her] from an uncomfortable angle." When I asked her why, she said the following:

> *Kimberly*: Because I'm guilty of it myself.
>
> *Jeff*: Guilty of?
>
> *Kimberly*: Of the whole myths and fears and not—like, with the whole Karina incident. That came to me. And maybe as her classmates, being in fifth grade, we were thinking, oh—because it was my first time, you know, sitting with her, until I wanted to go discover [the hearing aid] she was hiding. So that aspect of it. And just like, oh, I'm guilty of this myself. And just the whole Stephen experience changed that.

Newkirk recognizes guilt as part of the turn. One sees the error of one's ways and then performs a self that represents a turning away from that flawed, selfish, thoughtless, or unaware self (*Performance* 14). In Kimberly's case, her guilt had its source in realizing that she had participated in the same "myths and fears" that Gerschick names.

This sense of guilt carries over into her conclusion to the essay. In her final two paragraphs, she adopts a confessional, reflective voice to discuss how the situation meeting Stephen helped her come to a new understanding of her world and her own subjectivity within it. "What surprised me," she admits, "was the prejudice around me and especially within me." She talked more about this in our third interview:

> *Kimberly*: Just, just the prejudice that—like, with my mom, and—or just, being on campus, I feel like I do have to word choice people a lot.
>
> *Jeff*: You do have to what?
>
> *Kimberly*: Word choice people. Like, when they say "retarded" or "that's so stupid," you—I'll just say something along the lines of maybe choose another word [...].
>
> *Jeff*: I gotcha.

> *Kimberly*: And, yeah, and within me. Just, like, sometimes I do have to
> step within myself before I use those words also. And that's just my whole
> experience with ablism, being here and writing this essay. Because
> initially, I did it. In high school, I did it. A couple weeks [into] college, I
> did it. Just the weight that's behind those words.

There's something of an evangelical tendency in "word choicing" people—having the boldness in social settings to rebuke offensive uses of language and to prompt people to use words that are more politically correct. Equally important, the sermonic repetition of "I did it" in the last few lines of what Kimberly says announces a highly confessional motive that underpins the way in which Kimberly concludes her essay. She is using her writing of "The Discovery" as a way to reflect critically on a practice in which she had engaged that she felt did not match up with her ideals as an evangelical Christian or as a socially-aware student for whom being politically correct matters.

Guilt and Repentance

Some compositionists may be uncomfortable with acknowledging the role that guilt seems to have played in how Kimberly wrote her personal essay. In fact, Priscilla Perkins alludes to a similar concern when she writes that "[t]he notion of 'repentance'"—the evangelical Christian's response to guilt—"has no place [...] in a progressive writing pedagogy" (597). This is because, in Perkins' estimation, repentance "implies a remorseful turning away from disobedience rather than an active embrace of unfamiliar possibilities" (597). And, in many ways, Perkins is right: Christian repentance often entails a good deal of remorse. Her claim, though, that remorse is necessarily bad or that it precludes the "active embrace of unfamiliar possibilities" merits critique.

Elizabeth Vander Lei and Donald R. Hettinga raise such a critique in their response to Perkins' essay. Though Perkins attempts to value the worldviews of

fundamentalist Christian students, Vander Lei and Hettinga point out that, by dismissing repentance, Perkins rules out a doctrine that is "central to the Christian faith" (721). This leads them to raise important questions:

> [Can Perkins] fairly conclude that she has made enough room for the faith of her students? Does her assertion about repentance represent a willingness to read through another's reality, or, as it seems to us, does it suggest Perkins's commitment to an ideological absolute? (721)

Later in their response, Vander Lei and Hettinga wonder what might result "if Perkins *did* allow her students' understanding of repentance into her classroom" (722, original emphasis). They suggest that doing so might open up possibilities for fundamentalist Christian students like the one Perkins discusses to engage productively with "the interplay of humility and hope" that is central to their faith and to the progressive writing classroom (722). In short, Vander Lei and Hettinga argue that "students' faith, unaltered, could help them imagine themselves as writers" (722).

I'd like to suggest that Kimberly exemplifies this. Her faith is precisely what helps her imagine herself as a writer, particularly in terms of the kind of self that her personal essay assignment called for. Kimberly's identity as an evangelical *allows* her to write "The Discovery" because it attitudinally predisposes her to recognize the significance of such transformational moments. Kimberly's evangelical sense of self, along with its emphasis on guilt and redemption, helps her imagine herself as the kind of writer she needs to be to complete her personal essay successfully. For Kimberly, this occurs through an implicit understanding that the way in which an evangelical encounters life is to keep oneself open to the possibility that, at any given time, God might reveal to the believer ways in which he or she might live a better life and help others do the same. Note, for example, how Kimberly described her faith in her first writing prompt:

My faith is what allows me to get through the day. [...] I try to be a servant to all because that is the way Jesus lived his life. I also strive to not curse or judge others throughout the day. I understand that I am not perfect and ask for forgiveness when I do make a mistake. That is one aspect of Christianity that I appreciate. The fact that God understands we are not perfect and offers the opportunity to be forgiven. I also appreciate simply just loving each other. Love encompasses all things and God loves us despite our flaws.

These motives for Kimberly are grounded in her evangelical identity and infuse "The Discovery." There's a significant amount of overlap between her beliefs as an evangelical and the kind of identity she is expected to perform in her personal essay.

What's also striking about how Kimberly discusses the role of guilt in her essay is that it comes in response to reading an academic text and not in relation to, say, hearing a sermon or reading the Bible. She's appropriating a line from an academic text and using it to examine herself and her motives as an evangelical. In fact, Kimberly read sacred and academic texts with the same purpose in mind. For instance, she talked at length about the similar kinds of experiences she had reading and writing about the Bible and reading and writing about schooled texts. Here's further discussion about Gerschick's essay:

> *Jeff:* Do you often read stuff in school that kind of prompts this kind of, "Oh, I've been wrong about this," or, "Oh, I've been [...] guilty in this way or that way"?
>
> *Kimberly:* Yeah, definitely. Especially in *Race, Class, and Gender*. That was one course where we talked about, like, privilege a lot, and, like, in my privilege of being an able-bodied person, and using the handicapped bathrooms, when persons with disabilities are not able to use any bathroom they want. But I can just stroll into any bathroom I want. So, yeah, just stuff like that.
>
> *Jeff:* You know, we were kind of talking about this a little earlier, but does reading the Bible do something similar?
>
> *Kimberly:* Yeah, sometimes. I've been trying to read the book of James.

That Kimberly would mention the New Testament Letter of James as a book that challenges her to reflect on how she is living her life would make sense to many

Christians, whether evangelical or otherwise. Even a cursory examination of James

suggests that it critiques traditional hierarchies of power and authority. For instance,

James decries discrimination on the basis of class, arguing that favoring the rich while

demeaning the poor goes against God's commandments. James has a distinctly social

justice bent to it: material care for the poor and freedom from oppression are both major

themes. This concern for the marginalized shows up in one of the epistle's most

frequently cited verses: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is

this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the

world" (Jas 1.27).

Beginning in the early twentieth century, evangelicalism tended to deemphasize

social concerns in favor of spiritual ones (see Marsden, *Fundamentalism*; Webber,

Younger). Evangelism was more about saving souls and "keep[ing] oneself unstained by

the world" than it was about "car[ing] for orphans and widows"—taking care of peoples'

material needs. As I mentioned in my first chapter, though, this is a trend in

evangelicalism that has begun to change in recent decades (see Campolo; Claiborne and

Campolo; McLaren; Sider; Wallis; Webber, *Younger*). Many evangelicals see attending

to people's material, physical, and health needs as equally important with their spiritual

state. Kimberly's connection between the contents of a book like *Race, Class, and

Gender* and The Letter of James thus suggests that she embraces a version of

evangelicalism that emphasizes both material and spiritual concerns. Equally important,

the connection between her Bible reading and her schooled reading highlight the degree

to which her academic and evangelical trajectories are intertwined. I pointed this out in

one of our later interviews after Kimberly talked about how reading helped her reflect on

how she was living her life and how she might become a better person. When I asked her if she experiences other such moments, she responded as follows:

> I guess specifically with, like, social justice work and stuff like that. You know, like, in reference to the Bible, treat others the way you want to be treated. You know, love your neighbor. And just like the activities I participate in. And in *Race, Class, and Gender*, we touched on social justice. But like the MLK Summit [a University-wide celebration of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.], I would analyze that and say, Hmm. You know, am I loving my neighbor as myself? Am I treating a working class person the same as a middle class person? [...] Just looking at it and saying, you know, the biblical aspect of it, and being a good Christian.

What this points to is the convergence that exists between Kimberly's forms of participation within her various communities of practice. Kimberly's schooled learning sheds light on her evangelical literacy, while her evangelical identity shapes how she encounters her schooled learning. There's no division between what she learns via evangelical or academic practice. For Kimberly, all reading and learning, whether it relates primarily to her evangelical or academic communities of practice, can contribute to her goal of living her life as an evangelical Christian.

Kimberly's Persuasive Essay: Faith Constrained

Kimberly's identity as an evangelical allows her to make the "turns" she needs to make in her personal essay. In this regard, the convergence associated with Kimberly's writing of "The Discovery" seems largely beneficial. There appear to be few risks associated with how her evangelical identity was implicated in writing her personal essay. What's troubling, though, is that Kimberly was largely unaware of how her evangelical identity related to her schooled writing until she and I discussed it in our interviews. In other words, she wasn't able to see how her identity shapes and is shaped by the writing she is asked to do for her FYW course.

Her inability to "see" the way in which her evangelical identity influences and is implicated in her schooled writing becomes even more apparent when she writes the final essay for the semester, a persuasive essay about a controversial vaccine for the human papillomavirus (HPV). Like her personal essay, "HPV Vaccine Prevents Cancer" bears little trace of her evangelical identity. This is especially surprising given the fact that much of the controversy surrounding the HPV vaccine came from evangelical Christians. Because the HPV virus is sexually transmitted, makers of the vaccine recommended that it be given to young girls before they become sexually active. Many evangelicals saw the vaccine as a potential license to have sex and vehemently opposed any move to mandate the vaccine for young girls. I'll discuss this more fully below.

The absence of Kimberly's evangelical identity is largely the result of her writing instructor's proscription against topics that evoke religious responses. The reason the instructor gave was that religious perspectives are too "subjective" (abortion, of course, was the primary example). From the start, then, Kimberly faces a rhetorical situation in which she must dismiss her religious perspectives as irrelevant (Marsden, *Outrageous* 20). Her instructor's stricture against religious perspectives wasn't too troubling for Kimberly, though, largely because *not* including her religious perspective in her schooled writing had "kind of been [her] experience." Despite the proscription—and despite the fact that Kimberly has been socialized into compartmentalizing her evangelical identity from her academic practice—there is a brief moment where her evangelical identity emerges in her persuasive essay, a moment that can be understood in terms of what Nancy Welch refers to as *excess*. As such, it is a significant moment of identity formation.

I'd like to analyze this moment in Kimberly's essay and discuss her views about writing "HPV Vaccine Prevents Cancer." I'd also like to challenge the view in rhetcomp that topics that elicit religious responses are best left untouched. In doing so, I'll be echoing arguments forwarded by Beth Daniell, Kristine Hansen, and Ronda Leathers Dively. I'll shift this conversation toward identity and identity negotiation, though, in order to address the question of how Kimberly negotiates her identity in a rhetorical situation that does not value her evangelical identity.

"HPV Vaccine Prevents Cancer"

Kimberly chose to write her persuasive essay about the HPV vaccine because she had been offered it as a senior in high school. She opted against getting the vaccine because, like many evangelical Christians, she is not sexually active and does not "plan on having sex anytime soon." One of the requirements of the assignment was that students should write their essay as a letter to a specific audience. Kimberly addressed her letter to "parents of young girls," and her goal in the essay was to encourage her audience to have their daughters vaccinated against HPV. Kimberly states her purpose clearly at the outset of her essay: "I am writing to inform you about a new vaccine recommended for your daughters." Almost to a fault, Kimberly stays true to this promise and maintains an informative stance throughout much of the essay. In her second paragraph, for instance, Kimberly explains what HPV is and how it causes cervical cancer. In doing so, Kimberly uses declarative sentences: "To get a better understanding of HPV and the cervical cancer relationship, let us start from the top. The cervix is an important part of our anatomy. During menstruation, the cervix allows blood to flow

from the uterus into the vagina." Kimberly goes on to explain how HPV causes cells in the cervix to grow abnormally and why the vaccine can be beneficial for young girls. By maintaining this declarative stance, Kimberly positions herself as a "presenter[ ] of information," someone who is "attempting to influence [her] interlocutors' knowledge and beliefs" (Ivanič 269).

She aims to do more than just inform, though. She wants to persuade her audience to act, namely to have their young daughters vaccinated against HPV. To do this, she first argues that teenage girls will often be sexually active without their parents knowing it. She cites statistics related to how many teenage girls get pregnant every year and how many contract HPV. In doing so, she responds to one of the criticisms of the vaccine—that it will serve to promote sexual activity among teens by giving them a false sense of security. She argues that what these critics "fail to understand is that girls are already taking the initiative [to have sex]." Even though Kimberly agrees with abstinence, she recognizes that "young people are having sexual intercourse anyway." Because "sex is so prevalent among girls," she contends, "the HPV vaccine does not impact that activity. The vaccine simply offers protection against a threat to their female bodies." In making this point, she positions herself as a realist and not an idealist.

In the remainder of her essay, Kimberly provides further support for her argument. She offers statistics about how many women will develop cervical cancer each year and how many will die from it. She also includes personal testimony from a mother who had her daughters vaccinated. And Kimberly responds to potential counterarguments, notably those that deal with the high cost of the vaccine, the concern that mandating inoculation infringes on the rights of parents, and the fears about possible

side effects of the vaccine. She closes her essay by returning to some of her strongest points: we live in a society in which "sex bombards every aspect of our lives," and, because young people are going to have sex anyway, the possibility of them contracting an STD like HPV is real. Kimberly concludes with a direct appeal to her audience:

> As parents it is your responsibility to be proactive in the sexual education of your children. It is your duty to protect your child the best way possible. Knowing that HPV causes cervical cancer is sufficient to taking active steps in your daughter's health. I encourage young girls to be vaccinated against HPV to prevent a common cancer among women.

For an essay written by a FY student, "HPV Vaccine Prevents Cancer" is well crafted. It includes sound research, a logical argument, and audience-based appeals.

It's also an essay that bears no overt trace of Kimberly's evangelical identity. As I noted above, much of that has to do with the instructor's stricture against topics that might elicit a religious response. Kimberly told me about this restriction in our second interview when I asked her if religious topics ever came up in class.

> Ah, no. I don't think—no. Um, I feel like she shies away from those type of discussions. Um, like her—when introducing [...] our [persuasive essay] she said, you know, abortion or, like, those type of—like, picking those topics can bring in the religious aspect of it. And maybe, you know, that's not the route you'd want to go for that paper. It was something about, like, faith being subjective [...]. She was just like, don't really go into the religious aspect of it. So.

When I asked her how she felt about this proscription, Kimberly said the following:

> [M]y question is [...] not necessarily would my grade be effected, but would, if I chose to go that route [...], like, what would be her reaction to that? Yeah, I feel like with the HPV topic that I chose, I went from, like, a more general standpoint. I don't know if there are any ethical-ish—not ethical—um, religious aspects that play into it. But I guess we'll see as my research goes on.

Kimberly's last line here is somewhat ironic, since there are plenty of "religious aspects" that "play into" the HPV vaccine debate. In fact, evangelical Christian organizations have

been the source of much of the controversy surrounding the vaccine, largely because, for many evangelical Christians, sexual purity, often in the form of abstinence before marriage, is a key moral issue for evangelicals.

Even before the HPV vaccine was approved by the FDA in June 2006, socially- and politically-conservative Christian organizations in the U.S. had started to oppose the vaccine. The Family Research Center (FRC), a Washington-based lobby group whose motto is "Defend Faith, Family and Freedom," received particular media attention. An April 2005 *New Scientist* article cited Bridget Maher, a spokesperson for the FRC, as saying that "[a]bstinence is the best way to prevent HPV" and that "[g]iving the HPV vaccine to young women could be potentially harmful, because they may see it as a license to engage in premarital sex" (Mackenzie). That perspective generated critique. In a May 2005 article in *The Nation*, Katha Pollit lambasted the "Christian right" because they don't "like the sound of this vaccine at all" (9). The reason why, Pollit explains, has more to do with sex than with life:

> With HPV potentially eliminated, the antisex brigade [right-wing Christians] will lose a card it has regarded as a trump unless it can persuade parents that vaccinating their daughters will turn them into tramps, and that sex today is worse than cancer tomorrow. (9)

This leads Pollit to conclude forcefully: "What is it with these right-wing Christians? Faced with a choice between sex and death, they choose death every time" (9).

Eventually, the FRC, along with many other evangelicals, came to support the vaccine, albeit with two stipulations: 1) the vaccine should not be touted as a failsafe against HPV (it only targets two of the four strains of HPV), and 2) it should not be mandated by the government. Peter Sprigg, the FRC's vice president for policy, writes in a July 2006 *Washington Post* op-ed piece that his organization "oppose[s] any effort by

100

states to make [the vaccine] mandatory." Families should be able to make such decisions for themselves, especially since the disease is transmitted "only through sexual contact" and not "casual contact or blood." Since 2006, the HPV debate has continued. Though many evangelical Christians have come to support the vaccine, outspoken critics of the vaccine remain, especially when it comes to the question of governmental mandates.

My point here is not to explore every facet of the HPV debate but rather to highlight the fact that much of the debate Kimberly explores in her essay revolves around the moral and political concerns of socially- and politically-conservative evangelical Christians. And it is a debate that garnered much discussion in the public sphere. Typing the words "Christian HPV vaccine" into Google, for instance, returns over 55,000 hits, while the search terms "religious HPV vaccine" turn up 80,000. In both cases, many of the top hits deal generally with "evangelical Christians," "the religious right," or "conservative Christians." Because of the prominence of this topic within evangelical circles and in the public sphere, it is surprising that Kimberly does not explore this angle of the debate at all. Towards the end of her argument, Kimberly does briefly acknowledge the role that religion plays in the debate, writing that "[p]arents are allowed to opt out due to medical, religious and philosophical reasons across the 50 states." Other than that mention, though, it's not something she explores at all.

This brings me to the second reason why Kimberly evangelical identity does not emerge explicitly in her HPV essay: she doesn't know how it might matter. Kimberly has been socially conditioned to compartmentalize her evangelical identity and beliefs from her schooled writing. Moreover, because religious perspectives are discouraged in her FYW course, she isn't encouraged to explore *how* her evangelical perspective—or the

perspectives of other evangelicals—might matter to this debate. At one point, for

instance, Kimberly and I were talking about her decision not to write about this topic

from her evangelical perspective.

> *Kimberly*: I feel like I chose not to put the Christianity aspect of it [in my essay]? Just because of the whole thing along the lines of, you know, what my teacher said before. You know, religious arguments, like, try to stay away from that. And not that it wouldn't belong in the piece, but none of my relating paragraphs really touch on religion and that aspect of it? Well, promoting abstinence, but that's not along the lines of religion.
>
> *Jeff*: So there are kind of places where you could see talking about it specifically, but you're not doing it because of what your professor said.
>
> *Kimberly*: Not only that. I just don't see the place for it type of thing. I don't know.

Since she has been socialized into compartmentalizing her evangelical identity from her

schooled writing, this assignment—and the schooled context in which she is writing it—

alerts her to the fact that her faith does not matter to what she is writing. Thus it is that

she can't "see" how her evangelical identity might pertain to her argument.

Given her identity as an evangelical who has promised to remain abstinent until

marriage, her statement that "promoting abstinence" is "not along the lines of religion" is

an odd one. Abstinence is, for many evangelical Christians, a value intimately tied to

faith (Webber, *Younger*). And, to be sure, it's something that Kimberly often talked about

in terms of her membership in an evangelical community of believers. Kimberly even

refers to such a connection a bit later in this same exchange: "I would like to, you know,

throw something in along the lines of—in the second paragraph—like, the Bible says

sex—premarital sex—should not be going on." From this statement, and from others she

made during our interviews, Kimberly does seem to associate abstinence with her faith.

There may be no easy answer to the contradiction she seems to make, but it might be a

result of her socialization into a kind of academic discourse that negates religious

identity. In fact, reading through the above exchange leads me to believe that Kimberly might have been rethinking her assumptions during the course of the interview itself. Notice how once she arrives at the explanation that "none of [her] relating paragraphs really touch on religion," she immediately qualifies her statement: "Well, promoting abstinence, but that's not along the lines of religion." She's wrestling with meaning here—wrestling with categories—and trying to make sense of her identity as it relates to her academic writing. She's literally coming to terms with her experience and her identity, though she's bumping up against her trained incapacity as someone who has been socialized into compartmentalizing the religious from the academic.

Voice, Excess, and Identity Formation

Kimberly is also experiencing the kind of tension that arises from participating in multiple communities of practice. Etienne Wenger argues that identity comprises multiple trajectories, each of which may be featured in a different community of practice, but each of which influences and shapes the others. Wenger uses the term *reconciliation* to describe the process of negotiating identity in relation to the multiple and competing demands associated with participation in various communities of practice. And because identity can neither be understood as a unity of trajectories nor as a series of fragmented trajectories (Wenger 159), reconciliation suggests that compartmentalization—the separation of one trajectory from another—can never be absolute. There will always be moments of convergence, moments in which one's trajectory in, say, a religious community of practice shapes participation in an academic community of practice.

Such convergence appears in Kimberly's HPV essay. Despite the fact that

Kimberly's instructor outlaws religious topics and that Kimberly does not "see" how her

faith matters to her HPV essay, there is a moment in her essay where her evangelical

identity emerges textually. Somewhat ironically, it does so in part because the instructor

wanted students to include their "voices" in their persuasive essays. Kimberly defined

voice as follows:

> Just me being in the piece. Or me—I feel like a lot of times, [my
> instructor] comments on my writing being so academic, or—not
> necessarily academic—just not enough of me. And when I work through
> the piece, I try to see where I could either tone down the vocabulary or
> switch around the sentence structure to make it more like me.

Kimberly's definition is similar to Peter Elbow's conception of voice: "Writing *with*

voice," Elbow explains, "is writing into which someone has breathed. It has the fluency,

rhythm, and liveliness that exist naturally in the speech of most people when they are

enjoying a conversation" (*Writing* 299, original emphasis).

Incorporating more of her voice into her writing proved to be a struggle for

Kimberly, largely because she had been taught to write formally and academically in high

school. In high school, she felt like she "was told to tone it up a little bit, to be more

academic in a way." College writing was a different story. Based on her instructor's

suggestions, Kimberly felt that "maybe [she] need[ed] to tone it down a bit," to make her

writing less formal. She attempts to do so, and her personal voice appears most clearly in

the first paragraph of her essay:

> As you may know, the Food and Drug Administration approved the first
> human papillomavirus vaccine in June 2006. This vaccine is intended to
> prevent the strains of HPV that lead to cervical cancer in women. I was
> offered this vaccine my senior year of high school when I went to receive
> my required vaccines for college. I declined the vaccine because my risk
> of acquiring HPV is low. I mean, I am not sexually active nor do I plan on
> having sex anytime soon. Compared to girls my age though, engagement

in sex starts around 18 or younger. The Advisory Committee on
Immunization Practices recommends the vaccination for girls 11-12 years
old, particularly before sexual activity. With cervical cancer being a
leading cause of death among women, I encourage young girls to get
vaccinated against HPV.

Kimberly starts off informally enough with "As you may know." The remainder of that

sentence and the second sentence are both in the declarative mood, suggesting that

Kimberly is positioning herself again as a "presenter[] of information" (Ivanič 269). In

the next few sentences, Kimberly shifts to a more personal voice. Her use of the pronoun

"I" indicates that she is speaking personally, and what she says in these three sentences

bears this out. Essentially, she's telling her story about her interaction with the HPV

vaccination. She ends the paragraph with a thesis statement that tells us what she will

argue. In doing so, she emphasizes her own subjectivity ("I encourage […]").

Thus, in her first paragraph, we get everything that the first paragraph of a

persuasive letter such as this should have—an introduction to the topic, a clear statement

of the writer's argument, and an even, casual tone. We also get a few sentences in which

Kimberly writes in her personal voice, the most overt example of which is, "I mean, I am

not sexually active nor do I plan on having sex anytime soon." The fact that Kimberly

uses the personal pronoun "I" indicates that she is aligning herself with or owning the

point she's making (Ivanič 226). But the fact that she uses "I mean" to introduce the

sentence is also significant. In a different interview, Kimberly pointed to this particular

phrasing as something she would say in a conversation. As such, it's an indicator of her

personal voice—an idiomatic sentence modifier that serves to emphasize, intensify, or

clarify the rest of the sentence. It adds a tone of mild protest—one is reminded of the

exclamation, "I mean, c'mon!" The subject matter of this sentence is important: Kimberly

is letting her audience know that having sex is not an option for her. In a way, then, she's

announcing a key difference between the teenage girls she is writing about and her own

identity. Kimberly has chosen to remain abstinent, a decision that is grounded in her

evangelical identity.

Several times throughout our interviews, Kimberly made reference to the moral

standards she holds as an evangelical Christian. One of the standards she often mentioned

involved her desire not to have sex until marriage. "[T]his is how God is working in my

life," she said in one of our interviews. "Even though I'm in college, and even though I'm

surrounded by drinking or, like, sex and drugs and all this stuff on a daily basis, I'm able

to stay grounded." That Kimberly talks about how God "is working in [her] life"—a

distinctly evangelical concept—in spite of being "surrounded by" sex and drugs is

significant. She's acknowledging that she sees premarital sex as antithetical to living the

kind of righteous life she hopes to live as an evangelical. This is also an idea that came up

when she talked about her sorority, her involvement in which, like Austin, is motivated in

part by her desire to share her faith—"to minister to people," as she put it. Kimberly

talked about her sorority sisters' openness "to, you know, Bible study and stuff like that,"

but she found that, because they're "in college right now," they "find it hard […] to, like,

not drink or not have premarital sex or whatever." Premarital sex, along with drinking

and using drugs, goes against Kimberly's identity as an evangelical Christian. She is able

to maintain her identity as an evangelical and a sorority sister because her sisters respect

her. As she put it, "I feel like my sisters just understood that I wouldn't do anything

against my moral values."

These moral values, including abstaining from premarital sex, match up with

wider trends among evangelical Christian teenagers. In *The Younger Evangelicals*,

Robert Webber notes that while younger evangelicals are willing to live as part of their world (and not as separatists like their fundamentalist forebears), they do not consider themselves *of* the world. Rather, Webber writes, they "are separating themselves from the ideologies of the world" and rejecting moral relativism, especially as it relates to attitudes toward sex (228). Webber writes that younger evangelicals have been influential in popularizing "the chastity movement that has spread through the churches and beyond to teens who have discovered 'it is better to wait'" until marriage (229). This conviction about sexual purity is widely held by evangelicals in Kimberly's generation.[3]

Thus I read Kimberly's "I mean" sentence as a moment in which her evangelical identity, a significant component of which entails living according to her "morals" and abstaining from premarital sex, emerges subtly but significantly in her essay. When I made this observation in one of our interviews, Kimberly agreed. She then went on to talk more about why she chose *not* to include more of her evangelical perspective in her essay, acknowledging her instructor's stricture against religious perspectives and her own inability to "see" a place for it. Kimberly includes her "I mean" sentence not out of any ulterior motive—she was not trying to write a line that would surreptitiously announce her evangelical identity. That is to say, she did not intend her sentence to act as a written equivalent of an *icthus*, the drawn outline of a fish that early Christians used to identify themselves to each other in the face of persecution. Quite the contrary, Kimberly includes her "I mean" statement simply because her professor had asked her to include more of her personal voice, to make her writing sound more conversational. Intent aside, though,

---

[3] Of course, whether or not evangelical teens maintain that stance is a question all its own. In his book *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers*, Mark Regnerus suggests that evangelical teens are as likely as nonevangelicals to engage in premarital sex. He also found, though, that evangelicals with high levels of religious commitment were more likely to maintain abstinence.

Kimberly's sentence aligns her with a perspective common among evangelical teens. As such, Kimberly's evangelical identity is present in "HPV Vaccine Prevents Cervical Cancer" as it was in "The Discovery." She is not actively writing from an evangelical perspective, but because her faith comprises such a major component of her sense of self, it shapes her schooled writing nonetheless. What Kimberly said about her personal essay thus applies to her persuasive essay: it bears the stamp of "the subconscious [...] value that [she has] as a Christian." Her evangelical identity is the subtext that shapes her schooled writing in subtle yet significant ways.

Rhetcomp has a number of metaphors that might describe how Kimberly's evangelical identity shapes her academic writing. Perhaps the most appropriate is Nancy Welch's concept of *excess*, a concept that she develops from the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Lacan. In *Getting Restless: Rethinking Revision in Writing Instruction*, Welch defines excess as the phenomenon in which "individual identities always exceed and transgress the discursive formations available to them" (137). She discusses excess in terms of revision, arguing that revision ought to be located "at the intersection between full and excessive lives and the seemingly strict limits of texts that must be made coherent, delineated, and smooth" (11). Individuals' identities are, for Welch, always excessive, because there are more contradictions, complexities, and uncertainties in one's sense of self than can ever fit neatly into a carefully packaged essay. Identity is excessive because it always fights against "the management of meaning" promoted by revision strategies in composition (11).

As I understand Welch, excess refers to those moments in writing when the writer's identity, in all of its robustness, ruptures forth into the writing in a way that

somehow transgresses genre or assignment expectations. In that sense, I read Kimberly's inclusion of "I mean, I am not sexually active nor do I plan on having sex anytime soon" as an excessive moment. Even though it comes partly as a response to her instructor's suggestions to revise her essay so that it is more personal in tone, Kimberly's rhetorical choice exceeds her teacher's expectations and, though it is not immediately apparent, transgresses her professor's stricture to avoid religious perspectives. Kimberly makes her comment almost as an aside, but it's rich with identity material. Early in her chapter on excess and revision, for instance, Welch notes that "it's in the pursuit of what exceeds [...] that we can locate the beginnings of identity, voice, and revision [...]" (137). Kimberly's "I mean" sentence points to her evangelical identity even in the context of an assignment that expressly asked her to ignore that aspect of her self.

In that way, Kimberly's "I mean" sentence represents a significant moment of identity formation. Donna LeCourt defines identity formation as a process of identifying with certain subject positions while distancing oneself from others. Citing Stuart Hall, LeCourt notes that such acts of identification "must construct an 'outside'—that which identity is not—in order to be orchestrated. In identifying with one position," LeCourt continues, "we come to exclude others in order to mark the boundaries by which we might constitute self" (146). Kimberly certainly seems to be marking the boundaries of her self here. Her tone of protest in the "I mean" sentence makes it clear that she is somehow different than teenage girls who might have sex before marriage.

This demarcation of self was somewhat troubling for Kimberly. The fact that she did not take the HPV vaccine when she was offered it threatened her credibility or *ethos*. Kimberly brought up this concern in one of our interviews:

> And so I guess me not taking the vaccine myself, I have to make sure that I'm not going against anything that I personally believe in? Because I didn't take the vaccine, so how am I gonna advocate for a vaccine I didn't take?

I read this passage as an example of Wengerian reconciliation. Kimberly is certainly straddling two communities of practice here. She has a sense that she ought to be authentic in her essay—that it should, as Austin put it, represent her "true colors" to the extent possible. It should reflect what she "personally believe[s] in," which relates directly to her practice as an abstinent evangelical. At the same time, she is also aware that she needs to perform a self that is convincing for her audience.

In my previous chapter, I cited Roz Ivanič's notion that writers must "decide how far they will be true to themselves in appropriating [their readers'] values and meeting [their] expectations" (245). I discussed how Austin was certainly aware of his audience's values, but potentially went too far in accommodating them. Ivanič's point applies to Kimberly's persuasive essay. She has a keen sense of her audience's expectations and realizes the discrepancy between her own refusal to take the vaccine and her argument in support of it. Kimberly thus finds herself located at a troubling nexus of expectations and identities. Her identity as an evangelical female college student who did *not* take the HPV vaccine when it was offered to her is clearly implicated in her argument.

Pedagogical and Civic Blindspots

I've been arguing that Kimberly's sentence, "I mean, I am not sexually active nor do I plan on having sex anytime soon," represents an instance in which her evangelical identity emerges subtly in her persuasive essay. As such, this sentence can be understood as a moment of convergence. Despite the fact that Kimberly has been taught to

compartmentalize her evangelical identity from her academic work, this sentence suggests that her evangelical identity at least partially motivates her writing of her persuasive essay. Granted, it is a much more limited example of convergence than that which appears in her personal essay. It's hard to see how her evangelical identity shapes the direction and focus of her persuasive essay as it does in "The Discovery." What it suggests, though, is that Kimberly's evangelical identity is not completely compartmentalized from her academic practice. Her trajectories as evangelical Christian and as student writer converge in her persuasive essay.

But how is Kimberly's evangelical identity implicated in her persuasive essay about the HPV vaccine? More generally, what does it mean when a student's evangelical identity is implicated in academic practice? I'll answer this question in three ways, the first one dealing with what seems *not* to be happening. Kimberly certainly does not make any argument that goes against her deeply held beliefs. There's no sense in which she is committing any kind of apostasy through her academic writing. She is not, to borrow a term Stephen Barrett uses in his dissertation, deconverting from her evangelical Christian faith. The second answer is that she is seeing herself through a lens of her academic practice. This is a subtle shift and thus not one that is easily explored. But the fact that she is writing about a topic that relates to her evangelical identity in an academic context and for the purpose of academic assessment forces her to see that aspect of herself in terms of a set of expectations that do not necessarily align with her evangelical identity. What happens in her persuasive essay is similar to what happens in "The Discovery." Kimberly ends up seeing an aspect of her evangelical identity, namely her desire to remain abstinent, through a different lens.

It's the third answer to the question that deserves the most attention, though. The fact that Kimberly is unaware of how her evangelical identity matters to her academic writing proves to be the most significant problem. In other words, Kimberly's evangelical identity is implicated in her persuasive essay by virtue of the fact that it is almost completely ignored. Most troubling, the manner in which her identity is implicated is something of which she was not aware until we discussed it in our interviews—a state of affairs similar to what happened with Kimberly's personal essay.

The problem of ignoring religious perspectives and identities is one that Beth Daniell identified in "Composing (as) Power," her contribution to a 1994 *CCC* interchange called "Spiritual Sites of Composing." Daniell notes that, "As scholars and teachers in America, we have been carefully trained not only to separate religion from civic life but also to dismiss the spiritual" (239). Citing Stephen L. Carter's contention in *The Culture of Disbelief* that American law and politics trivializes religious belief as a "hobby" and not as something that "gives meaning and purpose to the lives of many people" (239), Daniell goes on to say that "contemporary intersections of literacy and spirituality have gone largely unrecognized" in rhetcomp (240). The problem with failing to recognize such intersections for Daniell is three-fold: it "hinders or precludes discussion of our closest, most significant, issues"; it leaves "gaps" in our knowledge; and it "alienates human beings from their own emotions and experiences" (240). Given these significant oversights, Daniell argues that rhetcomp needs "a language that will allow [compositionists] to talk not only about the cognitive, intellectual, social, political, and economic aspects of writing but also about its emotional and spiritual aspects" (240).

What Daniell points out here is a kind of scholarly blindspot, a gap in discussions about literacy, identity, values, and beliefs.

In doing so, Daniell also identifies a pedagogical blindspot, an absence of discussion with students about how their literacy learning intersects with their religious motives, beliefs, and identities. It is in this sense that I think Daniell's essay helps us understand Kimberly's experience. Kimberly does not have a language with which to understand how her evangelical identity, values, and beliefs intersect with her academic practice. Rather, she has a firmly ensconced sense that her evangelical identity and beliefs do not—or should not—matter to her schooled writing and academic practice. This attitude seems to be one that she learned in high school. Sadly, though, it is also one that is reinforced by her instructor in her FYW course in college.

Consider, for instance, the way in which Kimberly responded when I asked her if there were ways she wanted to incorporate her evangelical perspective into her persuasive essay but felt she couldn't: "I would like to, you know, throw something in along the lines of [...]. like, the Bible says sex—premarital sex—should not be going on. But I just strayed away from that." I'm reminded here of Austin's citation of Joshua 24.15. I'm reminded, too, of how he felt that citing the Bible would add weight to his paper. As I discussed in the previous chapter, there are ways in which citing Joshua 24.15 allowed Austin to fulfill some of his purposes. However, in citing this verse the way he did, Austin also casuistically stretched the principle he believes as an evangelical Christian— that everyone *should* come to know Christ as their personal savior—to the pluralistic principle that his audience shares—that it's okay to choose one way or the other.

Throwing in Bible verses as evidence in an academic argument can have unintended consequences.

I'm not arguing here that Kimberly should have been allowed or encouraged to cite the Bible in her HPV essay. Of course, if she had written to an evangelical audience, doing so might have helped her make her point. I'm concerned, though, that this is the extent to which Kimberly—a good student, a good writer—is able to think deeply and critically about how the issue she's exploring relates to her sense of self. She views her evangelical identity as ancillary to her schooled self. It's an afterthought. And if it is true that rhetoric is habituating, that, as Wenger puts it, the more we practice something, the more that kind of practice becomes part of our identity, then Kimberly has certainly been habituated into seeing her evangelical self as separate from academic practice.

For many compositionists, this may not represent that much of a problem. Religious perspectives—especially evangelical Christian ones—often conflict with the goals and epistemologies of FYW courses (see Brummett; Downs). But if, as many scholars have argued, the composition classroom is an extension of the public square, and if one of the goals of FYW courses is to help prepare students to be engaged, active, and productive citizens, then delimiting the religious perspectives of students from academic writing and practice may represent a significant shortcoming. For one thing, given the attention that rhetcomp has paid to religious identity in recent years, it seems as if barring evangelicals' religious identities proves to be as problematic as ignoring students' gendered, raced, and classed identities from shaping their writing. I'd also like to suggest that the students I discuss in this study indicate that such compartmentalization is problematic to maintain completely. Granted, some students may see their evangelical

114

identities as more pertinent to their academic work than others. But because religion is such an integral aspect of self, it is impossible to assume that evangelical Christians will be able to separate completely their academic and religious identities. Richard Miller makes a similar point in "The Nervous System" when he writes that "maintaining the opposition between 'the academic' and 'the personal'" is an "impossibility" (280).

The split between the academic and the religious in particular represents, for many compositionists, a less-than-ideal state of affairs. Kristine Hansen, in her contribution to *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*, recognizes the extent to which the language of "philosophical liberalism"—a discourse that presupposes the separation between the private and the public and between subjective and objective knowledge—is "no longer adequate for conducting public affairs" (27). Given this—and given the fact that "religious expression" is increasing in public discourse both in "volume" and "diversity" (31)—Hansen argues that writing instructors "should permit students to talk and write about their religious beliefs, particularly in connection with the political stances they take on issues that confront society" (27). For Hansen, the writing classroom represents an extension of the public square. As such, she sees ignoring religious topics, beliefs, and identities as anathema to a democracy. "[I]f we see part of our aim as preparing [students] for citizenship in a diverse society," Hansen argues, then compositionists "need to help students address" the various rhetorical situations that are arising due to the prominence of religious discourse in the public square (31). "We and our students need to know more about the origins, nature, and purposes of religious political discourse," she continues, adding that such explorations might entail "how to create such discourse" and "how to receive and evaluate it" (32). Either way, Hansen's

argument is clear: ignoring religious discourse is contrary to the aim of civic-minded compositionists.

Ronda Leathers Dively argues something similar in "Censoring Religious Rhetoric in the Composition Classroom: What We and Our Students May Be Missing" when she contends that asking students to write from and in response to religious beliefs can lead to effective writing. What might be more significant in Dively's article, though, is that she focuses on what students learned about how their own (and others') religious beliefs shape public discourse. Dively, for instance, notes that some students "viewed the opportunity to clarify their beliefs as a means to more effective communication about some prominent issues in American culture" (64). She provides an example from a student questionnaire that speaks to this attitude:

> [A]ll the issues in our society have religious overtones.... If you can't discuss your faith with a general audience, how are you going to deal with issues in a society composed of such a variety of people. ... It's really ironic how, in the last couple weeks, I've gotten into so many discussions about religion with people in our dorm room and in the lounge. ... There are so many issues in society that religion is a part of. And if you cannot define your own religion...then you'll really have trouble clarifying your stance on a lot of issues in society. (qtd. in Dively, "Censoring" 64-5).

Comments like this one lead Dively to conclude that "the decision to discount religious expression in writing classrooms that make public discourse the object of study is a pedagogical choice that forwards an incomplete representation of this culture's discursive tradition" (66).

Kimberly's FYW course may not have been organized solely around public discourse, but the topic of her persuasive essay certainly participated in a civic discussion. And when I consider Hansen's and Dively's arguments and read student comments like the one above, I wonder what Kimberly might have written had she been

encouraged to explore the HPV debate from the perspective of an evangelical Christian college student who refused to take the HPV vaccine. How might she have interpreted and analyzed the debates surrounding the vaccine—especially those that were formed within evangelical communities—as an evangelical Christian? What realizations might she have had about her own identity in relation to a controversy that impinged in various ways on her sense of self? Her essay in the end may not have looked much different than what she produced—she might have still made the same argument—but she hopefully would have begun to recognize the way in which the faith tradition to which she belongs shapes and is shaped by public discourse. She might have been able to "define [her] own religion" as it relates to at least one issue in society—a public issue that has been shaped significantly by debates centered in the evangelical Christian community.

In considering the potential long-term effects on Kimberly's identity, then, I worry that the division she maintains between her private and public (or evangelical and academic) identities will continue. I worry, in essence, that the pedagogical blindspot in which she has been implicated will develop into a civic blindspot, one in which she will assume that her civic identity should be equally devoid of her evangelical perspective. Of course, the argument could be made that Kimberly's evangelical identity will shape her civic interactions in the same way they have shaped her academic writing—that is to say, subconsciously—because it is such a central aspect of her sense of self. And that's likely true. But I lament the fact that she has missed an opportunity to articulate her religious beliefs in relation to a civic discussion, and I worry that, without such articulation, she might be led to make hasty or ill-informed decisions. Like Dively's student said, "if you

cannot define your own religion…then you'll really have trouble clarifying your stance on a lot of issues in society."

What stands out to me about both Hansen's and Dively's arguments—and the reason why I'm discussing them at length in regards to Kimberly's experience—is that they both value assignments that invite students to explore religious rhetoric and belief as worthy of the attention and energy of writing instructors. In doing so, both instructors value and validate their students' religious identities as significant to their academic writing and, by extension, to their civic interactions. Though Dively acknowledges the "unique pedagogical challenges that may accompany" assignments that focus on religious rhetoric and identity, she contends nonetheless that she "will continue to welcome it in [her] writing courses" in order to help her students "learn to read religious rhetoric—their own and others'—from an informed, critical, intellectually rigorous vantage point" (66).

Perhaps the greatest ramification to ignoring religious identity and belief for students like Kimberly is that they are forced to inhabit subject positions that reject religious perspectives as too "subjective." The implications of this kind of logic should be troubling for compositionists who seek to value the richness and diversity of students' identities. Indeed, it should be troubling for Americans who value the cacophony of voices that comprise a healthy democracy (see DePalma, Ringer, and Webber).

Chapter Conclusion

Kimberly's experience in her FYW course serves as a reminder for compositionists that, to borrow LeCourt's phrase, identity matters. Specifically, Kimberly's experience writing her personal and persuasive essays suggests that an

evangelical student's religious identity may shape his or her schooled writing in ways that aren't immediately apparent but that are nonetheless significant. One implication that compositionists must consider, then, is that we may not have a choice when it comes to the question of whether or not to value evangelical perspectives as part of academic practice. As Kimberly's experience suggests, evangelicals' identities will likely shape their academic writing. Despite our and our students' best efforts at compartmentalizing, it seems likely that convergence will occur. The question thus becomes not *if* we should value students' evangelical identities, but *how*. How do we teach them to recognize the ways in which their religious identities intersect with their academic pursuits and schooled writing? How do we help them develop attitudinal predispositions towards seeing the how their academic and evangelical trajectories converge in their nexus of multimembership?

At the end of our final interview, I asked Kimberly if there was anything she would like to say about what she had learned about the relationship between her faith and her education. She said the following:

> I guess this experience allowed me to look—um, cuz I feel like sometimes I just live it, in a way? Like, just walk around and, yeah, I'm a Christian, and, um... I feel like more during this experience I'm able to look at it and see where I demonstrate that in class, or where I would say, oh, treat the other person the way I wanna be treated, or. Um, just their opinion and still have respect for it and all of that.

Being asked how her faith and learning intersect allowed Kimberly to begin seeing connections between the two. It's a small gain, but a gain nonetheless.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRIMARY AND PROBLEMATIC: BRIAN, ANTIFOUNDATIONALISM, AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

"There is no inconsistency in being a Christian scholar and academic."

—Brian in his first writing prompt

In this chapter, I switch to exploring how graduate students in rhetcomp negotiate their identities as evangelicals in academic communities of practice. It should come as little surprise that the identity demands placed upon graduate students are more rigorous than those placed upon FY students. Graduate students are expected to professionalize, to demonstrate that they are part of the field in which they aspire to be productive members. Wenger would likely refer to grad students as "[n]ewcomers" who "are joining the community with the prospect of becoming full participants in its practice" (154). As such, they are "invested in their future participation" as full scholars and are in process of developing what Wenger calls "inbound trajectories" (154). And because identity is, as Wenger contends, "a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other" (151), how graduate students in rhetcomp participate—how, for example, they write academically—has bearing on how they construct their identities. In accommodating the forms of practice germain to rhetcomp, graduate students are asked to identify, often implicitly, with the narratives their academic community offers.

Those narratives represent more than just a way of participating in their graduate programs and chosen field. Wenger maintains that "[j]oining a community of practice

involves entering not only its internal configuration but also its relations with the rest of the world" (103). As James Gee might put it, participating as a graduate student in rhetcomp means adopting the ways of speaking, writing, valuing, and believing that the field privileges. "Discourses," Gee writes, "are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" ("Literacy" 526). The graduate students I interviewed for this study all had a sense that they needed to accommodate the language and perspectives of their graduate programs in order to identify themselves as members of the field—to think, talk, act, believe, value, and write like rhetcomp scholars.

Nancy Welch provides a compelling example of how entering a graduate program can shape identity. In "Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers," an essay about her own experiences as a newcomer to a PhD program in rhetcomp, Welch recounts a moment during TA orientation when "religious metaphors of testimony, confession, baptism, and conversion were invoked [...] to describe the culture of teacher training" at the university she was attending (387). Though Welch is talking specifically about TA training, there are wider identity implications at stake:

> The convergent model [that the TAs were being taught] asks teachers to participate in a range of identity-changing, ideologically-situated assumptions about language and learning, about the relation between individuals and institutions, about the construction of knowledge and the construction of self. (388)

Although Brian and I talked little about teaching, what we did discuss relates directly to the idea that academic professionalization shapes identity in terms of "ideologically-situated assumptions" regarding language, learning, and "the construction of self" (388).

There's no evidence from my interviews with Brian that he felt like he had to "testify" to a certain perspective in the way that Welch recounts. In fact, at the outset of

his second year in his PhD program, he was able to say confidently what I include as the epigraph above: "There is no inconsistency in being a Christian scholar and academic." Brian even wrote in one of his letters for this study that he felt his faith was at least somewhat accepted in his graduate program. And yet, as I'll discuss in this chapter, participating in the kind of academic discourse that rhetcomp privileges does shape how Brian is able to construct his discursive identity in his schooled writing. Similar to Austin and Kimberly, this occurs because Brian must use the language and premises of his audience. In order to achieve authority, he must enact the kind of academic discourse privileged within rhetcomp—discourse that is overwhelmingly antifoundational and, as such, is contrary to his own foundationalist worldview.

The central irony is that the academic writing I discuss in this chapter—an essay that Brian wrote for one of his doctoral seminars—reveals a writer who is aware of some of the ways in which discourse vies for his identity but unaware of others. Despite the fact that Brian explicitly seeks to distance himself from antifoundationalist perspectives in his essay, he nonetheless reverts to antifoundationalist premises to make his argument. He argues *from* a perspective with which he disagrees in order to argue *for* recognition of a foundationalist perspective that is irreconcilable with the premise he employs. Thus my focus in this chapter is how Brian struggles to maintain and argue for his foundationalist evangelical Christian identity from within a discourse that does not value such a perspective. What results, I argue, is a highly complex negotiation of identity on Brian's part—a negotiation that brings into relief the extent to which rhetcomp, despite its avowed antifoundationlist welcoming of various perspectives, militates against a fundamentalist evangelical faith such as Brian's.

Multiple Identities and Conscious Convergence

The first letter Brian wrote for this study reveals much about his evangelical background. Raised in a Baptist family in the South, Brian "accepted Jesus Christ as [his] personal Lord and Savior" when he was a "young child." He went on to write that he "grew up in the church" and has "always held strong" to his faith—a kind of faith that would place him on the conservative end of the theological spectrum. In that letter, Brian described the beliefs he felt all Christians should hold:

> Two of these include 1) a belief in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible and 2) a belief in Jesus Christ as the *only* way to the Father (who is a single, masculine, holy, righteous, perfect, just, merciful, omniscient, omnipotent, loving, graceful, three-person God).

Though evangelicals by and large see the Bible as the inspired Word of God, not all believe in its inerrancy and infallibility (see Campolo; Claiborne and Campolo; Noll; Webber, *Younger*). And the emphasis on "Jesus Christ as the *only* way" to God—a clear echo of John 14.6, which evangelicals often use to support claims about the universal need for salvation through Christ[4]—clearly signals that Brian positions himself as a theologically conservative evangelical. Elsewhere, Brian explicitly identifies himself as a foundationalist. He believes that capital-T truth exists, that it is knowable because it has been revealed through Jesus Christ and Scripture, and that Christianity is inherently reasonable. He also consistently distances himself from antifoundationalism, relativism, and liberalism.

Brian is aware that his evangelical identity does not align neatly with dominant assumptions within rhetcomp. Take, for example, the letter Brian wrote prior to our fifth

---

[4] "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

and final interview, a letter that reveals the degree to which Brian recognizes how his

evangelical and academic trajectories converge and conflict. He addresses it to "Dr.

Anonymous," an imagined audience that represents a conflation of several of his spiritual

mentors. In it, Brian offers a poignant image of a Bible resting on his desk in a manner

that is "both prominent and subtle" and that "reflect[s his] own experiences of faith and

education." For Brian, the literal presence of the Bible in his academic context serves "to

underscore the prominence" of his faith and how it shapes his "intellectual growth in

academia." Brian admits, though, that his faith occupies "a place that is both primary and

problematic," an idea he went on to discuss more fully:

> It is primary because my Christian faith remains the substance of things
> hope[d] for, the very power of God to sustain, encourage, and develop me
> as a follower of Jesus Christ firstly, a[n] integrated person secondly, and
> an academic thirdly. The ordering of these three personas is purposeful,
> again reflecting my position on their importance to life. The problematic
> aspect relates to the environment in which my faith must live each day.

Brian's evangelical Christian faith is problematic because it is rarely welcomed in the

academy, the "secularization" of which, Brian wrote elsewhere, "is complete." After

comparing his faith to the Armor of God passage from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians—a

reference that indicates his sense of being embattled as an evangelical at a state

university—Brian asks rhetorically, "where will my faith stand?" His answer offers

insight as to the stance Brian often adopted in our interviews and in his academic writing:

"[My faith] stands in me, as I stand." There are echoes here of Martin Luther's protest

against the Catholic Church. And the kind of self Brian hopes to convey is that of

someone who will defend his faith. Instead of standing up against the Catholic Church,

though, Brian is protesting philosophical liberalism, secular humanism, and

antifoundationalism, perspectives that, according to Brian, are dominant and oppressive in rhetcomp.

As a graduate student in rhetcomp, Brian is familiar with many of the field's claims about writing, discourse, and identity. His use of terms like "literacy," "discourse," and "communities of practice," as well as his familiarity with scholarship that makes use of such terms, imply such an understanding. Attendant to this understanding of identity is his recognition that he inhabits multiple subjectivities that conflict to differing degrees. For example, in the essay Brian wrote that I will focus on in this chapter, Brian cites David Russell's idea that students experience a "double bind" in their writing, a sense of being "pulled in different directions" by the motives and objectives intrinsic to competing activity systems and their genres (Russell 534). When I asked Brian if he had experienced this double bind as a graduate student, he responded affirmatively.

> Well, sure. I think the very notion [we're talking about] is an issue of the double bind. The issue of having, as everyone does, multiple identities, if you will, with which you affiliate, and feeling pulled in separate directions based on the community of practice that you're in at the time. Particularly prevalent, and maybe particularly strong [...] when those personalities happen to be evangelicalism and academia. When those two come into contact at the level of graduate study, I think they have a stronger magnetic separation, if you will, instead of attraction, than some other personalities. In other words, it's not always as easy to integrate one with the other because there are aspects of both which tend to want to disassociate with or blame or even find fault in the other. And that's on both sides.

The complexity of his identity as it relates to his nexus of multimembership is nothing foreign to Brian. What Russell calls the double bind, Brian refers to using a similarly appropriate metaphor, that of magnetic separation.

Part of the way in which Brian negotiates this double bind is to subject his academic learning to his evangelical Christian worldview. This is one of the ways in which he is able to say that his faith is "primary." In a manner not unlike St. Augustine, Brian's faith precedes his knowledge and understanding. Here, for instance, is an excerpt from our first interview in which Brian articulates his worldview:

> The way that I look at anything—the way that I see a sunrise, or the way that I read a theory—I do that with a background recognition that ultimately all truth is God's truth. And thus I see reflected in those things the Creator Himself. So I see in a sunrise, as I mentioned, the hand of God. I see in a theory, no matter what it is, secular or not, that somewhere in there, there is something, there is some part of the truth, there is some— because I do believe in an objective truth, hence being an evangelical a lot of times we do—so I will see, you know, what in this, for example, theory can I reconcile and can I put up alongside of my beliefs? Will it coincide? Will it not? How does it so? And in that sense that's maybe what I say by how I interpret the world. Everything I see and learn I put through that lens of, Is it true? Does it hold up to my beliefs? And that isn't to say at the same time that I'm not putting my own beliefs up to scrutiny, but that's how I interpret the world.

What Brian says here corresponds to the paradigm for identity that he outlines in the letter he wrote prior to our final interview. He is first "a follower of Jesus Christ," second an "integrated person," and only then "an academic." He made it clear to me that "[t]he ordering of these three personas is purposeful, again reflecting [his] position on their importance to life."

A clear example of his identity prioritization emerged in the same interview. After Brian told me about how his faith shapes his worldview, I asked if he could think of specific theories he had encountered in his graduate work that he had subjected to the critical process he was enumerating. Without hesitation, be named social constructionism, which he defined as "the idea that everything is socially constructed, that our interpretations of the world are influenced by the upbringings, by the

126

communities of practice we're engaged in." He then explained his way of thinking

through social constructionism as an evangelical:

> And so in terms of my worldview, after studying [social constructionism],
> I would immediately [...] limit this by saying, well, yes, maybe there are
> social—and I would change the wording—*influences* upon us, but that
> does not mean that the way that we interpret everything is relative to our
> social upbringing. In other words, social constructionism tends to lead
> away from there being some sort of foundational truth—it's
> antifoundational, much like postmodernism—and whereas my Christian
> worldview would say, I have a foundation, I'm foundationalist. And so I'd
> change the wording and say instead of everything being relatively socially
> constructed, it's [...] socially influenced. But there is behind the language
> [...] an objective reality, there is meaning that can be derived from
> language, and even common agreement upon that meaning, and that not as
> far as someone like Lyotard or even Foucault or Derrida, that language
> isn't completely meaningless.

Though social constructionism is not synonymous with antifoundationalism, rhetcomp

has generally adopted social constructionist thought as such (see Bruffee, "Social"). And

Brian certainly understands social constructionism as contrary to his foundationalist

evangelical Christianity. What he tries to do here, though, is forge a middle way between

these conflicting positions: social *influence* offers a way for Brian to reconcile his faith

with a theory that is widely accepted in rhetcomp (Smit).

Subjecting a theory like social constructionism to his foundationalist faith

corresponds to his prioritization of identity: evangelical first, integrated person second,

academic third. It also highlights his awareness of convergence between his evangelical

and academic identities. To be sure, this convergence is not unidirectional—the direction

of influence does not proceed only from evangelical to academic. He does, however,

clearly privilege the evangelical over the academic. The former comprises the lens

through which he evaluates the latter. This idea of social influence also exemplifies what

Wenger calls *reconciliation*, the process of negotiating the potential conflicts that exist

among trajectories within an individual's nexus of multimembership. Social influence represents a way for Brian to accommodate a perspective that rhetcomp privileges without buying fully into the wider implication that truth and knowledge are contingent and situated—implications that conflict with his foundationalist views.

What I'd like to do is turn to Brian's academic writing to demonstrate how what he calls the "magnetic separation" between his evangelical and academic identities troubles his attempts to construct an integrated self, which Brian defined as "the sense of a whole person—a person who draws all aspects of [his] life together into a consistent personality [...]." The essay I'll discuss deals with the very question Brian and I pursued in our case study interviews, namely the extent to which evangelical graduate students in rhetcomp can integrate their faith into their academic practice. Brian's attempt to reconcile his evangelical and academic communities of practice leads to significant tensions in his essay, tensions that result from Brian's ongoing struggle to reconcile the evangelical and academic trajectories within his nexus of multimembership—and tensions, I might add, that suggest that his desire to live as an "integrated person" may be more difficult to achieve than merely subjecting his academic learning to his evangelical worldview.

Brian's Academic Writing

Brian wrote "Marginalization and Evangelical Christian Graduate Students in Composition Studies"[5] for a doctoral seminar that focused largely on postmodern rhetoric. As the title suggests, "Marginalization" is an essay about how the perspectives

---

[5] I've modified the title of Brian's essay in order to protect his identity as much as possible. I will also exclude specific details about his argument.

of evangelical Christian graduate students are often marginalized in rhetcomp. In his essay, Brian is concerned primarily with what professionalization means for evangelical Christian graduate students' identities—a focus, to be sure, that is quite similar to my own. A central component of his argument is that compositionists—especially those who teach graduate students—should recognize and value the identities and literacies of evangelical Christians. Early in his essay, Brian identifies the gap he's trying to fill: although there has been significant discussion in rhetcomp about accommodating the beliefs and identities of evangelical undergraduate students, little has been said about evangelical graduate students. On top of that, Brian argues, few contributions to the discussion have been written *by* scholars who identify as evangelical.

A key feature of "Marginalization," then, is Brian's explicit identification of himself as an evangelical Christian. He does so as early as his first paragraph:

> In the following [essay], I seek to find common ground upon which to address issues of professionalization surrounding students of faith in graduate programs in Composition from the perspective of a devout conservative (often labeled fundamentalist), evangelical Christian.

Although this disclosure is somewhat indirect, Brian identifies himself more directly two pages later. He does so in reference to a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article in which Robert W. Connor argues that college may be the best time for students to explore both secular *and* religious questions. Brian aligns his inquiry in "Marginalization" with Connor's assertion that it "would be useful to know more about evangelical-Christian students, whose prominence on campuses has increased so much in recent years." Brian identifies himself as "one of those students" and goes on to define how he will use the term "evangelical" in his essay. A bit later in "Marginalization," Brian admits that his

129

"own research agendas and religious heritage play a role in how [he] view[s] the topic as well as the framework from which [he] interpret[s] results."

Brian's evangelical identity also emerges explicitly in his essay in the form of his own personal experience. Unlike Austin, Brian does not see speaking from the "I" as a rhetorical move that will destabilize his credibility.

> In my own graduate career, several instructors have made it abundantly (and yet implicitly) clear that my religion had no place in the academic discourse I was learning to enter. I have had professors brush me off when I attempt[ed] to interject a faith-supported rationale for disagreeing with some theory.

Despite such overt "marginalization" of his and others' evangelical faith, Brian makes it clear that his beliefs shape the way he interprets various claims and theories in rhetcomp. For instance, after quoting Lizabeth Rand's statement that "[a] postmodern Christian sensibility is attainable" (352), Brian writes the following:

> While I have recognized the sense in which I, and conservative evangelicals, might agree with Rand, it must also be realized that many religious conservatives cannot hold to the tenets of postmodernism in its "all-encompassing" form and still claim a Christian worldview through which to interpret experience.

Brian clearly seeks to distance himself from postmodernism when he explains that evangelicals believe "essential [...] truth is objective because it is derived from an objective Creator Who is Himself the instantiation of Truth." Citing C.S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man*—a book that directly challenges relativism—Brian also notes his belief that "there is a standard of truth, right and wrong, good and bad, from which to derive our notions of better and worse, understanding and knowledge."

Brian's statement that truth derives "from an objective Creator Who is Himself the instantiation of Truth" highlights another strategy by which he announces his evangelical identity. Several times in his essay, Brian uses the term "Creator" with a

130

capital C to refer to God. He does the same with "Truth," "Maker," and the pronoun "Him" when it refers to God or Jesus. This was a conscious decision:

> I very purposefully take that position of capitalizing those pronouns and the word God when I'm talking about the evangelical God of the Bible— Yahweh of Scripture. That's a very purposeful move that could be an example of community of practice learning in an evangelical community? But it's also a philosophical move as well, because it reflects certain things I'm trying to imply about that—well, about God, about the subject of the pronouns.

His reference to communities of practice here is significant. The argument he makes in "Marginalization" centers on his belief that graduate students' evangelical literacies should be valued, not marginalized. In the interview where he said this, we had been talking about how his own literacy as an evangelical had shaped his writing of "Marginalization." Capitalizing key terms related to his faith thus represents one of the ways in which that influence emerges in his academic writing.

His evangelical literacy also emerges when Brian cites the Bible. Although he does not quote scripture like Austin did, Brian does include a brief parenthetical reference to Genesis 3 when he states that humanity is formed in the image of God. Towards the end of his essay, Brian also briefly discusses Romans 8.2, a verse that enumerates the Christian perspective of freedom through Christ. Finally, Brian's evangelical literacy emerges in his references to Christian thinkers like C.S. Lewis and Martin Luther. As he does with the Bible, though, Brian merely references these writers. He does not devote significant space to exploring what they say. This kind of ornamental citation is similar in motive to Brian's negotiation of "social influence" that I discussed earlier. Referencing Lewis, Luther, and the Bible allows him to achieve some degree of reconciliation between his evangelical and academic trajectories.

Despite the explicit identification of himself as an evangelical Christian, Brian makes an argument in "Marginalization" that is, in many ways, commonplace within rhetcomp. His overarching argument goes something like this: *Evangelical Christian graduate students, along with their identities and literacies, have been marginalized in rhetcomp. However, since rhetcomp values the identities and literacies of individuals from across the spectrum of diversity, compositionists should not marginalize but rather value as legitimate the identities and literacies of evangelical Christian graduate students.* As he put it in one of our interviews, Brian's essay is a call for awareness. In constructing his argument in such a way, he was conscious of the fact that it paralleled a common argument in rhetcomp.

> In terms of having a model for ["Marginalization"], I did not have one in mind as I wrote the paper, though I am and was at the time fully aware of many of the typical academic moves that are made and I think I just implicitly drew from that. [...] There's typical moves about, you know, [...] we need to be more careful about X and Y, and we need to be aware of Z. You know, there were certain moves I was implicitly making, which is I think something you learn to do obviously in grad school the more you read and the more you learn. You learn to embody the discourse of the community in which you participate.

In saying that he has learned to recognize and reproduce rhetorical moves that are commonly found in rhetcomp scholarship, Brian is also suggesting that he can inhabit various subject positions acceptable in academic writing.

This is evident in his essay. For instance, Brian aligns himself primarily as a composition scholar writing to other composition scholars. He draws on the work of established scholars—Patricia Bizzell, Shannon Carter, Cheryl Glenn, Stanley Fish, Michel Foucault, Gesa Kirsch, and Elizabeth Vander Lei, to name a few—both to agree and disagree with their various perspectives. At one point, Brian also seeks to reconceptualize a term that he feels has been misunderstood and misused in rhetcomp.

Following standard practice as represented in many published articles in the field, Brian forecasts his argument and includes section headings that serve as signposts to guide the reader through his argument. He's clearly familiar with rhetcomp scholarship and with the kinds of rhetorical moves that such scholars make.

Partly because of this familiarity, he uses the term "we" throughout his essay to position himself as a rhetcomp scholar speaking as part of the community of rhetcomp scholars. One example of this occurs in the middle of his essay: "*We* must be constantly vigilant that as *we* 'mold' future scholars, *we* do not force them into a predetermined mold, but allow them to fill the mold they see best fits the negotiation of their multiple identities" (emphasis mine). What's interesting here is that he is identifying primarily as someone who trains "future scholars," even though he is himself a "future scholar." Also worth pointing out is the fact that he uses "them" and "they" to refer to the evangelical Christian graduate students he feels are marginalized, even though he is, again, one of those students. Of course, as I mentioned earlier, he identifies explicitly as an evangelical graduate student elsewhere in his essay—there are occasions when "we" and "us" clearly refer to evangelical Christian graduate students. But he does not consistently position himself throughout his essay. To be sure, Brian himself admitted that his essay was still a work in progress. When I asked him about the shifts in his use of pronouns, he said he was aware he would have to be more consistent when revising. I'd like to suggest, though, that the inconsistency in how he identifies himself—at times as a rhetcomp scholar, at others as an evangelical graduate student—speaks to the difficulty inherent in negotiating an identity as both.

This inconsistency may result at least in part from Brian's sense that evangelical Christianity is embattled in the secular academy. I use the term "embattled" following sociologist Christian Smith's use of it. In *American Evangelicals: Embattled and Thriving*, Smith argues that American evangelicalism "perceives itself to be [...] embattled with forces that seem to oppose or threaten it" (89). Brian certainly constructed himself—and his faith—as in opposition with dominant trends in rhetcomp. In "Marginalization," Brian writes that rhetcomp is "heavily oriented toward a secular humanist perspective." Because of that, religion—especially fundamentalist evangelical Christianity—has been "marginalized" and "has receded into the background of the academy." At one point, he also cites a scholarly text that he believes speaks to "the struggle inherent between secular instructors and religious graduates." Earlier, I noted how Brian echoed Martin Luther's protest against the Catholic Church. Frequently in his essay, Brian inhabits a similar subject position—that of embattled evangelical Christian who seeks to protest that which he sees as oppressive.

Audience and Purpose

One explanation as to why Brian inhabits this subject position may result from his considerations of audience and purpose. When I asked him about his audience, Brian told me that he was writing largely for his professor, someone who, as I learned throughout our interviews, espoused a set of beliefs and values much different from his own. In fact, Brian initially had chosen a different topic for his essay, one in which he wanted to use the perspective of a prominent Christian scholar to critique the postmodern perspectives that rhetcomp has embraced. Despite the fact that this topic, in Brian's words, "would

have built heavily on reading we had done," he "felt very clearly" that it was "not a direction" the professor wanted him "to pursue."

> It's not like he shut me down, saying, you know, "You can't write on this topic." Though when I originally went to him for a topic, [...] I was gonna bring in a lot of things that [a well-known Christian scholar said] and how he sort of was a forerunner or predecessor of many things that postmodern theorists said. Of course, [this Christian scholar] didn't agree with them, but he sort of foretold the way things would go and the views that they would have—the positions they would have to take in a lot of his essays—philosophical essays. And I wanted to sort of look at that, and he shut me down on that one pretty straightforward. So then I turned in a different direction.

This is an instance in which Brian's evangelical literacy, informed as it is by the writings of this particular Christian scholar, was unwelcome in his academic community of practice.

In our interview, Brian went on to say that, though his professor is "open to some things," Brian knew he had "to be a lot more careful" to "justify" them appropriately. This led Brian to include a lengthy section in his essay that he later realized was ancillary to his argument. It's a section, though, in which Brian attempts not only to defend his methodology but also to challenge key misconceptions about evangelical Christianity, not the least of which is, as Brian put it in an interview, the "problematic [...] dichotomization of rationality and faith." This section of "Marginalization" is substantial—nearly ten pages long!—and its presence speaks to Brian's sense of needing to justify his perspective for an audience he knows does not value it. Additionally, appealing to reason and rationality speaks to the foundationalist, modernist underpinnings of his faith, perspectives that don't align with antifoundationalism in general (Webber, *Younger* 96-7) or with his professor's theoretical leanings in particular.

135

As a burgeoning scholar in rhetcomp, though, Brian was not writing solely for his professor. Later in our interview, Brian provided a more complete picture of his audience.

> I specifically had in mind an audience that represented [my] professor's viewpoint, a viewpoint that was generally not friendly or accepting of the religious identities that we present as compositionists: those who espouse [...] secular humanist positions. But I thought, I also imagined that parts of it would be for the audience that would accept that position. But generally, [for a] position who represented him.

As he expressed to me on numerous occasions, Brian's hope was to revise his essay and eventually submit it for publication. It is thus significant that Brian conceives of his audience as holding a position that is contrary to his own. There's a distinct sense of distance between Brian's evangelical Christian faith and the viewpoint represented by the "secular humanists" to which he writes.

Part of that distance likely results from Brian's awareness that his purposes for writing "Marginalization" in some ways transcended the "safe" epistemological territory of academic discourse. Note the way Brian talks about his purpose in the freewrite he did prior to our third interview. I include part of it here with the original emphasis.

> I noted that writing "for" the professor was only *one* sense in which I wrote ["Marginalization"] due to the fact that I feel part of my calling in life is to integrate my faith into my scholarship, my academic career. So, in another sense, I was writing the piece *for God* and *for* myself, and my faith.

Like Austin, then, Brian sees his academic writing as imbued with a sense of divine purpose, a consideration for which academic discourse has no framework (see Brummett). Brian's "calling"—a concept that is highly significant for evangelicals—is to integrate his faith into his scholarship, an objective that certainly shapes how he writes "Marginalization." This sense of purpose as an evangelical goes hand in hand with his sense that God is part of his audience.

Of course, Brian never explains his sense of divine purpose and audience in the essay itself. Quite the contrary, he states his purpose in terms that are appropriate for his audience and context. Early on in his essay, for example, he writes that his goal is "to find common ground upon which to address issues of professionalization surrounding students of [evangelical Christian] faith in graduate programs in Composition […]." He goes on to say that he will do so by "rely[ing] partly on arguments already being well-articulated in the context of the teaching of first year writing, as well as [his] own experiences as a graduate student in Composition." And, in classic academic fashion, he hopes to "fill a gap" in the scholarship. In short, his stated purposes align closely with common scholarly practice in rhetcomp.

What Exactly *Is* an Evangelical Literacy?

Brian does explicitly identify himself as a foundationalist evangelical in his essay. Doing so is central to his purpose—ultimately, he's arguing for "teachers of composition to better accommodate […] the literacies of evangelical Christians." Elsewhere in "Marginalization," Brian explains that his purpose is to encourage compositionists to "giv[e] faith a voice in the classroom instead of [marginalizing] it." He continues:

> Though teachers may feel discomfort, even aversion, to certain religious discourses, we must guide students to productive rhetorics that convey rational arguments from *within the literacies* with which they are familiar. (emphasis added)

The disciplinary terms Brian uses here—literacy, discourse, rhetorics—suggest that he is getting at the argument that rhetcomp should value the evangelical identities of graduate students. Such students should be able to integrate their faith into their academic work. Rhetcomp, in other words, should make room for what he refers to as the

"spiritual" or "religious" literacies of evangelical graduate students. Here, for example, is

Brian announcing a significant part of his argument in "Marginalization":

> Often, students and faculty feel their religious identity is one that must be
> kept quiet, separating it from their academic persona. While not
> disregarding the issues this separation entails, I would like to focus instead
> on how we can productively encourage this spiritual literacy in members
> of the composition community, as well as in our students.

Later in his essay, Brian discusses how Shannon Carter's pedagogy of rhetorical

dexterity can help rhetcomp value and validate the "religious literacies" of graduate

students:

> By helping students use their current religious literacies, literacies of
> competence embedded in communities of practice, we can enable the
>
> learning of new literacies, especially academic ones. This cannot be done,
> Carter argues, by ignoring current literacies, religion included, but she
> contends that "we must routinely and explicitly validate the complex
> systems in which these students are already considered literate by taking
> them seriously and asking our students to do the same" (99).

What Brian does not do explicitly in his essay, though, is enumerate what a "religious" or

"spiritual" literacy might entail. Put otherwise, he never directly answers the question,

What does it mean to be literate spiritually or religiously? or *What does it mean to have*

an evangelical Christian literacy? He does, however, implicitly identify some of the

characteristics of such literacies.

One characteristic that Brian understands to be central to an evangelical literacy is

a foundational belief in absolute truth. Early in his essay, for instance, Brian writes that

"students of religious background will view their own ethics based in a moral (and

absolute) standard [...]." This emphasis on absolute standards relates to his belief in

absolute truth. Later in his essay, for instance, Brian notes that "[p]hilosophical liberalism

cannot accept, in postmodern theory, any candidate who claims truth, especially one who

claims objective truth." And for Brian, philosophical liberalism represents the antithesis

of his foundationalist evangelical faith. He cites Bronwyn Williams' explanation of why

the academy is averse to "issues of religion," an explanation that centers on tensions of

epistemology, authority, conceptions of language, and politics (107). But then Brian turns

the equation around: "This aversion is precisely the same discomfort that students of faith

experience when the ideas of philosophical liberalism are espoused in the classroom

without regard for dissenting opinions." Later in his essay, Brian discusses how

evangelical graduate students must "appropriate the genre of the profession of

composition [...] while refusing to appropriate the liberal philosophies that attempt to

destroy the previously appropriated motives of his or her religious identity." For Brian,

then, the principles underlying philosophical liberalism conflict with the principles

underlying his foundationalist view of evangelical Christianity.

In his freewrite for the fourth interview, Brian linked his foundationalist

perspective to his understanding of evangelical literacy.

> My evangelical literacies, that worldview, allows me to critique the
> postmodern assumptions underlying authors such as Foucault and Derrida
> in ways that those who do not start from a foundationalist worldview will
> not. A literacy that encourages an objective textual reality interprets
> individual actions, individual responsibility, differently than a
> constructivist or even subjectivist one. Thus, my evangelical literacies
> enable a unique perspective on other texts, other bodies of work; a
> perspective with which, I would argue, a good portion of our nation
> sympathizes.

Brian may be right that "a good portion of our nation sympathizes" with his religious

views—two of the surveys I cited in Chapter 1 attest to this. However, the 2007 Institute

for Jewish and Community Research survey also suggests that faculty at U.S. colleges

and universities "feel coldly" and "most unfavorably" about evangelicals (Tobin and

Weinberg 2). If these sentiments hold true for rhetcomp scholars—if, as Shannon Carter

observes in "Living inside the Bible (Belt)," there are irreconcilable differences between evangelical Christianity and the kind of academic discourse privileged in rhetcomp—then the question for Brian is not one of critique but of authority. Brian certainly can critique rhetcomp from the vantage of his foundationalist evangelical identity. The question remains, though, as to whether he can he speak *from* that identity within rhetcomp. Is his foundationalist evangelical perspective welcome in the writing he does for his academic community of practice?

The Power's in the Discourse

As I pointed out earlier, Brian intuitively recognizes that there are certain rhetorical moves that are privileged within rhetcomp that, if he employs them, will grant his argument legitimacy. This recognition stems from a conception of discourse Brian was studying in the course for which he wrote "Marginalization." The course focused on postmodern rhetoric, and one of the theorists they read was Michel Foucault. Brian cites Foucault's *Order of Discourse* in his essay, noting that "[t]he source of power, according to Foucault, is discourse itself." One of the passages he quotes from Foucault says as much:

> [...] discourse is not simply that which manifests (or hides) desire—it is also the object of desire; and since, as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized. (1461)

Though Brian did not talk specifically about power in any of our interviews, the idea does emerge in his essay. In forecasting his argument, for example, Brian notes that he "will conclude by arguing that in order for graduate students of faith entering Composition studies to negotiate their multiple discourse identities (and literacies), those faculty

140

seeking to professionalize them must be more receptive to these students' religious identities." There is a sense in which he implicitly sees the ability to speak and be heard as conferred by those in power in the field. The authority to speak as an evangelical is not something that evangelicals such as Brian can develop for themselves; it must be granted by those in the field who already hold it.

This idea emerges in Brian's essay when he is explaining how Foucault's concept of discourse matters to his argument. Brian cites a passage from *Order of Discourse* in which Foucault defines discipline as "a principle of control over the production of discourse. The discipline fixes limits for discourse by the action of an identity which takes the form of a permanent re-actuation of the rules" (1467). Brian then writes the following:

> These rules provide the learner with the means to enter the discourse while at the same time, providing those in power with the means to distribute authority. It is not a question of who has power but of who has influence or a gravity that causes people to listen to them and the authority to certify (normalization and hierarchical observation—and their combination in examination). Who is accorded influence? Who has the power to influence and who has the power to officially recognize that one has the marks to enter another group?

This string of questions echoes a common question in rhetcomp: *Who is allowed to speak?* Or this: *Who has the authority to speak?* The question is one he hopes to answer for himself and for other evangelicals. It's a question, too, that matters to his writing of "Marginalization." Does Brian have the authority to speak—and be heard—as an evangelical writing academically in rhetcomp?

In *Writing and Identity*, Ivanič writes that though students may harbor "ambivalent feelings about the intrinsic value of academic conventions," they often perceive such conventions "as worth aspiring to, if only as a means to another end" (236).

To an extent, Brian's motives for mastering academic discourse match Ivanič's point. In the following excerpt, for example, he talks about the possibility of students bringing their evangelical identities to academic discourse:

> [W]e have to play by the rules. We have to live by those standards and use those standards in ways that positively portray us. There's always the idea of going against authority, I guess, and playing with standards. But you have to learn the standards in order to manipulate them. [...] People like Gloria Anzaldúa who do that kind of thing. So, yes, there is a place for evangelical discourse. But I think that we have to know both our literacy—our evangelical discourse—and the discourse of the academy—before [...] we can use them in such a way that is going to positively portray us and enable change. [...] You can't talk to someone unless you know their language.

Brian identifies himself ambivalently with what he refers to as the "standards" of academic discourse. He notes, quite matter of factly, that one must play by the rules, a point similar to what George Marsden argues in *The Outrageous Idea of a Christian Scholarship*. At the same time, Brian recognizes that there is room for change. His invocation of Gloria Anzaldúa as an example of this kind of "manipulation"—the process of showing oneself to be master of academic discourse in order to bend its conventions—would be familiar to most compositionists. Brian may be right that aspiring scholars must master the conventions of academic discourse in order to manipulate them. What also seems to be true, though, is that the act of appropriating such conventions is far from ideologically neutral. Appropriating academic discourse and conventions shapes Brian's discursive self in ways that implicate his evangelical identity.

Antifoundational Premise, Foundationalist Perspective

At the outset of this chapter, I quoted from the heuristic writing Brian did prior to our first interview. In that letter, which he addressed to "Dr. Anonymous," Brian explains

that his faith "drives [him] to succeed" and "to act in ways that glorify God." This includes his desire "to communicate with language that reflects [his] beliefs and character." In our interview, I asked Brian to talk more about this desire. Specifically, I asked him if doing so in his academic community of practice ever seemed difficult.

> I think it gets tricky every moment of the day. In that sense—
> communicate in a way that reflects my belief—is that [...] when I learn
> something that maybe I disagree with, it would be to possibly question
> that in ways that show either where I stand, or, if not that, question it in
> ways to have others think—understand that there are other options out
> there. You know, if someone—if we're working on a section of
> postmodernism, and we're talking about antifoundationalism, and the
> subjectivity and relativism of language, I might bring up things that might
> be problematic in that worldview or even in that interpretation and say,
> "Well, how do we—how do we come to terms with these things?" And
> "Are we necessarily—Is it necessarily wrong that people have held other
> positions?"

Challenging a position that seems to have achieved superiority over others is a common critical move in rhetcomp. And it's basically what Brian seems to be doing here—reminding his colleagues that their postmodern perspective is not beyond question (see Anderson). Moreover, the fact that he is challenging antifoundationalist and relativistic perspectives surely corresponds to his foundationalist Christian worldview.

At the same time, there's a central irony present in what he says. Brian's critique of the dominance of antifoundationalism is, in itself, an antifoundational argument. The antifoundationalist premise he draws on to make his critique is evident in his question, "Is it necessarily wrong that people have held other positions?" In a graduate seminar that focuses on postmodern conceptions of rhetoric, the expected answer to a question such as this would be something like, "No, it isn't necessarily wrong, because we've long agreed that there is no One Right Position that transcends all others. It's all made up of 'other positions.' Right and wrong are not universal categories but rather are contingent and

143

historically situated." A foundationalist, on the other hand, would answer differently, citing the presence of an objective standard against which claims can be judged (Bizzell, *Academic* 204). As I pointed out earlier, Brian is a foundationalist in that he believes the Christian God is "the instantiation of Truth." It is this "standard of truth" that, in Brian's estimation, allows for notions of "right and wrong" and "good and bad."

This is not the "standard" on which Brian premises his argument, though. Brian's purpose in "Marginalization" is to open up space for foundationalist evangelical Christianity, and he does so by arguing from an antifoundationalist premise. Early on in the essay, for example, Brian calls for compositionists to "respect the conclusions of the 'community of practice' from which many of the students and colleagues I am writing about represent." On the surface, the argument Brian makes here seems to align with his identity as a foundationalist evangelical—he is, after all, calling for recognition of the legitimacy of his perspective. And yet, in defining "conclusions" as resulting from communities of practice, Brian is aligning himself with a perspective that is more social and contingent than foundational. Community of practice theory is, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, a social theory. Etienne Wenger rejects the notion that identity, meaning, and knowledge are objective, absolute, or eternally existent. Rather, they are all products of the kinds of social negotiations within and among various communities of practice. In asserting that conclusions derive from communities of practice, then, Brian is perpetuating a view that he says he opposes, namely that truth and knowledge are contingent, situated, antifoundational. The implicit premise Brian draws on is the idea that no discourse is necessarily better than any other.

Brian's use of an antifoundational premise emerges more explicitly later in his essay. In the following paragraph, for instance, Brian discusses the complicated relationship between multiculturalism and religion in rhetcomp.

> Various scholars are now making the declaration "that postmodernists ignore religious identity; thus, in the name of 'diversity' an entire subculture often gets silenced" (Rand 351). In the name of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, race, and others, the heated and potentially explosive culture of religion has been marginalized. To clarify a point, I am making no claims that these areas of diversity just mentioned should not be studied. The benefits of understanding issues of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and race are important for compositionists to understand if we are to continue to encourage "our students to become more critical and self-aware" (358), but religion has been "othered" along with these areas.

The sentiment that Brian borrows from Lizabeth Rand, namely the desire to help students "become more critical and self-aware," parallels what Chris Anderson argues in "The Description of an Embarrassment." As I discussed in Chapter 1, Anderson draws on James Berlin's social-epistemic rhetoric to make the case that, even if writing instructors don't favor the testimonial language evangelicals often use in their essays, they have to grant that it is not intrinsically worse (or better) than the academic discourse they favor. After citing Berlin's argument that knowledge is a "product of the dialectic" between an individual, her discourse community, and "the material conditions of existence" (qtd. in Anderson 13; Berlin 730), Anderson maintains that "effective teaching and writing are always self-aware, always examining their own assumptions" (13)—always, to use another term, critical.

The possibility of such critique and self-awareness derives from an antifoundationalist assumption. Again, what Anderson argues for in his essay is that the rhetorician who espouses social-epistemic rhetoric and the student who identifies as a fundamentalist Christian *both* should recognize that their perspectives are not without

their own biases. The antifoundationalist premise lurking here is that every perspective is situated and contingent and, as such, not beyond critique. As Patricia Bizzell puts it, antifoundationalism rejects the existence of any absolute standard for judging truth, claiming instead that "the individual mind can never transcend personal emotions, social circumstances, and historical conditions" (*Academic* 204). From an antifoundationalist perspective, then, literacy and knowledge are never neutral but are always shaped by the knower's social, cultural, historical, economic, racial, and religious background. This stands in contrast to a foundationalist conception of literacy, which Bizzell defines as the belief in "an absolute standard for the judgment of truth" (*Academic* 204). Such a standard is knowable and "enables the individual mind to transcend personal emotions, social circumstances, and larger historical conditions" in order "to reflect critically on them" (204). A foundational standard of truth would be timeless, objective, and thus beyond critique.

Thus, what Brian is getting at in the passage above is the idea that religion, like race, class, gender, and other categories of difference, shapes individuals' consciousness—*how* people know, interpret, read, and write. In doing so, he's echoing an argument that has become a commonplace in rhetcomp since the "social turn" (see Trimbur). That argument is this: because there's no way to escape our own perspectival biases, fostering critical awareness is essential to ensuring that no single perspective, to borrow Burke's terms, masquerades as the perspective of perspectives (see DePalma, Ringer, and Webber). Moreover, the importance of recognizing and valuing diversity as a key component of literacy rests on the assumption that literacy is not autonomous but is, as Brian Street contends, "inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society"

(433). Literacy is "saturated with ideology" (Street 435). There is not one "literacy" that is "out there" and that can be mastered once and for all; knowledge is not found. Rather, there are "literac*ies*," all of which are products of specific socio-historical contexts. This is precisely why, after arguing for the merits of an ideological view of literacy, Street discusses various literacy theorists who conducted ethnographic studies of literacy in various cultural contexts. One of these studies, Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways With Words*, is well known to compositionists.

The antifoundationalist assumption also emerges in another language choice Brian makes. Prior to the passage I cited above, Brian writes in his essay that "[s]tudents and professors alike *make meaning* out of their world through the lenses [...] of their belief systems, whether those systems contain the concept of an objective Truth or not" (emphasis mine). Again, the point he's getting at here is that we all have biases that influence the way we read the world. We all have perspectives that are shaped by our beliefs. As I understand it, though, the phrase "make meaning" suggests a paradigm in which meaning does not exist to be discovered but is contingent upon human knowers and their socio-cultural situatedness. "Making meaning" bears traces of Berlin's social-epistemic rhetoric, a decidedly antifoundational view that conflicts with Brian's foundational belief that objective reality exists, that it is knowable, and that its source is God-as-absolute-Truth.

Toward the end of his essay, Brian offers answers to his own question, "What, then, are compositionists to do?"

> In order for teachers of composition to better accommodate and [...] facilitate the literacies of evangelical Christians [...], we need to enable those students to use the literacies with which they are comfortable and familiar to guide them into an understanding of new literacies. [...] Instead

of asking peers, students, or colleagues to abandon the literacies of faith
from which they sustain their identity [...], we should encourage the use
of what Shannon Carter calls "a pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity."

The appeal of Carter's pedagogy for Brian is that one does not have to abandon one's

faith-based literacies. Rather, Carter explains, rhetorical dexterity "trains writers to

effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and lingiustic codes of

a new community of practice [...] based on a relatively accurate assessment of another,

more familiar one" (574). And the kinds of literacies Carter discusses in her essay,

including "deep knowledge of the Bible and its applications in day-to-day life" (574), are

certainly important to evangelicals like Brian and the students Carter discusses in her

essay.

At the same time, Carter herself acknowledges the "irreconcilability" between

evangelical Christianity and the academy (574). While evangelicals tend to share the goal

of witnessing and saving souls, the aims of "academic rhetoric" generally involve

"pluralism" (578). Indeed, such plurality is, as Carter implies, intrinsically woven into the

very fabric of her pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity—a way of teaching that has as its goal

the development of "flexibility and critical consciousness" within students (579). Citing

the New Literacy Studies, Carter sees literacy not as an "abstract set of rigid standards

but rather as a blend of mutable social forces deeply situated in time and place" (579). As

a result, the perspective Carter forwards is one in which "hierarchies among literacies"

are "necessarily flatten[ed]" (579). From this vantage, one literacy cannot be "inherently

more significant or valuable than another" (579).

Carter's pedagogy of rhetorical dexterity is thus premised on social

constructionist, antifoundational assumptions. And though she argues that rhetorical

dexterity is a strategy that allows students to use their evangelical literacies to help them

148

learn academic literacy, what her pedagogy does not necessarily make room for are those

aspects of evangelical literacy at the level of belief and value—the foundationalist

perspectives often held by such students. Even in her section that explores potential

"common ground" between evangelical and academic epistemologies, Carter must admit

that the assumptions about Truth that many evangelicals hold are "irreconcilable" with

the social theories that she and many writing teachers espouse (584). Thus, whereas

rhetorical dexterity does open up some space for students to learn academic discourse

without discrediting the importance of, say, their biblical literacy, what such students

must still do in an academic community of practice is set aside the belief that evangelical

literacy is grounded in absolute, objective truth. In order to engage in rhetorical dexterity,

students must think antifoundationally.

I'd like to submit that Brian's attempt in "Marginalization" to argue for

recognition of his foundationalist evangelical Christian perspective highlights such

irreconcilability. Again, that aspect is literacy at a deep level—literacy at the level of

belief, assumption, and value (Gee). Brian can certainly introduce some aspects of his

faith-based literacy into his academic writing—he can cite Scripture, refer to C. S. Lewis,

and capitalize key terms like "Creator," "Truth," and "Him." What he is unable to do,

though, is argue from his foundationalist Christian perspective. He cannot premise his

argument on the assumption that Christianity is true, that the Christian God is the source

of truth, and that such truth comprises the standard from which to judge right and wrong,

good and bad. To make an argument that will be heard in his academic community of

practice, he must abandon his foundationalist premises and, if only temporarily, argue

from the same antifoundationalist position that he elsewhere rejects. He cannot fully identify as a foundationalist evangelical in his academic writing.

A Tricky Argument

To be sure, just because Brian argues from an antifoundational premise does not mean that he has ingested that perspective whole. One can certainly learn the argumentative strategy of one's opponents in order to use it against them. But it's worth pointing out that Brian did seem to identify wholeheartedly with the argument he was making in "Marginalization." In the following excerpt from the freewrite Brian wrote prior to our third interview, he makes it clear that he was excited about writing "Marginalization" because he felt he was able to write from his own identity as an evangelical. Again, I've retained Brian's original emphasis:

> I was able to write from *my* identity, which grows out of my faith. Of course I wrote with my audience in mind, all good writers do. Of course I wrote in such a way, used language in such a way, that my ideas were conveyed in the least offensive manner while maintaining a reasonable argument supporting my position. There have been papers in the past in which I have assumed an identity in which I was more "ambivalent," but ["Marginalization"] was more freeing than those papers have ever been. It allowed me to draw from the literacies of faith I hold dear, and from which I draw strength.

In our interview about this essay, Brian added that "Marginalization" represented "one of [his] most satisfying papers." He went on to discuss his experiences writing it:

> This paper has been really good, really exciting for me to write—to draw from my own religious identity—my evangelical literacies, so to speak— and bring those into the classroom in such a way that I'm incorporating and integrating my faith into my own scholarship, my own identity and professionalization, if you will.

I'm reminded here of Austin's excitement in being able to write "Christian Schools vs. Secular Schools." As I discussed in Chapter 2, writing that essay for Austin allowed him

to identify with his schooled writing. In Ivanič's terms, Austin demonstrated ownership over what he was saying in "Christian Schools," to the extent that the essay took on significance beyond that of mere exercise (222). Based on Brian's freewrite, it seems safe to say that he shared an experience similar to Austin's. In stressing that he was able to write from his identity and from the "literacies of faith" he "holds dear," Brian certainly demonstrates ownership of "Marginalization."

To be sure, there does seem to be evidence that Brian was aware of making an argument that appealed more to his audience's values and expectations than it reflected his own. In our second interview, I pointed out that Brian was making an antifoundational argument to challenge antifoundationalism and to advocate for recognition of his foundationalist perspective. Brian's response to my observation provides insight into how he negotiates his identity as an evangelical graduate student.

> Um, a lot of times I am. It's like that whole quib [...] of postmodernism says, "There are no absolute truths. That very statement is an absolute truth." So in that sense, yes. You know, I often try to show that within the framework they're using, why does it not work? Because otherwise [...] academics tend to say things like, "Well, you're just using your faith or the Bible to explain"—you can't, in other words—things like, "You can't use the Bible to explain this, x, y, or z." And so in that sense, it's where C.S. Lewis never tried—he said, you know, I'm gonna use your own logic to deceive you or at least help you recognize that this isn't a) the only position, and b) maybe even a reliable position to put your faith in, so to speak.

Based on this response, Brian does seem to be aware that he is using an antifoundational argument in support of a foundational perspective. The fact that he cites C. S. Lewis is telling, since one of Lewis's strategies as an apologist involved an emphasis on "learn[ing] the language of [one's] audience" ("Christian Apologetics" 96). Like Anderson, Brian can see when antifoundationalists are "absolutist in their anti-absolutism" (13). What's interesting, though, is that even in this response Brian is

151

employing an antifoundational premise—antifoundationalism may not be "the *only* position" (emphasis mine). Brian continually returned to this kind of premise.

In fact, the answer he offered when I pressed him on this point suggests that Brian may not have been fully aware of the extent to which he was drawing on the same perspective he rejects.

> *Jeff*: It does still seem, though, that by premising your argument upon an antifoundationalist assumption—I mean, it seems like you see some logic in that position.
>
> *Brian*: Now, what do you mean? Explain what you mean by that— premising my argument on an antifoundationalist assumption.
>
> *Jeff*: Well, because you say in your—kinda the fourth line from the bottom in your paragraph in Excerpt 1—you say, "Is it necessarily wrong that people have held other positions?"
>
> *Brian*: Right.
>
> *Jeff*: And, you know, several lines above that you say, you know, you try to help people see that there are other options out there. And, you know, that kind of talking about options and different positions—that seems very antifoundationalist in the sense that there's not one way of looking at things; there are multiple ways of looking at things.
>
> *Brian*: Ah, okay. Now I see where you're coming from.

The fact that I had to define for Brian what it means to argue from an antifoundationalist perspective is significant. There's a sense in which he was aware that terms such as *antifoundationalism* have implications that conflict with his evangelical belief, but he was unaware of what using antifoundational arguments looks like in practice.

Brian did answer my question about his use of an antifoundational premise. He referenced the preface to *Mere Christianity* in which C.S. Lewis uses a metaphor about a hallway with various doors to explain his purpose in the book. As per the title, Lewis's goal in the book is to discuss what is essential to Christianity, and he wants to do so by setting aside denominational divisions. Here's how Brian used Lewis' metaphor:

Now there are doors along this hallway, and each door might represent a different type of faith, a different denomination, maybe or, you know, Catholicism, or Lutheranism, or Methodism, or whatever it is. So each doorway might represent something else, and those doorways work for different people. You may open this door and say, you know, "This door doesn't work for me," and then you may go to another door, but the hallway is the common ground.

Brian then compared his argument in "Marginalization" to Lewis' hallway. Like Lewis, Brian is trying to find common ground between his own and his audience's perspectives. "[I]f you start from the hallway," Brian told me, "you can get people to the door [...]." He continues:

[I]t's not necessarily that I'm trying to be inclusive or the opposite and be completely exclusive—and that doesn't mean I don't have strong beliefs about John 14.6[6]—but it does mean that I think for particularly secular humanists, the hallway tends to be the place that is the best start for them. And once you can get them there, then they're willing to see that there are actually other doors in the hallway.

To some extent, the metaphor works. Lewis's goal in the book is to talk about what is (or should be) common ground amongst various denominations within Christian tradition. But the hallway that Lewis is talking about and the hallway that Brian invokes are two very different hallways. The common ground in Lewis's hallway includes the premise that Christianity is true even if there are different ways of going about it. The hallway Brian must step into in order to find common ground with his audience is framed by a much different premise—there is *no* foundation from which truth and knowledge is built. It seems quite telling, in fact, that Brian returns again to his antifoundational premise at the end of his explanation: once he can get "secular humanists" into the

---

[6] "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

hallway, he believes he can help them "see that there are actually other doors in the hallway." It's as if Brian is trying to out-antifoundation the antifoundationalists.

Chapter Conclusion

Brian is savvy enough of a scholar to know that making an argument from a foundational premise will not fly with his audience. As he makes clear in "Marginalization," he has already experienced being "brush[ed] off" by professors because he "attempt[ed] to interject a faith-supported rationale for disagreeing with some theory." Because of such experiences, he must set aside his foundational premises and take up antifoundational ones in order to be heard. At first glance, this may not seem like much of a problem. Just because he's making an antifoundational argument doesn't mean he has abandoned his foundational faith. At the same time, though, if Brian follows his reasoning to its logical end, he would have to accept the argument that his own perspective, that of a foundationalist evangelical Christianity, is not beyond critique. At least within the confines of the kind of academic discourse privileged in rhetcomp— discourse that has antifoundationalism as its dominant paradigm—Brian would have to admit that his perspective is simply one among many. Of course, he could do so without necessarily holding the same beliefs or values espoused by, say, Hindu or atheistic discourse. But he would have to let go of any claim that his own discourse contains or speaks for absolute truth. He can't identify fully as a foundational evangelical Christian while making an antifoundational argument.

And that's the kicker. In an essay in which he purports to argue for recognition of students' religious literacies—and primarily for the foundationalist evangelicalism he

espouses—he is not able to argue *from* that literacy. If Brian had attempted to argue from

his foundationalist perspective in an essay written for scholars in rhetcomp, he would

essentially betray the expectations of his readers. In fact, in regards to the section in

"Marginalization" where Brian *does* try to write from his foundationalist perspective, his

professor commented in unambiguous terms that he "absolutely disagree[d] with" it.

Brian's professor included the following comment on a draft of "Marginalization." I

include it here with its original emendations and emphases:

> I hope you see the overall tone of my responses as helpful and instructive,
> as I intended them to be. I also hope you understand that I feel as
> ~~compelled~~ strongly in my own convictions about what is and isn't
> appropriate in terms of academic standards of reasoning—that is,
> evidence—as you do in yours and so <u>needed</u> to make my perspective
> known.

This set of conflicting convictions—Brian's foundational beliefs and his professor's

antifoundational convictions—represents at least part of the irreconcilable gap Shannon

Carter names in "Living inside the Bible (Belt)."

Thus it is that Brian, as he writes in "Marginalization," understands that "the

[evangelical] student needs to appropriate the genre of the profession of composition [...]

while refusing to appropriate the liberal philosophies that attempt to destroy the

previously appropriated motives of his or her religious identity." What happens

otherwise, Brian writes, is that students who espouse a belief system similar to his own

are appropriated by discourse, "force[d ...] into a predetermined mold." The problem is

that using a genre and appropriating its attendant beliefs and values may not be as

discrete as Brian suggests. Bakhtin argues that "[t]here can be no such thing as an

absolutely neutral utterance" (84), adding a few pages later that "all our utterances" are

"filled with others' words" that "we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate" (89).

155

Extending Bakhtin's thought, Anis Bawarshi observes that "theorists have begun to question traditional views of genres as simply innocent, artificial, and even arbitrary forms that contain ideas" (23). In rejecting the "container view of genre," Bawarshi argues that genres are both functional and epistemological: "they help us function within particular situations at the same time as they help shape the ways we come to know and organize these situations" (24). As such, genres are much more than a tool to wield. They are "socially constructed, ongoing cognitive and rhetorical sites [...] within which communicants enact and reproduce specific situations, actions, relations, and identities" (39). Genres, Bawarshi says elsewhere, shape their users.

If we agree with Bakhtin and Bawarshi, then what Brian hopes to do as a rhetcomp scholar—employ the genres of rhetcomp without embracing their ideologies—is impossible. In "Marginalization," it is clear that the ideology of the genres Brian appropriates from rhetcomp shape his thinking. He ultimately adopts the attitude rhetcomp shares toward antifoundational premises. Brian does not speak in "Marginalization" as a devil's advocate; he does not acknowledge that he will be borrowing the argument and premises of a perspective with which he disagrees in order to challenge that perspective. In enacting the genres related to the kind of argument he makes, he aligns himself with an antifoundationalist perspective.

For compositionists, then, Brian's experience writing "Marginalization" provides insight into the limits of the kind of academic discourse privileged within rhetcomp. While rhetcomp certainly espouses a kind of antifoundationalism, it cannot encompass perspectives that challenge its core assumptions, values, and beliefs. Bizzell says something similar in "Faith-Based Views as a Challenge to the Believing Game" when

she questions whether it is possible for an academic skeptic—someone who enacts Elbow's "Doubting game"—"to inhabit a densely articulated web of belief that initially seems diametrically opposed to his most cherished intellectual values" (33). It's an important question, one that Stephen Barrett raises in his dissertation when he points out, *à la* James Gee, that discourses resist internal critique (151). If rhetcomp scholars hold their ideological and epistemological convictions as "strongly" as does Brian's professor, then inhabiting a perspective like Brian's—the act of which, Bizzell argues, entails not just rational understanding but, equally important, emotional connection—may represent a near-impossibility. Encounters with evangelical students like Brian for such scholars would doubtlessly lead to recognition, along with Shannon Carter, of "the limits of [one's] own tolerance" (572).

Brian's academic writing serves as a reminder of the degree to which the antifoundationalist paradigm in rhetcomp, dominant though it may be, is partial. Although he employs the same antifoundationalist premise in his argument, what Brian attempts to do is call antifoundationalism's bluff—that despite its promise of inclusivity, it leaves out a perspective such as Brian's. Of course, this raises the question of whether rhetcomp's antifoundationalism *can* embrace foundationalist evangelicalism. Bizzell puts this question well: "As we are trying to do with diverse forms of academic discourse, will we be able to accommodate the faith-based discourses that mean so much to so many of our students—and if truth be told, to many of us as well?" ("Faith-Based" 35). She also maintains that "[p]ermitting such a development will require academic discourse to come to terms with emotion" ("Faith-Based" 35). Given the emotional attachment both Brian and his professor seemed to hold towards their respective positions, this certainly seems

true. What also seems true, though, is that accommodating faith-based discourses and

identities will require thinking through the irreconcilability between rhetcomp's dominant

paradigm and the foundationalist epistemologies of graduate students like Brian.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIMITS OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE: KATHRYN, AMBIGUITY, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTEGRATED SELF

"I don't know if I know any fully integrated people. I know some fine people who are good scholars. And I know some religious people who are not so strong in teaching and scholarship. But I don't know any who are just super in [both] those areas."

—Kathryn in her final interview

In the previous chapter, I described how Brian tried to negotiate an identity as an evangelical in his academic writing. Toward that end, I pointed out how he mentions early in his essay that he is writing "from the perspective of a devout conservative (often labeled fundamentalist), evangelical Christian." Identifying himself this directly is central to his purposes because, as he later observes, there are no scholars who have contributed to the discussion about evangelical identity in rhetcomp who write explicitly *from* such a perspective. He writes, "of those authors who affiliate with a faith, none have thus far identified themselves as evangelical Christians, but instead come from a range of less conservative [...] positions." He's right. While there certainly are rhetcomp scholars who write from faith perspectives—Beth Daniell and Virginia Chappell identify themselves as Episcopalians, Bronwyn Williams as a Quaker, and Priscilla Perkins as a liberal Catholic, to name a few—there are no contributions from evangelical Christians. At least, no one explicitly identifies as such. Quite the contrary, there are at least two scholars who admit to severing ties with their evangelical past. While Stephen Barrett describes how entering the academy led to his "deconversion" from his Pentecostal Christian faith (20), Juanita Smart alludes to having distanced herself from her "fundamentalist past" (12). The

159

narratives within rhetcomp militate against identifying and speaking as an evangelical Christian.

And that's what I find most admirable about Brian's academic writing. He's trying to fill a gap, to speak from a perspective that has yet to be spoken from. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the question of whether he is able to do so is open to debate. But the absence he identifies does provide an apt starting point for my discussion of Kathryn, a white, middle-aged, evangelical Christian whose experience integrating her faith into her academic writing is radically different from Brian's. While Brian *wants* to speak from his foundationalist evangelical identity, Kathryn intentionally represents her faith ambiguously in her academic writing, an autoethnography she wrote for a graduate seminar during her first semester in the PhD program. Ironically, it's an autoethnography that purports to focus on the connections between her religious upbringing and her literacy learning. As I'll show, though, Kathryn fears that disclosing her evangelical identity will "change everything" in terms of her social relations with her peers and professors. She thus erases over much of her evangelical identity in her autoethnography because she believes that doing so will help her identify with her academic audience—an audience that, in her mind, would not value a nuanced articulation of her faith. The subject position she inhabits might best be described as *vaguely Christian*.

Kathryn's decision to render her faith ambiguously illustrates a reality that Anne Ruggles Gere voiced in "Articles of Faith," her contribution to "The Politics of the Personal" symposium in 2001. Noting her own limitations in articulating religious experience while trying to co-author a memoir with her daughter, Gere laments that "the available language for talking about religious faith is impoverished [...]. Because

discussions of religion have been essentially off-limits in higher education," she

continues, "we have failed to develop sophisticated and nuanced theoretical discourse to

articulate spirituality" ("Articles" 46). Though Gere was not talking specifically about

evangelical identity, her point applies to Kathryn's experience. Because any discourse

functions as an "identity kit" that tells us "how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take

on a particular role that others will recognize" (Gee, "Literacy" 526), acknowledging the

limits of discourse is tantamount to acknowledging the limits of identity. Kathryn sees

her evangelical identity as "off-limits" largely because, as the epigraph suggests, she has

no exemplars for "fully integrat[ing]" her faith and her academic work. In terms of

negotiating her identity in her academic writing, Kathryn is bumping up against the limits

of what is possible.

In negotiating an identity that she believes to be "safe" within her academic

community of practice, Kathryn is compelled to see her faith from the vantage of

academic discourse *á la* rhetcomp. As I'll show, this causes her to question distinctions

central to her faith while aligning herself with academic ones. To put this in identity

terms, Kathryn's academic writing illustrates Donna LeCourt's conclusion that

"academic discourse *does* influence the construction of self" (143). Both in Kathryn's

academic writing and in our interviews, the tension between her academic and

evangelical trajectories is evident. What's hopeful, though, is that there are moments of

convergence in which Kathryn's evangelical and academic values align. Equally

significant, there are aspects of Kathryn's evangelical literacy that could prove beneficial

to rhetcomp. At the end of Chapter 4, I cited a question raised by Patricia Bizzell: "What

if there is intellectual work that can only be done by what [Shannon] Carter calls the

'Christian' mind [...]?" ("Faith-Based" 35). In closing this chapter, I will suggest ways in which Kathryn's evangelical literacy, rendered in nuance and sophistication, might help rhetcomp do two things: develop the language for which Gere has called and accomplish more effectively the kind of rhetorical work that Sharon Crowley attempts to do in *Toward a Civil Discourse*. I'll first explore Kathryn's evangelical identity and discuss her autoethnography, paying particular attention to how she erases over her evangelical identity in favor of a more ambiguous representation of spirituality.

Evangelical Literacy and Identity

Kathryn's first writing prompt, a letter she wrote to a friend in her graduate program, reveals much about her upbringing as an evangelical Christian in the South. Her narrative highlights features common to someone who grew up in an evangelical context. These include an early awareness of God, regular church attendance where "strict and conservative views" were promoted, and memories of Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. She also names part of her evangelical literacy in the form of her familiarity with terms like "salvation," "heaven," and "hell." Kathryn was immersed in evangelical discourse and acquired its terms and concepts early on:

> From the time I was a young child, I have had a sense of the importance of knowing of and trusting in some sort of authority who was in charge of the universe. And from the very beginning, I was taught that God was the Creator (capital C) of everything—He was the authority to know and trust—He was omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

The language that Kathryn uses here, namely the terms "omniscient," "omnipotent," and "omnipresent," alludes to the traditional Western definition of God (Stump and Murray 3) and thus speaks to a depth of knowledge that may transcend that of many evangelicals.

When I asked her when she learned these terms, she answered in a way that highlights the

pervasiveness of her evangelical upbringing.

> You know, I don't remember a time when I didn't know those words.
> [...T]hat was part of how I came to know who God was. You know what I
> mean? I always thought of him as everywhere and knowing everything
> and all-powerful. I mean [...], that's just who he was to me. When I first
> heard "God"—I don't even remember the first time, you know, because I
> was in church from the time I was a little bitty kid [...].

Kathryn here is naming terms that shaped her understanding of God. What's also

significant is that she refers to God as "the authority to know and trust," language that

speaks to the personal relationship with God that many evangelicals desire.

In her letter, Kathryn recalls the moment when she decided to "accept Jesus as

[her] personal Saviour" at the age of nine.

> One Sunday evening, at the invitation time, I was sitting near the front,
> and I felt compelled to walk down the aisle and speak to the pastor, telling
> him that I wanted to become a Christian. To me, that meant praying a
> prayer of repentance and being sorry for my sin, turning from that sin, and
> striving to live a life that glorified God by serving others in ways that
> pleased Him. That's what I did. The pastor heard me, prayed with me, and
> asked me to take a seat on the front pew. At the end of the invitation, the
> pastor announced what I had done or committed to do, though my sitting
> there indicated to everyone in attendance what had already happened.
> There was no special sound or sign—[j]ust faith that what I had said to
> God meant something. I was confident at that time that an inward
> transformation had occurred, though there hadn't been much sin, as such,
> to turn from.

The "invitation" Kathryn mentions here is a common feature in many evangelical

churches. Towards the end of a service, the pastor will invite congregants to come

forward for prayer or to become a Christian. Many evangelicals point to such an "altar

call" as the moment when they converted to Christianity.

Kathryn's faith certainly has changed since her decision to follow Christ. In her

letter, though, she makes it clear that it hasn't changed in essence.

Many times since then, I have revisited that moment, wondering if the experience was real or was just a young girl's searching. But if anything that the Bible says is true, then my faith in the power of God and his Son's sacrifice and my asking Him to save me *worked*. Over the years, I have relied on faith to reassure me, even without understanding. (original emphasis)

She even goes on to say later in the letter that her "relationship with God feels intact."

Through "active" prayer and the literate practice of reading daily from *My Utmost for His Highest*, a popular devotional book among evangelicals, Kathryn experiences "moments of intense closeness" to God—moments, she explains, when she "realize[s] the quiet power of His presence." In these moments of closeness, she is also able to sense "anxiety" when she recognizes that she has "ignored" God. This occurs when, in her words, "I [...]followed my way over His in circumstances where He has tried to direct me." What Kathryn refers to here is a common narrative among evangelicals who talk frequently of "being led by the Lord" and of "wanting to do God's will." The anxiety she speaks of results from having a sense of not doing God's will regarding a life choice or some other significant decision.

This desire to follow God's plan for her life certainly shapes her identity—it is something that she and her husband talked and prayed about when she was deciding whether or not to pursue the PhD. This is also a belief that shapes how she interacts with what she reads and learns. Kathryn talked at length, for instance, about how her evangelical identity serves as a kind of critical filter with which she uses to evaluate incoming information. Here's how she put it in her first interview: "I don't want to be sold a bill of goods. I'm very cautious—I won't say paranoid—but I will say I'm very cautious about the kinds of information that I take in." Kathryn's caution here speaks to a key difference between the orientation she holds toward her academic community of

practice and Brian's orientation. Whereas Brian dove in headlong and, unknowingly, embraced premises that conflicted with his epistemology, Kathryn's more guarded approach seems to be a major factor in her decision to compartmentalize her faith from her academic practice. Brian certainly talked about his faith as a kind of critical filter (e.g., in his revision of social construction to social influence), but Kathryn seems to have enacted such sifting and sorting more carefully. Perhaps Kathryn's age and experience influence her awareness that what she interacts with has the power to shape the way she perceives herself, her faith, and her world.

Kathryn concludes her letter with a statement that pertains directly to her identity. Equally important, she articulates some of the core values and beliefs that pertain to her evangelical literacy. She writes that who she is "today is a direct result of [her] relationship to God." She goes on to say that "[m]ost of the ideals" she holds "are representative of the Christian faith," and she explains that these ideals "can be summed up in the nine fruits of the Spirit found in Galatians." Here, Kathryn alludes to the words of St. Paul: "[T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things" (Gal 5.22-23). She then adds that "these are my goals—not my accomplishments," a rhetorical move that highlights her attitude of meekness and deference, a key aspect of her personality.

Compartmentalization and the Fear of "Coming Out"

Although Kathryn talked freely about these aspects of her evangelical literacy in our interviews, she represented them much more ambiguously in her academic writing,

an autoethnography about her faith and literacy that she wrote for a graduate seminar. Kathryn was anxious about writing an autoethnography for two reasons. One reason has little to do with her evangelical identity but much to do with her lack of experience with the autoethnography as an academic genre. As a graduate teaching assistant, Kathryn was required to teach a FYW curriculum that included an autoethnography as part of the assignment sequence. Kathryn was resistant toward autoethnographies because she had learned years prior in her master's program that the "personal and academic do not go together." Her experience thus parallels Kimberly's in some ways—both had been conditioned to see the personal and academic as separate categories. As I discussed in Chapter 3, that understanding significantly shaped how Kimberly was able to see how her evangelical identity matters to and is implicated in her schooled writing. A similar view shapes Kathryn's desire to compartmentalize her evangelical identity from her academic practice. It wasn't until her PhD program that Kathryn encountered the assumption that schooled writing might be, in Richard Miller's terms, "a place where the personal and the academic, the private and the public, [...] are always inextricably interwoven" (267).

Kathryn was also anxious about writing her autoethnography because she feared that doing so would result in her "coming out" religiously. In the following excerpt from the freewrite she did prior to our third interview, Kathryn discusses her fear about how writing "Unto Whom Much is Given" might affect her social relations.

> For me on this particular assignment, I remember thinking how my work on this project might "change everything"—my professors' and classmates' attitudes toward me and toward my work, and my subsequent need to defend myself and my beliefs [...]. I had not expressed my "religious side" to many in the program until that point. And I still haven't. A few know me well—maybe 4 or 5 people. But none has a comprehensive view of that part of my life. Why is that, I wonder[?] This compartmentalizing. . .

Kathryn's use of the term "compartmentalizing" here is significant. She used it to refer to the different "areas" or "aspects" of her life that "have been influential in making [her] who [she is]." Because she was married with grown children, she felt that moving away to attend graduate school was a significant sacrifice for her family. Thus, she tried to protect her time as much as possible. She didn't want to become known as the "caring Christian" in class who helps everyone with their personal problems. Kathryn wanted to maintain separation between her academic and personal lives.

Equally important, Kathryn didn't want to find herself having to defend her identity and beliefs. Unlike Brian, Kathryn did not want to fulfill the role of evangelical Christian apologist in her graduate program. There are many possible reasons as to why this is the case, but gender and position certainly play a role. While Brian was a white male in his late twenties who had recently completed an MA in rhetcomp, Kathryn was a white, middle-aged female who was returning to graduate school after a years-long hiatus. From the start, then, Kathryn viewed herself as having even less in common with her peers than Brian. Couple this with her tendency to defer to others, and it makes sense that Kathryn would want to be more guarded about revealing a part of her identity that might further separate her from her peers. In her second letter, Kathryn explained how she "felt very insecure and lacking in confidence" early on in her program. Her goal was to be a graduate student in graduate school and an evangelical Christian at home. She didn't *want* the two to converge.

Emotion also played a significant role. Kathryn went on to emphasize her fears about how others might perceive her if they knew about her evangelical background.

> I'm a little cautious about telling people even a lot of the stuff that I've told you! You know, about [...] growing up in a Baptist church and then

167

> going to a charismatic church where all kinds of things were possible and
> expected [...]. You know, I don't tell people that kind of stuff. Because
> they go, "Charismatic! Well, that's speaking in tongues! Well, so, have
> you ever spoken in tongues? Well, what is that like? Well, isn't that
> false?" [...] You know? And I just don't really wanna deal with that.

The fears Kathryn expresses here are not out of step with what other evangelicals aligned

with the charismatic or Pentecostal movement have experienced. While Pentecostalism is

garnering more adherents, negative perceptions of Pentecostals remain ("Is American";

Norris). There's also a distinct fear of being viewed as an exotic Other, as a kind of

religious curiosity to be analyzed and interrogated.

When I asked her to talk more about how her autoethnography would "change

everything"—and if by that she was referring particularly to revealing her evangelical

Christian identity—she had the following to say:

> Yeah. I think so. Yeah. Um, yeah because I hadn't really, you know,
> talked to people about it. And I expected that people would ask—and they
> did—ask me what was I writing about for this paper, and, you know, I
> sorta, I guess found myself a little defensive in that they were seeing a side
> of me that I hadn't really shared too much about?

Kathryn's use of the term "defensive" points to her sense of needing to enact what

George Marsden calls "self-censorship" (*Outrageous* 13). In Gere's terms, Kathryn felt

she needed to create a "barrier, a DMZ zone, between [her] own faith and the academy"

(46). Part of that has to do with the compartmentalization she attempted to enact, but

much of it had to do with her uncertainty about how identifying as evangelical would

affect her standing among her peers. Related to this, she referenced another student in the

program who was outspoken about her evangelical Christian faith in a way that served to

alienate her peers. This was something that Kathryn consciously opposed. As a middle-

aged female, Kathryn wanted to minimize her division from her peers as much as

possible. She did not want to be mistaken for the kind of evangelical Christian that most

Americans perceive to be judgmental (see "A New Generation").

Kathryn's fear that revealing her faith would "change everything" parallels the

poignant story Richard Miller tells in "The Nervous System" about a TA training class in

which the discussion focused on whether or not gay teachers should out themselves to

their classes. Miller tells of a graduate student who "highjacked the narrative" and "'came

out' to the class as a...Christian" (280). According to Miller, the moment "pulled the

plug on the high-pitched energy of the class" and "opened a sea of confused silence"

(280). He continues:

> In the moment, no one knew quite what to say, so we took a break, and
> came back to reflect on what happened in the discussion and its
> aftereffects, including the rush some instructors made to meet the final
> speaker in the hall and thank her for having the courage to make her
> statement. (280)

Miller's story dramatizes the sense of risk faced by graduate students in the secular

academy who disclose their religious beliefs—especially if those beliefs align with what

is considered to be an evangelical form of Christianity.

Kathryn senses this risk acutely. She thus strategizes ways to maintain separation

between her academic and evangelical identities without fully disclosing her faith. This is

evident in the following passage where Kathryn describes how she talked with other

students about her autoethnography:

> I would try to frame what I was saying in a defensible kind of way by
> saying something like, they would say, "So what are you writing about for
> [our] class?" And I'd say, "Well, I'm doing an ethnography because I
> think it would be really helpful for me—when I ask my students to write
> an ethnography—that I've done one myself." [...] And then they'd say,
> "Well, what point are you gonna make?" So then I said, "Well, I'm going
> to make the point that my family has much to do with—and my family's
> heritage—has much to do with the reason why I became a teacher," and
> that kind of thing. And so I really didn't come out and say, "Well, I'm

gonna look at my family's religious background as a way to approach this."

Kathryn's strategy was the opposite of Brian's. Rather than find ways to identify openly as an evangelical in her graduate program, Kathryn sought to keep her religious identity "cloaked" (Stenberg 279). In describing her project to others, she intentionally and strategically erased her evangelical identity.

Despite Kathryn's calculated strategy of cloaking her faith, she was more or less forced to reveal her evangelical background when she had to give a presentation about her autoethnography. Echoing both Gere's and Miller's terms, she refers to that presentation as her "premier coming out," a watershed moment in terms of how she identified herself in her doctoral program. Her presentation, though, did not hijack the class with the same shock that Miller describes. In fact, Kathryn's presentation was well received. Here, for instance, is Kathryn talking about the literacy artifacts she passed around to the class—artifacts from her family that included Bible verses on them.

> But it took them almost the whole class to pass those all around. And they—some of them read every single word! You know, some of my colleagues read every single word, or at least noticed, "Oh, this is scripture," and then they would read the letters. Because they were crammed in envelopes, I just passed the whole packet of stuff around. And

> I was really surprised. You know, it may have been that they hung up on somebody's desk and didn't get passed, but I know that I didn't get the whole envelope until the very end. [...] Anyway, and so, as far as their responses, I—I mean, I took them as a very friendly sign. I didn't take them negatively. I didn't take them as condescending or patronizing.

Though her presentation breached the compartmentalization she desired to maintain, it did so in a neutral, if not positive, way. She didn't recognize any apparent changes in the way she was treated in her graduate program.

Kathryn's experience "coming out" as a Christian in her graduate program illustrates the impossibility of maintaining compartmentalization, what Miller calls the "opposition between 'the academic' and 'the personal'" (Miller 280). What's also true is that her religious self-disclosure was only partial. Though her audience certainly would infer from the scriptural literacy artifacts that Kathryn identifies as Christian, a closer look at her autoethnography itself reveals a much more complex picture of her faith. Writing "Unto Whom Much is Given" forced Kathryn to locate herself within the interstices between evangelical and academic discourse. As such, she was compelled to select those aspects of her evangelical identity and literacy that she perceived to be acceptable within her academic community of practice. She doesn't completely erase her evangelical identity in her autoethnography, but she does render her faith ambiguously.

Autoethnography, Spirituality, and Ambiguity

The title of Kathryn's autoethnography, "Unto Whom Much Is Given: Literacy Sponsorship in the Riley[7] Family," begins with an allusion to the King James Version of the Gospel of Luke. Kathryn includes part of that verse in an epigraph: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required [...]" (KJV, Lk 12.48). The reference to the Bible announces that Kathryn sees her literacy sponsorship in terms of her religious upbringing. It announces, too, that her essay will explore the relationship between her evangelical Christian faith and literacy learning. Her first paragraph furthers this expectation:

> Education seems to run in my family; individuals from one generation
> after the next pursue teaching as a vocation, and I stress *vocation*, not job

---

[7] I changed Kathryn's family name to protect her identity.

171

or career. A look at the generations surrounding me includes grandfather, mother, husband, daughter, son-in-law, and me—all teachers. Those of us who teach do so because we feel called to do so. That calling results, no doubt, from our spiritual heritage, from a sense of obligation and responsibility and a godly stewardship of those treasures we have been given—the desire to learn and to teach. But how did this happen? And where did our callings begin? (original emphasis)

Kathryn's use of terms like "calling," "spiritual heritage," and "godly stewardship" announces a religious identity. And though Kathryn notes in the middle of the paragraph that her family's calling resulted from their "spiritual heritage," the fact that she concludes her opening paragraph with the question, "where did our callings begin?" announces that this is the inquiry she will pursue in the remainder of the essay.

"Calling" is a key term with distinctly religious overtones (Cross; Hardy; Placher). It's certainly a term that shows up frequently in conversation among evangelicals. Her use of the term—as well as her use of "spiritual heritage" and "godly stewardship"—points to a religious intention. Couple this with her allusion to Luke 12.48, and any attentive reader would assume that her essay would explore the relationship between her religious heritage and her literate upbringing. What's surprising about her autoethnography, then, is that Kathryn does not explore her "spiritual" literacy in any depth. To be sure, spirituality is present in her essay, but any deep exploration about how her faith shaped her literacy—or what exactly it means for her to have an evangelical literacy—remains largely unexplored.

Take, for example, the following paragraph from the beginning of her essay. She's talking here about how her family represented a kind of discourse community or community of practice:

As a result of my exposure to and integration into the social group of my family and into these wider practices of social literacy, what Gee terms "ways of talking, interacting, thinking, valuing, and believing," I came to

172

value my parents' and their parents' values, which turned out to prepare
me well for a life of schooling. As a result, the values they held toward
reading and social interaction early on was modeled in ways that became
immediately translatable for a profession in teaching. But how did I get
enmeshed in a family so rich in literacy and spiritual heritage?

What's interesting about this passage is that spirituality is present, but mostly as an

afterthought. To be sure, she may have implied faith in her mention of "values," but it's

not something that she articulates here. Kathryn similarly relegates faith to a secondary

position throughout her essay. Grammatically, she often buries spirituality in the middle

of a sentence. At one point, she defines learning as "becom[ing] literate socially,

spiritually, and academically" (emphasis added). And it is certainly the "social" and

"academic" that receive the emphasis in her essay. Kathryn uses the term "social" fifteen

times. Counting instances when she quotes literacy theorists like James Gee or Deborah

Brandt using that term, the number rises to twenty-one. In contrast, the term Kathryn uses

the most to name her faith, "spiritual," only appears nine times.

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke argues that "there is an *objective* difference in

motivation between an act conceived in the name of God and an act conceived in the

name of godless nature" (6, original emphasis). Although Kathryn is not attributing her

literacy learning to "godless nature," one does get the sense in reading her essay that the

social aspect of literacy is far more important than the spiritual. Again, though she's not

erasing her evangelical identity completely, by selecting certain terms to foreground

while avoiding others, she's announcing a more ambiguous faith identity. In fact, reading

Kathryn's essay gives the impression that spirituality is encompassed by and thus

subordinate to the social. Kathryn's concluding paragraph demonstrates this hierarchy:

As a result of [my grandfather's] legacy, his sponsorship of his children's
academic, *spiritual*, and moral education, as well as his children's
continued sponsorship of successive generations, I have always believed

173

that if I worked hard enough and did what I was supposed to do, *following God's plan for my life*, I could do anything I wanted to. (emphasis added)

In the first part of this sentence, Kathryn sandwiches "spiritual" between "academic" and "moral education." She then subordinates a key evangelical concept—that of "following God's plan for [her] life," which I discussed earlier as an integral part of her evangelical identity—to the idealistic perspective that if someone works hard and does what is required, anything is possible. It is unclear what role "following God's plan" plays here. One way to read this gerund phrase is to see it as renaming "if I worked hard enough and did what I was supposed to do." Another possibility is to see it as complementary to human idealism. Either way, spirituality is deemphasized in favor of the human and the social. Kathryn begins this sentence with her grandfather's legacy and ends on a statement of human agency: "I could do anything I wanted to."

In the next two sentences—the last of her essay—Kathryn writes the following: "The 'want-to' has to be right-minded, of course, but that kind of empowerment that [my grandfather] used with his nine children is the 'much' part of 'Unto Whom Much Has Been Given.' The second part of that is the tricky part—much shall be required." In a rhetorical move illustrative of Burke's notion that "[t]he ending is implicit in the beginning" (*Grammar* 259), Kathryn concludes her essay with the same verse she used to begin it. In writing that "[t]he 'want-to' has to be right-minded," Kathryn possibly points to her belief that, as an evangelical, it is important to follow "God's plan." And in saying that "much shall be required," Kathryn is again allowing for the possibility that God is the one holding her and her family accountable. It remains unclear, though, as to who is doing the requiring here. Is it God? Is it Kathryn's family?

This question remains open in her essay. While Kathryn is certainly artful in the way she weaves "spirituality" into her essay—beginning and ending on the theme of Luke 12.48 establishes a pleasing essayistic unity—she remains noncommittal at best when it comes to naming her "spirituality." To borrow the words of a graduate student I interviewed for a related study, Kathryn's essay "sort of smell[s] like Christianity. But [she] never [comes] out and [says] anything too direct." In some ways, this represents no problem. After all, Kathryn is writing her autoethnography for a graduate seminar that focused on social theories of literacy. Toward that end, she cites theorists like Deborah Brandt, Shannon Carter, James Gee, Shirley Brice Heath, and others. She certainly doesn't *need* to explore her evangelical upbringing in any deep way.

There are two problems with this perspective, though. The first is that Kathryn *does* connect her literate and religious upbringings. She could have chosen to jettison any connection to her evangelical heritage, but the fact that she includes spirituality in her discussion speaks to its significance for her literate upbringing. The second problem is related to the first. Following from the theorists she cites, Kathryn understands literacy as much more than just learning to read or write. Echoing Gee in particular, she defines literacy as including ways of believing, thinking, and valuing—what I referred to in Chapter 4 as literacy at a deep level. Though Kathryn certainly discusses the extent to which she was surrounded by text and talk in her "print-rich household," she does little to explore the connections between her faith and literacy at the level of belief and value.

She does talk about the fact that her grandfather was a minister, that she was christened in a Presbyterian church, and that the first book she was given was the New Testament. She also names "godliness" as one of the traits she learned from her family

and discusses how her aunt merged her graduate work in education with a firm belief in Christianity. But what gets significantly more attention in her essay is literacy as it relates to her education and socialization—a result, I think, of the impoverished language rhetcomp has for articulating faith and spirituality. As I'll discuss next, the terms Kathryn uses to name her faith highlight the ambiguity she hopes to maintain. Convergence does exist. There are instances in which her use of a term reflects the values of both her academic and evangelical communities of practice—but there are critical distinctions and nuances that pertain to Kathryn's evangelical identity that either do not make it into her essay or are set aside in favor of distinctions she believes would matter more to her academic community of practice. What results is a highly complex negotiation of identity that provides insight into what rhetcomp does and does not value.

Terms of Faith

Throughout her autoethnography, Kathryn uses three terms to describe her faith as it relates to her literacy learning: "religious," "spiritual," and "Christian." All three appear in her second paragraph:

> Though my immediate family was not what anyone would call "religious," in the grace-saying before meals or the "God bless you" after sneezing kind of way, it was a solid, individually spiritual-minded, Bible-reading, church-going unit, heavily influenced by its heritage of religious, Christian family members who were also invested in their own and in their children's higher education and opportunities for schooling.

In her essay, Kathryn uses "spirituality" (or "spiritual") nine times, "religious" (or "religion") four times, and "Christian" only three times. Kathryn understands each of these terms in a deeply nuanced manner. They are nuances, though, that come from her evangelical Christian upbringing. As such, the distinctions she might have made for an

evangelical audience were lost in her autoethnography—even though, ironically, "Unto Whom Much is Given" was about how her faith played a role in her literacy learning. As she made clear to me, there are aspects of her evangelical literacy that she doesn't feel matter to her academic identity. This is part of the compartmentalization that she hoped to maintain.

At the same time, there are moments of convergence in her use of some of these terms. Specifically, Kathryn's decision to use certain terms while avoiding others derives from motives that can be traced to her evangelical background *and* to her awareness of writing for an academic audience. Thus, because she invests each term with motive, her use of them tells much about how she is negotiating her identity as an evangelical Christian in a secular, academic context.

The first term Kathryn uses in reference to her faith is "religious." She uses it twice in the paragraph I quoted above. The first time she uses it, Kathryn wraps it in scare quotes to ensure her readers know that her "immediate family was not what anyone would call 'religious' [...]."A bit later in the paragraph, Kathryn uses the term a second time, describing her family as "a solid, individually spiritual-minded, Bible-reading, church-going unit, heavily influenced by its heritage of religious, Christian family members [...]." She doesn't use scare quotes in this second instance, but she does immediately qualify it with the term "Christian," making it clear that she's referring to a certain kind of religion. Other than two references to her aunt's "religious education," Kathryn abandons the use of "religious" after page one.

Part of the reason why Kathryn distances herself from "religious" in her autoethnography is because, like many evangelicals, she dislikes the term. In our third

interview, she told me she avoids "religious" because it's a "negative term" that she sees

as interchangeable with "pharisaical." For Kathryn, "religion" evokes comparisons with

the Pharisees, the one group Jesus consistently disparaged in the New Testament. He did

so because, while the Pharisees were experts at outwardly following the law, their

motives for doing so had more to do with self-interest and self-righteousness rather than

love of God and neighbor, the two commandments Jesus said encompassed the whole of

the law (Mt 22.36-40).

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus levels one of the most damning rebukes against

the Pharisees:

> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like
> whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they
> are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on
> the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy
> and lawlessness. (23.27-28)

This distinction between outward appearances and inward hypocrisy is one that

evangelicals refer to often. It's a distinction that emerges in terms of a more

contemporary saying that has achieved cliché status: "It's not about religion; it's a

relationship." It's a cliché, though, that exerts a powerful influence within evangelical

communities of practice. At the heart of the distinction is a suspicion of religion, because

to be "religious" means to follow a set of rules unthinkingly, without authenticity, a kind

of spiritual going through the motions. "Religious" thus refers to the pharisaical

following of fallible human systems and traditions. What many evangelicals stress

instead is having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Evangelicals who have such a

relationship with Christ may still follow many of the rules that "religion" has to offer, but

they purport to do so out of love for God and neighbor. So while evangelicals perceive

religion to be static, lifeless, and hollow, a relationship with Christ is understood as dynamic, alive, and authentic.

In distancing herself from "religious" and thus "pharisaical," Kathryn is aligning herself with the evangelical distinction between religion and relationship. As such, she is drawing on an important aspect of evangelical literacy in writing her autoethnography. To put this slightly otherwise, by avoiding the use of "religion," Kathryn is identifying in a way that accords with her evangelical background. Equally important, she is also distancing herself from a term that many academics dislike. In his preface to *Storm in the Mountains*, a book about how a county in West Virginia censored a progressive literacy curriculum, James Moffett defines religion as follows:

> However divinely inspired in origin, any religion partakes of a certain civilization, functions through human institutions, and is therefore partial, culturally biased. Otherwise there would be no wars between religions or religious countries. (xi)

In Moffett's experience, religion, namely fundamentalist Christianity, produces what he calls *agnosis*, a "not-wanting-to-know" attitude that "limits the thought and action" of individuals who adhere strictly to a religion and fear being altered by new ideas (187). Moffett writes in a related essay about how the goals of "cultural transmission and identity maintenance" conflict with "truly free inquiry" ("Censorship" 119). More recently, compositionists have alluded to similarly negative conceptions of religion. Shannon Carter points out that many scholars see religion and faith as the "complete opposite" of knowledge ("Living" 578), while Doug Downs sees religion as primarily affirming received knowledge and "overtly resist[ing] critical inquiry into it" (42).

In distancing herself from "religion," then, Kathryn is also aligning herself with a perspective that other rhetcomp scholars privilege, albeit for different reasons. And she

did talk about her motive for avoiding "religion" in academic terms. Throughout our interviews, for instance, she acknowledged that "religion" is a term that "others" because it defines those who are outside of its confines as much as it defines those who are part of it. This othering emerged perhaps most clearly in Kathryn's understanding and avoidance of the term "Christian." It's a term that, to be sure, is much more specific than "religion" or "spirituality" in regards to naming Kathryn's faith. And yet it's that specificity that Kathryn sought to avoid. As she explained to me in an interview, "'Christian' is maybe even more loaded than 'religious.'" Again, this has to do with the term's potential to divide rather than allow for identification (Burke, *Rhetoric* 22).

> But at the same time, um—and there's the whole conflict with world religions. You know, are you a Christian or a Hindu or a Muslim? So there's that. And you know I don't wanna—I don't—to me, in one sense I guess—and maybe that is in my primary sense why [...] I didn't choose it—you know, I don't wanna increase that conflict in my own thought or to distinguish myself as not something else particularly.

Kathryn, in other words, is aware of the implications of identifying with a term like "Christian." She believes using it would separate her from other religions, other cultures, other people groups—other categories. The term would other her from her audience. Like "religion," "Christian" suggests that some are *in* while others are *out*.

By minimizing her use of the term "Christian," Kathryn is hoping to keep her identity fluid—to make it clear to her audience that she has not tied herself down to a particular identity. In other words, Kathryn is hoping to do the opposite of what LeCourt argues in *Identity Matters*:

> For identification to move to identity (for subject positions to be interiorized in an act of self-construction) [...], the space of identification must construct an "outside"—that which identity is not—in order to be orchestrated. In identifying with one position, we come to exclude others in order to mark the boundaries by which we might constitute self. (146)

LeCourt goes on to say that, "[i]n identifying with one position, we come to exclude others in order to mark our own identity as sacrosanct, as a clear presence within culture" (146-7). By avoiding "Christian," Kathryn is trying to keep the waters muddied, to leave open the possibility of identification with an audience that may not identify with organized religion in general or Christianity in particular.

Kathryn's decision to avoid "religious" and "Christian" points to convergence between her evangelical and academic identities. Her motives for not using "religious" derive from both her evangelical and academic communities of practice. Neither likes the term very much. Of course, that's not to say there's no conflict between her trajectories in her decision to use one term over another. Avoiding "Christian" *does* conflict with her identity as an evangelical, although it does align with her desire to present herself as a certain kind of Christian—an evangelical who is not outspoken and divisive like another student in her program. Kathryn described this other student as follows:

> I have no doubt that this person considers herself a devout Christian, and I
>
> believe she probably has what she considers to be—and I'm gonna put this in quotes—a "close walk with the Lord." Okay? And I'm not judging her at all. I believe she feels that's true and she's doing everything she can do. But [...] I've heard people who are agnostic say about this person that well, they just find her, um, unapproachable [.... S]he comes across as not—what I would call not a good witness. Not a good testimony for Christianity in general.

As Kathryn put it a bit later in the interview, "I don't wanna be that person."

Because of this, Kathryn seeks to identify herself as an evangelical who does not preach at others. In her final letter, she described her preferred method of evangelism as follows:

> I believe that I have to be active in my sphere, in my world, and I have to teach and learn where I am, offering an example of what Christ expects from me. This, I'm learning, is the way I feel comfortable "testifying"—at

least for now. Perhaps as I grow and trust God more, I will find more
finite, perceptible, describable ways of service and influence toward faith.

What Kathryn is getting at here is a desire to perform "lifestyle evangelism" in her

program, a kind of evangelism that poet and essayist Kathleen Norris describes as the

"show, don't tell" kind (302). As such, Kathryn's desire not to offend anyone—to try to

identify herself with her audience as much as possible—does match up to her identity as

an evangelical.

While Kathryn uses "religious" and "Christian" a few times each in her essay, the

term she primarily uses to name her faith is "spiritual," a much broader term that has both

positive and negative connotations. Kathryn directly compared "religious" and "spiritual"

when I first asked her about her use of terms in "Unto Whom Much is Given." While

religious was negative, spiritual was more positive.

I think spiritual is more inclusive first of all, but it also is more
representative of outside of, um, established religion, I guess. You know,
which is sort of used as the term religion in the definition of the other.

What Kathryn is getting at here is her belief that "spiritual" encompasses more territory

than religion. While religion provides parameters in the form of tradition, creeds, and

sacred texts, spirituality is less defined. Religion refers to specific traditions: Roman

Catholicism, fundamentalist Calvinism, Islam. Religion is exclusive—to say one believes

in a particular religion is also to say that one does not believe in another—while

spirituality is inclusive. Religion always has others; spirituality downplays such

dichotomies.

Earlier, I discussed how Kathryn's reasons for avoiding "religion" echo Moffett's

dislike of the term. The opposite is also true: her motives for favoring "spirituality"

parallel Moffett's. He defines spirituality as the following:

182

> [It is] the essential impulse behind all religions before they become incarnated in cultures. It is a perception of other dimensions behind the manifested and of oneness behind the plurality of things. From this perspective arise ways of being and behaving that we call spiritual. (xi)

Thus the key distinction is that religion is culturally bound while spirituality is not. As Moffett discusses in his book, problems arise when adherents to a religion see their faith as the Truth, as not tainted by cultural biases. Such was the case with the fundamentalist Christians of Kanawha County who saw the *Interaction* curriculum as antithetical to their beliefs and traditions, which they saw as the Truth.

Though Kathryn does not cite Moffett in her essay, she aligns herself with a similar distinction. There's something of a rub, though, and it seems to emerge when she talks primarily in academic terms about her faith. Consider her response to my observation that the terms she used to describe spirituality—terms such as "inclusive" and "representative of [...] the other"—struck me as primarily academic in nature:

> Well, I'm doing that to you, but if I were talking to someone who wasn't an academic person, then I wouldn't. You know, but, um, I'm trying to articulate it best I can to my audience, I guess. But I don't—I mean, it's not that I'm making it up, or that it's not exactly what I think, cuz it's— those things are true—truly what I think and would say. But if I were talking to somebody who maybe wasn't in school and they said, "Why did you say spiritual instead of religious?" I would say because religious is bad to me and spiritual is good. Spiritual relates to the spirit instead of— capital "S" Spirit, Holy Spirit—not spirits, which could be good or bad.

What Kathryn is doing here is suggesting a kind of shift between her different trajectories, from her academic identity (initiated by an academic audience) to an evangelical identity (initiated by an evangelical audience).

She's also introducing an evaluative distinction that does not appear in her autoethnography. In the following excerpt from our third interview, Kathryn and I discuss the distinction she made in relation to the term "spirit."

Jeff: Is the fact that you're—you know, as you're talking to me, you're making this distinction between spiritual in a good sense and spiritual in a bad sense. Spirit being good, lower-case-s spirits—you know, related to mediums or whatever—as being not good. And, you know—

Kathryn: It's from my [evangelical] training. Not based on experience so much.

Jeff: Oh, sure, sure. I'm interested, though, that you're making this distinction as you're talking to me, but it's not a distinction you make in your writing. And I wonder if—should you have? Could you have?

Kathryn: Could I have? Yes. Should I have? I don't think so. Not there. At all. Because I think—I think the audience doesn't, wouldn't really—I think they would expect, based on other factors or other features of the writing, they would expect it to be good [...].

The first point to make here is that the distinction Kathryn makes about "good" and "bad" spirits is one that belongs to her evangelical "training," a term she often used to describe her upbringing as an evangelical. By saying that the distinction does not belong in her autoethnography, she is by extension communicating her belief that part of her evangelical literacy does not belong in her autoethnography. It is, to use a phrase she used, "not relevant." This is notable if only for the irony. Kathryn excludes an aspect of her evangelical literacy in an essay that portends to explore the relationship between her "spiritual heritage" and her literacy learning.

Of course, the reason why she does so is that what she knows her evangelical community of practice values is different than what her academic community values. Defining as "good" those spirits that are Christian while rejecting as "bad" those spirits that are associated with other spiritual traditions likely would not fly well in the liberal academy. And while my point here is certainly not to argue that Kathryn *should* have integrated this distinction into her academic writing, I do find it worth pointing out that, in using a term in a certain way, Kathryn is aligning herself with a set of values and beliefs that to some extent differ from the values and beliefs with which she identifies as

an evangelical. In trying to negotiate an identity as an evangelical in her academic writing, she is bumping up against the limits of academic discourse.

That brings me to a third point about Kathryn's motive for excluding this distinction. It results in large part from her audience's expectations—or at least, what she *thinks* her audience will value. In Roz Ivanič's terms, Kathryn has taken an accomodationist stance here. She is using a term in a way that clearly aligns her with the values she believes her audience shares. In my discussion of Austin in Chapter 2, I pointed out that such accomodationist stances can be seen as rhetorically savvy. Understanding one's audience is, of course, central to any sound rhetorical endeavor. And yet, as I discussed with both Austin and Brian, it is possible to accommodate the audience's values to the point where the writer ultimately identifies with a perspective not initially desired. Kathryn certainly does not commit an act of casuistic stretching or draw on an antifoundationalist premise, but she does distance herself from part of her evangelical heritage. Ivanič writes that "the choice *not* to do certain things is opting *for* a different identity—a self defined by the affiliations it avoids" (230, original emphasis). By not including any distinction about how she is using the terms "spirit" and "spirituality," Kathryn is aligning herself subtly with a "different identity" than that which her evangelical background represents.

Kathryn even goes so far at one point as to admit that making a distinction between "good" and "bad" spirits is "very biased" on her part. Thus Kathryn sees at least part of her evangelical identity as suspect in terms of academic discourse. She is seeing her evangelical identity through a set of terms and distinctions that questions, challenges, or problematizes her evangelical "training." Such a phenomenon is, of course, bound to

185

happen. What it highlights, though, is the process by which Kathryn's training as an academic has influenced her identity as an evangelical. A distinction she once made wholeheartedly no longer seems valid. Wenger would likely say that this is an example of how one trajectory within an individual's nexus of multimembership will invariably shape the others. It also speaks, I think, to the impossibility of maintaining compartmentalization between one's education and faith, especially when that education is at the level of graduate studies.

One further comment on Kathryn's use of "spiritual." She uses it *because* it is ambiguous. And the ambiguity of the term affords Kathryn a bit of comfort in writing an essay that, in many ways, violates her desire to compartmentalize the evangelical identity from her academic context. We discussed this in our third interview.

> *Jeff:* I guess what's interesting to me and, um, you know, this is kind of an observation. You know, it almost seems like—and I think I can identify with this—it almost seems like there's some kind of safety in the ambiguity of a term like spirituality.
>
> *Kathryn:* Oh, you know, when you said that—when you said the word safety—I laughed to myself, because I think you're exactly right. Um, in the ambiguity of a term like that. Yeah, I agree with you on that. There is safety because, um, well I don't know why. But I think there definitely is, because the less people know for sure, the more—the more general something is—the more they might be able to apply it to their own individual circumstance.

Kathryn hopes that using an ambiguous term will help her identify with as wide an audience as possible. She's banking on the fact that her readers will read their own meanings, values, and assumptions into "spirituality." While "religious" and "Christian" will certainly divide and other, "spiritual" affords a greater possibility for identification.

The problem with Kathryn's reasoning here is that writing ambiguously often has the opposite effect. *Not* exploring specifics tends to make writing, whether academic or

186

otherwise, difficult to connect with. It's in the specifics that readers can identify with the writer's perspective. As a writing teacher herself, Kathryn certainly understands this. In fact, immediately after she said what I quoted above, she revised her perspective:

> But also the more specific a piece of writing is, if they've—especially if it's an unusual situation that you're writing or discussing in your writing—the more validation a person might feel. For instance, if someone were writing about physical abuse and something that they had overcome [...] and they became a successful something—you know, university professor or something—and they told that story to someone else who aspired to be a successful university professor, but the reader was also someone who had experienced sexual abuse—um, or whatever kind of abuse I said—then they would maybe feel, "Wow, I could do it, too." And so specifics in that case would be good, ambiguity less good.

The question that occurs to me as I read this passage is this: *What about those readers who come from an evangelical background who would be able to identify with the specifics of Kathryn's story?* Or this: *What about those readers who come from a different religious background but are still able to identify with Kathryn* because *she names her struggles, fears, and successes as they relate to her particular religious identity?* What seems unavailable to Kathryn—and I think this highlights the degree to which Kathryn's autoethnography illustrates Gere's point about rhetcomp's impoverished discourse for articulating faith—is the possibility that her evangelical identity, if discussed openly, fully, and without ambiguity, would be productive.

Toward Productive Possibilities

In my third interview with Kathryn, I observed that the connection between spirituality and literacy seemed relatively underdeveloped in "Unto Whom Much Is Given." I noted that although it was clear to me how the literate social context in which Kathryn grew up shaped her identity in terms of her vocation as a teacher, what was less

187

clear was the specific role her faith played. I asked Kathryn to talk further about how her evangelical literacy shaped her learning and vocation as a teacher, primarily because she had cited scholars like Gee and Brandt who define literacy as more than reading and writing words on a page.

Kathryn's response illustrates the difficulty inherent in making such connections. After admitting that the connection between literacy and faith "probably isn't a very clear" one in her essay, Kathryn went on to talk about the "underlying principles" that influenced her family members' decisions.

> You know, with my mother and her instruction to me, she didn't really focus on, okay, we're gonna read the Bible now. It wasn't a—it wasn't a set kind of here's what we do. This is how we behave because we believe God, or because we are Christians, or—it wasn't anything like that. It was more of a, just an underlying principle that I understood that decisions were made throughout life of all kinds, based on, um, just principles that were maybe godly principles? Or biblical principles? [...] It's just that what was underlying, which was the biblical principles and what we believed about God—that really sort of drove the decisions we made.

Kathryn is certainly straining here to articulate how her family's faith shaped her literacy learning. Her admission at one point that she wasn't "saying this very well" highlights the limits of the terms she has available to her.

What she does hit on, though, is significant—the idea that an "underlying principle" shaped by "biblical principles" and "godly practices" motivated and guided decision making. Kathryn talked more about this a bit later in the interview:

> It was just that spirituality was sort of an underlying, um—maybe even under-examined kind of—I don't know exactly what noun to use there— *system*, maybe. Maybe it was a governing system rather than the outward let's-check-it-against-that-law. (original emphasis)

The idea that faith served as a "governing system" points to significant possibilities. Precisely what principles, values, and beliefs comprise that system? And how do they

relate to the principles, values, and beliefs associated with the literacy theory she cites? I suggest that answering questions such as these would provide insight into the kind of literacy Kathryn hints at in her essay—literacy at the level of belief and value. Equally important, I think it would help develop the kind of language that Gere acknowledges is impoverished in rhetcomp. Moreover, such a language would help rhetcomp respond to pressing exigencies in the twenty-first century.

By way of example, I'd like to discuss a topic that came up several times in my interviews with Kathryn—Sharon Crowley's book, *Toward a Civil Discourse*. Kathryn and her peers read this book as part of a graduate seminar, and the discussion about it grew quite heated at times. In the following excerpt, for example, Kathryn reflects on one particular class discussion:

> People really got angry. *Many* of us were angry and appalled that Crowley took so little care in knowing her subject [...]. Scholars can't be Christians, she indicates, because Christians don't rely on reason for decision making. Huh. Two of the Christians in the class were probably the most offended by the discussion and loudly disputed the ideas Crowley expresses. [...] That was one of many times that I kept quiet. It wasn't that I didn't want to be identified as a Christian. I just didn't want to be identified with *them*, the angry, vocal Christians—because confrontation makes me terribly uncomfortable. It's not because I don't feel strongly about many issues. It's that arguing and saying hurtful words is not productive. I still felt very insecure and lacking in confidence in the program here at that time, so I kept my mouth shut. In fact, I can't recall the specific points of the argument, but it was not pleasant. People yelled. They left the room angry. They cried in the restroom. They have continued to hold a grudge against one another. It was awful. (original emphasis)

I'm reminded here of Bizzell's point that coming to grips with discourses of faith in rhetcomp will mean coming to terms with emotion ("Faith-Based" 35). In the instance Kathryn describes, the emotional response of the students might be considered a worst-case scenario—angry exchanges, hurt feelings, long-term grudges.

I'm reminded, too, of Austin's silence in his FYW course when one of his

classmates publicly disparaged God and Christian schools. The scenario is different:

Kathryn was not the sole evangelical in her graduate seminar. But Kathryn's decision to

remain silent speaks to the difficulty inherent in negotiating complicated emotions and

social situations when addressing matters of faith in academic contexts. Equally

important, I think it sheds light on the lack of identity possibilities Kathryn recognized as

available to her. As a middle-aged female who was, at the point of the Crowley

discussion, still a newcomer in her graduate program, Kathryn was—and here I echo

Shannon Carter—hyperaware of her context and her somewhat marginalized position

within it (577). The situation forced her into a binary: either she sided with

apocalypticism and the "the angry, vocal Christians" or with Crowley and the

(seemingly) rational, secular liberals. There was little to no in-between, and she did not

feel that entering the conversation would benefit her or the discussion.

Kathryn is by no means alone in her critique of *Toward a Civil Discourse*. In her

review of the book, Beth Daniell observes that Crowley's "invoked audience" consists

"entirely [of] secular academic liberals" (81). Given this, Daniell laments Crowley's

failure "to take into account Christians who think of themselves as political liberals and

many, if not most, Christians in the academy" ("Whetstones" 81). Crowley "excludes this

middle," Daniell argues, a middle to which she admits she belongs (81). Unlike Daniell,

Kathryn does not identify as a "Bishop-Spong reading Episcopalian," but she does, like

many evangelicals, locate herself somewhere within the "middle" (81). Indeed, much of

Kathryn's negative reaction to *Toward a Civil Discourse* stems from Crowley's depiction

of "believers." As Kathryn put it in one of our interviews, Crowley "lumps everyone who

is a believer in the apocalyptist group," a categorization with which Kathryn disagrees. A

bit later in our interview, Kathryn observed that lumping all Christians into the

apocalypticist category struck her as "poor argument technique on [Crowley's] part." As

a newcomer to rhetcomp—especially one who is middle-aged and female—Kathryn felt

unqualified to critique a well-known, well-respected, longtime member of the field like

Sharon Crowley. She thus qualified her criticism:

> But I doubt that because, you know, [Crowley] does know what she's
> talking about evidently. She's fairly credible and most people believe her,
> so. You know, she's an authority where I'm not, so. She has reasons
> beyond what I know.

Having also read and critiqued *Toward a Civil Discourse* (see DePalma, Ringer,

and Webber), I was familiar with Crowley's disclaimer in her preface where she

identifies herself as an "outsider" to Christian tradition and questions whether it is

possible for a secular liberal like herself to "converse with"—not to mention

"persuade"—fundamentalist Christians who have densely articulated belief systems (ix).

Thus I decided to press Kathryn a bit on the issue:

> *Jeff*: At the same time, though, I remember, [... Crowley] has that moment
> where she says that someone had lent her the audiobook to the *Left Behind*
> series and she just starts listening to it and she has no idea. She admits
> she's never read [the Book of] Revelation; she admits this whole
> apocalypticist idea is totally foreign to her. So there's a sense in which
> maybe she doesn't know.[8]
>
> *Kathryn*: She didn't really catch her audience very well, it seems to me. I
> think that's kind of what you're saying, too. She doesn't really know the
> material she's trying to blow out of the water. But, again, who am I?
>
> *Jeff*: You at least, you know, you—you know way more about Christianity
> than she does.
>
> *Kathryn*: That's perhaps true.

---

[8] Crowley admits her lack of knowledge about apocalyptic theology prior to stumbling on the *Left Behind* series on p. 102.

I may have overstepped my bounds as an interviewer here—I was making a significant assumption about what I felt Kathryn knew. Granted, my assumption was informed by two previous interviews with Kathryn, both of which delved into her evangelical beliefs and background.

Kathryn's response to my somewhat off-the-cuff observation that she knows more about Christianity than Crowley—"That's perhaps true"—is humble to say the least. Earlier, though, I quoted the question that Bizzell raises at the end of "Faith-Based Views as a Challenge to the Believing Game." It's a question that I think Kathryn's evangelical literacy can help us answer: "What if there is intellectual work to be done that can only be done by what Carter calls the 'Christian mind' [...]?" (35). I believe that Kathryn helps us answer Bizzell's question as it pertains to Christianity, and particularly evangelical Christianity. I'll close this chapter with a few musings on how.

In writing *Toward a Civil Discourse*, Crowley's purpose is to find ways in which liberal rhetoricians can make emotional appeals that might persuade apocalyptists to abandon their hardline and potentially destructive political ideologies. By her own admission, Crowley comes up short. The last sentence of her book suggests as much: "I end with the hope that my readers will find, or open, many more paths of invention than I have been able to name here" (201). The reason why such a strategy falls short is because, although emotion is certainly important, at the end of the day it's probably not enough to change the mind of someone who believes Truth is knowable, accessible, and exclusive. Also, as Mike DePalma, Jim Webber, and I argued, Crowley's proposed solutions are grounded in the liberal-pragmatic terms that dominate her perspective—a perspective that does not correspond to the motives of the apocalypticists she hopes to

convert (313, 322). What might be more persuasive, though, would be arguments premised on the same values, beliefs, and motives held by many evangelical and fundamentalist Christians. What if rhetcomp scholars like Kathryn were encouraged to articulate the values undergirding their faith and then put those values in dialogue with rhetorical theory? What if evangelical Christian scholars in rhetcomp invented arguments premised on values derived from Christian tradition?

Such a dialogic articulation of values might be brought to bear on the problem Crowley identifies in *Toward a Civil Discourse*. Indeed, Crowley herself acknowledges this possibility. She observes, "there are other values that many people hold, some of which are explicitly Christian and which may thus be persuasive to apocalyptists" (200). She specifically names two: "loving one's neighbor" and "helping those who are hungry, ill, or infirm" (200). As soon as Crowley mentions these two values, though, she shifts to a discussion of "Enlightenment values" (200). She doesn't linger on "explicitly Christian" values because she is not—and here I borrow a term that Kathryn used to refer to her evangelical upbringing—"trained" to do so. By her own admission, much of the Christian belief she explores in *Toward a Civil Discourse* is new to Crowley (ix-x; 102). Equally important, Crowley gives short shrift to the possibility that there might be rhetoricians who are Christian—even evangelical!—who might be better prepared to invent arguments that would be persuasive for an audience that holds to apocalyptic beliefs (see Daniell, "Whetstones").

Rhetcomp scholars like Kathryn might be specially prepared to discover the paths of invention that prove elusive to Crowley. This would come about not by setting aside the nuances of one's faith in favor of a more ambiguous spirituality, but, on the contrary,

through direct and intentional articulation of how evangelical values and beliefs intersect with rhetorical principles and theory. Crowley writes that "arguments generated by rhetorical invention must be conceived as produced and circulated within a network of social and civic discourses, practices, images, and events" (27). She leaves out the religious here, and I think that is to the detriment of her argument. It certainly may be implied in the "social," but I'd like to suggest that, in doing the work that Crowley is trying to do, the religious must be foregrounded, not implied. As Kathryn's autoethnography illustrates, addressing social influences does not necessarily help in articulating religious influences.

Earlier in this chapter, I noted that Kathryn describes her faith by referencing a passage from Paul's Letter to the Galatians:

> [T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another. (Gal 5.22-26)

This is a passage that evangelicals refer to often. It also serves as a kind of summary of the faith Kathryn strives to maintain. In that regard, it provides a possible heuristic that an evangelical rhetorician like Kathryn might use not only to name her faith in nuance and sophistication, but also to do what Crowley fails to do—find paths of invention to communicate effectively with fundamentalist Christians.

In his book *When Religion Becomes Evil*, Charles Kimball provides insight into what such a possibility might entail. An ordained Baptist minister and professor of religion, Kimball discusses warning signs that indicate when religion has become corrupted. Central to my purposes, he argues in his final chapter that "people of faith

offer the best hope for correcting the corruptions" of religion in our post-9/11 world (187). Kimball goes on to say that, "[l]ike those generations who have gone before us, we, too, must look deep into our [religious] traditions for the wisdom and resources that support peacemaking rather than war, reconciliation rather than retaliation" (189). Although Kimball is not a rhetorician, what he writes certainly applies to those who are. Offering the metaphor of religion as a compass to help guide dialogue in the twenty-first century, Kimball identifies faith, hope, and love as core values that could help frame such discussions. These are values, of course, that are prominent within Christian tradition (see 1 Cor 13). They are also values that shape the beliefs and identities of individuals across the globe. He writes, "Our ways of seeing and interpreting the world, of framing issues, and even of asking questions are strongly tied to the social, religious, geographical, and historical circumstances into which we were born and raised" (196). Using his own Baptist upbringing as an example, he then adds that while "[r]eligious traditions do not determine who we are, [...] they are a part of the givenness of most people" (197).

It is that emphasis on the givenness of religion that, I argue, is worth tapping into rhetorically. Somewhat ironically, the very givenness of deeply imbedded religious perspectives—what Kathryn refers to as "underlying principle[s]" or an "under-examined [...] system," or what rhetoricians might refer to as "commonplaces" (Crowley 70)—is what makes them difficult to articulate. Conceivably, though, someone like Kathryn could begin from the premise that acts deemed "Christian" or "godly" would match up with the nine fruits of the Spirit. Such acts, whether they are political, social, economic, or otherwise, would produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. On the contrary, acts of any nature that lead to enmity, strife,

jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, and factions, among others, belong to what St. Paul

called the "works of the flesh" (Gal 5.19-20). With these values serving as a starting

point—as part of the religious discourse that serves as the ground for rhetorical

invention—someone like Kathryn could begin to invent arguments that could open up

more possibilities for engaging productively in debates that have deeply-held religious

convictions at their core.

For example, at one point in our interviews, Kathryn mentioned Wayne Booth's

The Rhetoric of Rhetoric. She was particularly interested in Booth's concept of "listening

rhetoric," what he refers to throughout his book as "LR" (10). She told me that LR "really

appealed to" her because it gets at "how we have to really pay attention to what" others

say. She continues, "we can't be [...] unwilling to hear someone else and still be

searching for capital-T truth [...]." Booth defines LR as the act of "listen[ing] to each

other not only to persuade better but also to find the common ground behind the conflict"

(10). At the heart of LR is the pursuit of "shared assumptions (beliefs, faiths, warrants,

commonplaces)" (10). I'd like to suggest that Booth's concept of LR appeals to Kathryn

at least in part because it matches up with her evangelical Christian faith, which she

defines in terms of the nine fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. LR is certainly patient, gentle, kind,

and replete with self-control. Interlocutors, Booth writes, must "join in a trusting dispute,

determined to listen to the opponent's arguments" (46). There's also generosity in

listening to others and hoping for peace, what Booth calls "a new agreement about what

is real" (47). As Booth makes clear, though, LR also demands faithfulness to one's own

beliefs; he decries "surrender rhetoric" or "self-censorship" (48). And though it's not a

reference to the fruits of the Spirit, LR does match up with the New Testament Letter of James, where the author urges his audience to "be quick to listen, slow to speak, [and] slow to anger" (1.19).

As I explore these connections between biblical principles and Booth's listening rhetoric, I am reminded of Paulo Freire's discussion of dialogue in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Drawing on his own Catholic Christian heritage—and echoing St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians (see 1 Cor 13)—Freire identifies love, humility, faith, trust, and hope as key values that inform dialogue. In terms of faith, Freire argues that "[d]ialogue requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human" (90). Such belief in others parallels Jesus' command in the Gospels to love one's neighbor as oneself—to see others, that is, as equally human. LR embraces such love for others. Taking someone else's ideas seriously—especially when that person has views divergent from one's own—is made easier when that individual's humanity is recognized as equivalent with one's own. As Kimball puts it in *When Religion Becomes Evil*, love as a religious value can help individuals understand diversity "as enriching rather than threatening" (194).

To be sure, citing the Bible is no silver bullet for groups who have such densely-articulated belief systems such as Crowley's apocalyptists. The evangelical Christian rhetorician would run the risk of making arguments that devolve into proof-texting. One could also foresee the trap of understanding debate as belonging to the "works of the flesh" because it can involve anger, factions, and quarrels. But those risks seem worth taking. What I'm driving at here is the possibility that inventing arguments from the Christian values enumerated in Galatians 5—values that Kathryn identifies as central to

her evangelical literacy and identity—could lead to the development of the nuanced and sophisticated language for which Gere has called. This language, in turn, would help rhetors address significant civic problems facing the twenty-first century. Equally important, it would increase the subject positions available for evangelical rhetcomp students like Kathryn, thus opening up possibilities for her to negotiate an identity that values her evangelical literacy as part of her academic self.

Chapter Conclusion

One of the results of writing her autoethnography is that Kathryn has a new set of terms with which to understand her literate upbringing. These terms act as terministic screens that, as Burke tells us, deflect reality at the same time they reflect it. What is reflected are the social aspects of literacy learning; what is deflected are the spiritual aspects of such literacy. Indeed, in a very real sense, Kathryn has gone so far as to adapt terms she knows as part of her evangelical background and reshape them to fit her academic context. This occurs most overtly in her use of the term "spiritual." In writing her autoethnography, Kathryn is constrained by discourse. The set of values and beliefs privileged within rhetcomp causes her to ignore many of the distinctions that inform her evangelical perspective. The identity she negotiates is, by virtue of the terms she selects to name it, one that is "safe" within rhetcomp.

One would be hard pressed to argue against the motives Kathryn had for constructing her discursive self the way she did. My lament, though, is for what rhetcomp has lost—and continues to lose—if students like Kathryn do not find room within academic discourse to explore fully the deep connections of value and belief between

evangelical Christian faith and current literacy, rhetorical, and composition theory. If we hope to develop the nuanced and sophisticated discourse to articulate faith and spirituality for which Gere has called, rhetcomp will need not only to take more seriously the beliefs of evangelical students like Kathryn, but also to encourage such students to articulate those beliefs as they are, without hedging. Nuance and sophistication begets nuance and sophistication.

CHAPTER SIX

VALUING FAITH: COMING TO TERMS WITH EVANGELICAL IDENTITY IN RHETCOMP

"What is not valued is not studied. What is not studied is not valued."
—Beth Daniell, *A Communion of Friendship*

In telling these four students' stories, I hope I have helped rhetcomp scholars

acknowledge and value the struggles, successes, opportunities, faiths, realities, and

processes of identity negotiation that evangelical students might encounter in academic

communities of practice. My hope, too, is that this study provides new terms—new

perspectives—on how evangelical Christian students negotiate their identities within the

kind of academic discourse privileged in rhetcomp. To echo Ann Gere's terms, I hope I

have added to the language for addressing faith in nuance and sophistication.

Beth Daniell notes that there's a direct correlation between what a field values

and what it studies. Her statement is accorded weight by virtue of the fact that she wrote

it toward the end of *A Communion of Friendship: Literacy, Spiritual Practice, and*

Women in Recovery, a book that sought to explore what its subtitle names. Early in the

book, Daniell admits that her focus on spirituality made her nervous (7). A bit later,

Daniell confesses that she "received a number of puzzled looks from CCCC colleagues"

when she began the project (12). It is in her conclusion that she writes what I include in

the epigraph above, and, though she's talking specifically about "pay[ing] special

attention to the literate practices of women and girls" (156), I think her statement applies

to her focus on spiritual practice. By extension, it pertains to my focus on evangelical

Christian identity in rhetcomp. In fact, the correlation between what a field studies and what it values parallels Gere's contention that the reason why our "language for talking about religious faith is impoverished" is because "discussions of religion have been essentially off-limits [...]" ("Articles" 46). We don't theorize about what our field doesn't value. We don't have a language for what we don't study.

By telling Austin's, Kimberly's, Brian's, and Kathryn's stories, I hope I have provided some understanding as to how evangelical Christian students might negotiate their identities in relation to rhetcomp. I hope, too, that I have helped my readers acknowledge the complex negotiations that occur when evangelical Christian students write academically. That complexity results no doubt from each students' individuality and particular relation to his or her faith. In fact, one observation worth acknowledging here is the highly idiosyncratic way in which each student negotiated his or her identity. The differences in approach between Austin and Kimberly and then between Brian and Kathryn are evident. And even though there are some similarities by gender (the male students both sought to integrate their faith into their academic writing more explicitly than did the females), there are even differences between Austin and Brian and between Kimberly and Kathryn. Brian, for instance, was more comfortable acknowledging his own evangelical identity in his essay; Austin, based on his perception of academic writing, actively sought to leave out mention of his personal faith. And while the female students compartmentalized their faith from their academic writing more than the males, Kathryn, possibly by virtue of the fact that her graduate program valued the personal as part of the academic, integrated her faith more directly than did Kimberly. Indeed, the

stricture against faith-based perspectives promoted by Kimberly's writing teacher certainly shaped the way she approached her HPV essay.

I could go on parsing out the differences between each students' construction of discursive identity, but the upshot seems to be something along the lines of what Shannon Carter has already observed: these evangelical students are hyperaware of their context (577), and that awareness plays a significant role in how they integrate their faith into their academic writing. So does each student's educational and religious background. Brian, having explored his faith intellectually, seemed much more willing to speak from his evangelical identity in his writing. Austin, Kimberly, and Kathryn, on the other hand, had been conditioned to disparage the personal when writing academically. Thus, writing from their own faith-based perspectives demanded varying degrees of cloaking (Stenberg 279) or self-censorship (Marsden, *Outrageous* 13).

Idiosyncrasies aside, there are certainly some common trends among these students. For instance, each student shared a sense of his or her faith as being generally unwelcome in the academy. This perception resulted in Austin's decision to remain silent in the classroom discussion that prompted his writing; in Kimberly's inability to "see" what role her faith might play in her academic writing; in Brian's intuitive sense that he needed to draw on premises that ultimately contradict his foundationalist belief; and in Kathryn's choice to render her faith ambiguously in her autoethnography about literacy and spirituality. Additionally, all four students recognized at some point that their prior experiences writing academically shaped how they approached their assignments and constructed their discursive identities. In the cases of Austin, Kimberly, Brian, and Kathryn, such familiarity with academic discourse influenced their decision to include or

not include their evangelical perspectives. Equally significant, it shaped how they felt they could construct their discursive identities as evangelicals. Austin consciously kept his personal experience out of his essay, though he included the experiences of other evangelicals; Kimberly was, in many ways, socialized against even recognizing how her evangelical identity might matter at all; Brian, despite his attempts to speak as a foundationalist evangelical, accommodated the antifoundationalist premises prominent within rhetcomp; and, lastly, Kathryn was wary of valuing personal experience—and especially *religious* experience—as part of her schooled writing.

That said, what is also true is that each students' faith did play a role in how they wrote academically. This was true of those students who saw their faith as integral to the argument they were trying to make. Austin, Brian, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Kathryn all brought their faith to bear on the academic writing they were required to do. Even in Kimberly's case, faith—an integral part of her identity—shaped the way she approached her personal essay and her researched persuasive essay. Certainly, I have only discussed four students here, but the varied ways in which their faith shapes their academic writing indicates that, like race, class, gender, and other identity characteristics, faith can be significant to academic writing. Lizabeth Rand is certainly right when she says that faith may be the primary sense of self by which students define themselves. What also seems true is that such students' faith-based identities will emerge in their academic writing. Acknowledging this influence—and developing a language with which to understand it better—will help writing teachers and theorists value that which remains relatively under examined.

What's also worth acknowledging in this concluding chapter is a factor that has certainly shaped how I wrote this book: my own identity as a rhetcomp scholar who has an evangelical Christian background. It is true that a researcher gets to know one's research subjects when writing about them. And I certainly feel like I've gotten to know Austin, Kimberly, Brian, and Kathryn. But since my identity closely parallels the students I've been discussing, I've also gotten to know myself better. At times, this has seemed like a good thing to me—exploring these students' experiences has allowed me to—even compelled me to—acknowledge the negotiations I myself make. Because of that, it has also been troubling for me. Dislocating. Unnerving. Either way, I certainly have brought my identity to bear on my analysis and writing of this dissertation from start to finish. The questions I've asked, the reading I've done, the lines of argument I've pursued have all, in some form or fashion, been shaped by my upbringing as a Pentecostal evangelical Christian, someone who grew up in the Assemblies of God, attended an evangelical university affiliated with the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), made my home in churches all along the political and theological spectrum, and currently considers himself to be an evangelical Episcopalian in the vein of Robert Webber.[9] There have been moments when reading these students' papers or listening to hours of interviews when I have felt challenged, as an evangelical, to be more intentional about my faith, to strive to acknowledge better the role my own faith plays in my scholarship and my teaching.

Because of this, I find it appropriate to conclude this book personally. The act of studying and writing about these students' experiences and academic writing has

---

[9] Webber's book *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals Are Attracted to the Litrugical Church* details his own and others' journeys to the Anglican tradition in a way that values their evangelical heritage.

prompted me to ask myself questions about my own experiences and academic writing. There are four questions in particular that seemed to come up frequently. They arose, I believe, because they get to the heart of what rhetcomp needs to understand if it hopes value the role that faith plays in the writing of evangelical Christian students, both undergraduate and graduate, and how such students will negotiate their identities in relation to academic discourse. In the hopes of providing of a more nuanced and sophisticated language with which to address faith in rhetcomp—in the hopes, that is, of developing new terministic screens by which we can acknowledge and value a contemporary reality for our students, our teaching, and ourselves—I discuss each question below.

Question 1: How Have I Negotiated my Identity in This Book?

Of the questions I'll address here, this is likely the most difficult to answer, if only because it is the most self-referential. A full treatment of this question would demand that I analyze these chapters in the same manner I've analyzed the writing of Austin, Kimberly, Brian, and Kathryn. How have I positioned myself in my writing? How have I defined myself in terms of my faith? Although my faith has primarily remained in the background, I did identify myself explicitly as someone who comes from an evangelical Christian background. In Chapter 1, for instance, I explained how "my primary motive for writing this book [...] comes from my own experience and identity."

> I am a compositionist who grew up in a Pentecostal evangelical Christian family in the northeast. As an undergraduate, I attended an evangelical college in the southeast, a school that emphasizes the integration of faith and learning. Graduate school brought me to two different state universities in the northeast, neither of which value evangelical Christianity as part of their mission. And, as I write this book, I am

teaching back at my alma mater in the southeast. Thus I have shuttled back and forth between evangelical and secular contexts. Though my beliefs have changed since I started college—and, for that matter, graduate school—I still identify with many of the tenets of evangelicalism. This book, in other words, represents a deeply personal inquiry for me.

Reading this, I'm reminded of the way Brian identified himself in "Marginalization and Evangelical Christian Graduate Students in Composition Studies." As I discussed in Chapter 4, Brian explains at the beginning of his essay that he is writing "from the perspective of a devout conservative (often labeled fundamentalist), evangelical Christian." Later in that essay, he notes that, in the scholarship about religious identity and discourse in rhetcomp, no scholars "have thus far identified themselves as evangelical Christians."

I do not align myself with the same foundationalist perspective that Brian espouses. Studying rhetoric and poststructuralism certainly have influenced my view of language and writing: though I view the Bible as inspired, I do not believe it is inerrant. This is a way in which my training as a graduate student—indeed, even as an undergraduate—shaped my faith. But it has by no means eradicated my faith. Indeed, as I discuss in "Faith and Language: Walter Hilton, St. Augustine, and Poststructural Semiotic Theory," Christianity and poststructuralism both demand a great deal of faith—regarding the former, that God exists; the latter, that meaning can be negotiated. I fully realize that admitting this might bar me from many evangelical communities, especially those of the more fundamentalist stripe. Inerrancy has been a mainstay in much of evangelicalism.

But that is not the only perspective. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, sociologist Tony Campolo, himself an evangelical, defines evangelical Christians in part as those who hold a "very high view of scripture though not necessarily inerrancy"

(Claiborne and Campolo). There is no space here to consider fully the theological

ramifications of claiming a view of scripture as highly valuable versus inerrant. I point

out Campolo's definition, though, because it allows me space to be—to exist—as an

evangelical within an academic community of practice that sees a claim to the inerrancy

of any writing as intrinsically flawed.

To put this slightly otherwise, my view of language—the fact that I believe faith

rests at the heart of negotiating meaning—allows for convergence between my academic

and evangelical identities. During the Eucharistic prayer in the Episcopal worship

service, there is a moment where the celebrant and congregation "proclaim the mystery of

faith" as follows: "Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again" (*Book of

Common Prayer* 363). Simple language for a complex, profound mystery, but it's that

emphasis on mystery—on not knowing fully, on not ever having quite sufficient terms—

that makes it possible for me to believe as a rhetcomp scholar. Not all evangelicals will

be comfortable with such claims to mystery. As Doug Downs observes, mystery can

conflict with the Discourses of Affirmation that many religiously committed students

might enact (43). And yet, as I'll discuss in Question 3 below, evangelical students do

tend to embrace a sense of mystery, a conviction that God is far bigger than what they

can think or imagine. As St. Paul, citing the prophet Isaiah, puts it, "For who has known

the mind of the Lord?" (Rom 11.34a). Such a belief provides an important point of

convergence between thinking rhetorically and thinking evangelically.

One thing I notice that I don't do in the paragraph I cited above is say directly, "I

am an evangelical Christian." I do say that I still identify with many of evangelicalism's

tenets, but I primarily identify myself in terms of my background, of where I came from.

207

There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is the fact that I, like many other

evangelicals I know, am hesitant to identify myself with such a politically loaded term. In

this regard, I have to an extent borrowed a strategy that Kathryn used. I'm being

somewhat vague, not because I necessarily want to hide who I am, but because I am

conflicted about a term that has garnered such negative connotations within recent

decades. I teach at an evangelical Christian college in the southeast, a school whose

motto is "Christ is King." Many of my students fit the definition of evangelical that I

have used in this book—they believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, desire to

share their faith, emphasize the importance of a conversion experience, and try to live

their lives according to Christian principles (see Noll; Balmer and Winner; Campolo).

When I asked a class recently if they identified as evangelical, though, not one raised his

or her hand. They much prefer to define themselves in terms of their relationship with

Jesus—thus tapping into the cliché that it's a relationship, not a religion—or as

"followers of the Way," a reference to Acts 9.2. Labels laden with political or ideological

baggage are anathema.

Given that avoidance, I find it all the more surprising that Brian so blatantly

defines himself as a fundamentalist evangelical Christian. I know what Brian is trying to

do, though. He's trying to fill a gap, to rescue a term. He's trying to prove that, by virtue

of his existence as a rhetcomp scholar and fundamentalist evangelical, it is possible to be

both. That's not to say that Brian *isn't* a fundamentalist evangelical Christian. I think he

certainly is. But I do think his decision to make such a bold announcement was motivated

by the hope that he might be able to prove his readers wrong—that, by writing as a

fundamentalist evangelical, he might lead his readers to question their assumptions about

such Christians. I'll admit, this is more of a hunch than anything. But it's a hunch based on my own experiences. There are moments when I have identified myself as an evangelical Christian in an academic context in order to let people know that, yes, it *is* possible to be both an academic and an evangelical. To an extent, I'm doing it here— right now, in this book.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, I'm not sure Brian was able to write from a fundamentalist evangelical perspective in his academic writing. And that leads to one of the most significant questions that I would like other rhetcomp scholars—of any faith or none at all—to acknowledge: What is at stake for students of faith, whether evangelical Christian or otherwise, when aligning themselves with ways of arguing in rhetcomp? And how do we help students acknowledge the potential disparities that may exist between their perspectives and the perspectives embedded within the social-constructionist or antifoundationalist views that remain prominent within rhetcomp?

To be fair, I'm not sure I've written as an evangelical here. I have drawn heavily on my evangelical literacy in writing this book, but the premises I have adopted are, more often than not, taken from what I know and believe as a rhetcomp scholar. Perhaps most glaring is the fact that I have adopted a social constructionist view of identity to frame my research. Wenger, LeCourt, Bizzell, Ivanič, and Gee, among others, see identity as socially constructed, as resulting from whatever mix of social, cultural, and historical norms, values, and beliefs happen to be reified in a certain setting. In many ways, this contradicts the Christian view of identity, a view that, for many evangelicals, is rooted in Psalm 139.13-16:

> For it was you [God] who formed my inward parts; you knit me together
> in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully

made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book was written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

When I was an undergraduate at an evangelical Christian college, I also remember hearing Jeremiah 29.11 cited as a verse that holds promise for the identity—the purpose—that God has for each individual: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future and hope."

Even as I write these verses, I wonder about the possibility that our identities are not products of the particular culture in which we were raised but rather divinely purposed. This is, of course, a radically different premise than a social constructionist view of identity. What if I had used as my operating theory of identity a view that claims God as the source of identity? That, yes, we might be shaped by our culture, but that who we are at a basic, primordial level transcends time and place? Most likely, I would be laughed out of rhetcomp as ignorant of one of the main premises underlying a dominant theoretical framework. But it would bring into greater relief aspects of these evangelical students' identities and motives that social constructionist perspectives deemphasize. These are motives that, as I have tried to show throughout this book, impact significantly what Austin, Kimberly, Brian, and Kathryn said and how they say it. The language to address spirituality in rhetcomp, if it is to acknowledge the motives of religiously committed students like many evangelical Christians, must have terms to account for a sense of divine purpose. To be sure, it might be possible to view identity as both socially constructed and divinely purposed. But such a perspective has yet to be theorized in rhetcomp, much less taken seriously.

What I'm driving at here is this: My critique of Brian in Chapter 4 is a critique of me. Of my own work. I can no more draw on my evangelical premises than he could. The difference may be that I don't claim a foundationalist perspective. And yet, I have to admit that I am troubled by my emotional reaction to reading and citing Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 29.11. I remember a time—when I was a FY student like Austin and Kimberly, perhaps—when reading those verses would have produced a significant emotional reaction in me, would have tapped into the sense of purpose that permeated my thinking and decision making. I read those verses now and I think of the ways in which it intersects with the critical theory I have learned. To what extent is that verse a product of its culture? To what extent is any claim about divinity a product of its culture? To what extent is such a verse *missing* the importance of the way culture shapes identity? As I ponder these questions, I realize how much enacting academic discourse has shaped how I view my faith. At one point in our interviews, Kathryn confessed that her schooling had complicated her processes of thinking and believing. "Muddying the waters," she called it. It's an apt phrase. If there ever was a division between my evangelical and academic identities, those lines are more blurred now than ever before.

Question 2: How Has My Evangelical Identity Informed My Writing?

My evangelical literacy—what I know, believe, and value as someone who has grown up in evangelical Christianity—has played an integral role in my writing of this book. At a very basic level, it prompted me to ask the questions I'm asking, to acknowledge evangelical Christian faith and its intersection with academic discourse as a legitimate site for investigation. From there, it has allowed me to "see" evangelical

discourse when it emerges in these students' writing. It helped me understand Austin's sense of divine purpose in writing his Christian Schools essay; it allowed me to see how the moves Kimberly made in her writing matched up with evangelical values and beliefs; it provided me with a way to identify with Brian's attempts to negotiate his identity as a foundationalist evangelical in his academic writing; it cued me in to the evangelical identity Kathryn was cloaking in the way she used terms like "calling" and avoided terms like "religious." My evangelical literacy has helped me acknowledge and thus study what has traditionally not been valued as part of academic discourse in rhetcomp.

But naming the values and beliefs, whether religious or otherwise, that shape one's academic writing can be difficult, especially for those who have lived in that perspective their entire lives. Marshall McLuhan's dictum that a fish didn't discover water certainly comes to mind here. Indeed, one question that my participants continually had difficulties answering was one that asked them to name their evangelical literacies. For instance, I asked Austin to respond to the following writing prompt:

> I'm interested to hear more about how your faith and identity as an evangelical Christian informs this paper. How does what you know as a Christian and how you know as one shape what you say in [your] "Christian Schools" [essay]? Another way to think about it: What are you able to say in this paper that someone who isn't evangelical would not be able to say?

His response alludes to the difficulty inherent in answering such a question:

> The one thing that sticks out in my mind that someone who is not a Christian wouldn't be able to say about Christian schools is that they
>
> would not have a relationship with God. A Christian school helps develop a person's faith in Jesus. At least that was the case for me. When I attended a Christian school, having people with such a strong faith in Christ gave me an example on what a Christian looks like on a day to day basis.

212

Austin does not name any aspects of his evangelical literacy specifically—a result, I admit, of a question that isn't as focused as it could be. He does hit on an important idea, though, namely that literacies are acquired socially, that how we learn to think, act, talk, believe, say, and do are shaped by the communities of which we are part (Gee, *Social*; Wenger).

One belief that I learned as a result of my participation within various evangelical communities growing up was the belief that, as a Christian, I should be sensitive at all times to listen for what Pentecostals would refer to as the voice or the "gentle prompting" of the Holy Spirit. Such promptings could come at any moment—while riding a bike, talking with a friend, sitting in church, teaching a class, meeting a stranger, writing a dissertation. Regardless of the specific context, though, the obligation of being a Pentecostal was to recognize these promptings and respond to them appropriately—to listen to and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit. Though Kimberly is not Pentecostal, I think similar attitudes emerged in her case study. She talked about the sense of guilt she often felt when reading cultural theory, a kind of guilt that she acknowledged was similar to reading biblical texts like the Letter of James. She talked, too, about her desire to reach out to strangers, to talk with people she might never see again at her state university—to communicate with Stephen, the hearing impaired boy she met, despite the difficulty inherent in doing so. Kimberly attributed that sensitivity in part to her evangelical Christian background—to the fact that, as she put it, she was "stepping out on faith and knowing that God would guide [her] through the situation." In fact, she went on to write that she was "guided by the values [she] hold[s] as a Christian"—values that she was able to name through the interview process.

These values shape the academic writing she produced. They inform the attitudinal predisposition that allowed her to fulfill the particular assignment she was asked to complete, to make the kind of "turn" that many personal essays ask FYW students to make. Such sensitivities are not solely the domain of evangelical Christians— believers of other faiths and non-believers alike can certainly have such attitudinal predispositions. And yet, as someone who grew up in a Pentecostal evangelical background, I understand such sensitivities in terms of the prompting of the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel of John, when Jesus is telling his disciples he will be leaving them, he promises to ask God the Father to give them "another Advocate" that will "be with [them] forever" (14.16). Later in the chapter, Jesus says that "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (14.26). This act of teaching and reminding Christians in lieu of Jesus implies a communicative aspect of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, elsewhere in the New Testament, St. Paul talks about the importance of living "according to the Spirit" (Rom 8.4) and "speaking by the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 12.3). This may not be "literacy" in a sense that the academy traditionally has welcomed. In fact, Brummett reminds us that such unmediated knowledge of the divine is a way of knowing for which the academy has no language. It's a way of knowing, though, that influences millions of Americans. It's a way of knowing that has been a significant part of my life and of the lives of the evangelicals I've discussed here.

Such ways of knowing amount to what Min-Zhan Lu has called "rich discursive resources," which she defines as follows:

> knowledge of and expertise in using a whole range of discourses which are
> specific to social groupings and settings to their *lives beyond the academy*,

'non-academic' conventions geared to serve motives and experiences delegitimized by standardized academic conventions. (original emphasis)

I like Lu's emphasis here on "motives and experiences" that have been "delegitimized by standardized academic conventions." The students I've discussed in this book have recognized to varying extents that their evangelical motives and experiences are, by academic standards, ancillary if not suspect. And yet, Kimberly's and Kathryn's experiences in particular suggest that the identities and literacies of evangelical students will likely shape the academic writing they produce, even in spite of their desire to compartmentalize it. To borrow Lu's term, evangelical students' rich discursive resources will likely emerge in academic writing.

Given this, it seems important to acknowledge and articulate these discursive resources. This is difficult work—finding terms to name phenomena for which our field does not have a nuanced and sophisticated language. In my interviews with Brian, I asked him a question similar to the one I asked Austin:

> How does *what* you know as an evangelical and *how* you know as an evangelical shape what you say in your essay? Another way to think about it: What were you able to say in this paper that someone who isn't an evangelical would not be able to say?

I expected the undergrads to have a limited language to address a question that gets at literacy at a deep level—literacy at the level of assumption, value, and belief. I did not anticipate that my graduate students would have as much of a difficulty. Even Brian, who has explored similar questions in his scholarship, acknowledged that what I was asking him to do is not easy.

> This prompt is a difficult and simultaneously energizing one. Trying to "pin down," so to speak, specific evangelical literacies is something I have not spent much time doing, so I do not doubt that this will be an exploratory draft in many ways.

215

What I argued in Chapter 5, though, is that spending time acknowledging or naming one's religious assumptions, values, and beliefs can be beneficial for developing the language that rhetcomp lacks (Gere). That language, in turn, might help rhetoricians do important work—work with far-reaching and beneficial political and social goals.

Question 3: How Should I Teach Evangelicals to Write Academically?

Part of the important back story to this question is that I took a job at an evangelical Christian university midway through writing this book. My decision to take this job was motivated by my interest in teaching students who share a faith similar to that of Austin, Kimberly, Brian, and Kathryn. Granted, teaching evangelical Christians in the context of a Christian college environment is much different than teaching them at a state university. And yet I certainly found myself drawing on my experiences working with these four students as I taught and talked with my undergraduates at Lee University, a school that, like many Christian colleges, values the integration of faith and learning. Because of that value, I have had the freedom to design writing courses with overt faith components. One class in particular explores a single theme: *What does it mean to be an evangelical Christian in the U.S. in the early twenty-first century?* Each of the three writing assignments requires students to think about this question in terms of their own personal identity. The vast majority of students who attend Lee are evangelical Christians.

Most students tend to react to the theme in the following manner. Initially, they're somewhat surprised ("Can we really talk about this stuff in an *English* class?"); that surprise, for many, leads to engagement ("I've never been able to write about something

so important to me!"); by virtue of that engagement, though, their faith is certainly implicated ("I've never had to think so hard about my faith…"). Differences of context aside, there are certainly some parallels to be drawn here between my students and Austin. As an evangelical, he was engaged by his research topic because it mattered to him so deeply. That engagement led him to wrestle with his ideas, to come to terms with how to explain his faith and his belief in Christian schools to students who didn't share— and even were antagonistic toward—his perspective. My students rarely were writing for such hostile audiences, but many could say along with Austin that they "never had a research paper that's been so near and dear to [them]."

And it's in writing about faith that is "so near and dear" where things get messy. For their first assignment, what I call a "Personal Analysis," students read excerpts from contemporary evangelicals who are trying to make sense of their own experience. Some examples include Donald Miller's *Blue Like Jazz* and Brian McLaren's *A Generous Orthodoxy*. They also read chapters from books like Kevin Roose's *The Unlikely Disciple* and Kathleen Norris's *Amazing Grace*, two texts in which their authors, not evangelicals, try to come to terms with the evangelicalism they encounter. In their writing, I ask students to put their own experiences in conversation with the texts we read. I want them to draw on, reflect on, and analyze their own experiences. And, like Chris Anderson, I want them to be tentative. I don't want them to preach. That can be a hard thing to do—to ask a class full of evangelicals to talk about their faith without preaching. But it is possible. They see it as a challenge right off the bat. "How can we talk about these things and not preach?" they ask. "We're so passionate about this!" I agree with them, but I then remind them that what we're talking about—God, faith, salvation—are mysteries.

They're way bigger than any of us in that room, way bigger, even, than the collective group of us.

They get that. They nod. They're writing about a mystery. And their writing reflects that—to a surprising extent. The personal analysis has quickly become my favorite writing assignment to teach and read. As I make these suggestions about how to write their essays, though, I am aware of Anderson's question that I used at the beginning of this book:

> [I]f we change the *way* students write, change their language, we also change *what* they think, what it is possible for them to think. [...] If we teach students complexity and irony in form, if we teach them the values of academic writing, of good prose, are we not then changing the way they think? If we teach them to write with complexity and irony about their religious experience, for example, are we not then challenging their faith, their belief—not giving them the right to their own language but implicitly and explicitly offering a model of what we think of as a better, because more sophisticated, understanding of religious experience? (15, original emphasis)

I recall numerous conversations in which I was urging students to think about their faith with a bit more "complexity and irony," as Anderson puts it—to see their faith not as a set of concrete answers but as something they're still exploring.

I remember one conversation in particular with a student I'll call Natasha. She was a wonderful student—thoughtful, motivated, articulate. She was the one student in our class, though, who thought of herself as a fundamentalist, a term the rest of the students disowned. In encouraging her to write more tentatively about her faith, I was instrumental in changing Natahsa's relationship with her faith. She expressed this to me in a conference. Things that had been certain, she told me, were certain no longer. She was by no means losing her faith, but, in urging her towards more tentative terms, I was

asking her to change her relationship to it. In Kathryn's terms, I was "muddying the

waters" for Natasha. Kathryn put it this way in our final interview:

> I'm not sure that my education has trained me to do anything but muddy
> the waters [...]. You know? Maybe there is black and white, and I'm
> seeing more gray. Lots more categories. Lots more columns. Not just
> yes/no, right/wrong. I don't necessarily think that's good, but.

Of course, education is largely a process of helping students see more categories, to

complicate existing frameworks. I would be a terrible teacher if, at the end of the day,

students weren't changed or challenged at all. But when Natasha asked me how she could

be certain about what she believes, I realized I was complicit in altering her faith. I

responded in the best way I know how. I reiterated the fact that these are divine mysteries

we're dealing with and that there are plenty of things we'll never know for certain. As a

result of writing about her faith academically—tentatively—Natasha has a different view

of her faith.

To be sure, there's certainly a difference between encouraging students to develop

their faith and challenging them to consider the possibility that it might be wrong or

misguided. Toward the end of his dissertation, Stephen Barrett writes the following:

> I neither agree nor disagree that we must complicate our students' primary
> epistemologies. I believe that for many faith-centered students this will be
> their experience whatever our intentions, whatever our methods and our
> bases for deploying the methods we choose. Rather, my concern is that
> teachers are aware of some consequences of our pedagogies for a number
> of our students. (149)

Barrett goes on to voice his concern regarding "assertions for the relative benignity of

any pedagogy"—he cites Maxine Hairston's 1992 essay, "Diversity, Ideology, and

Teaching Writing" toward this end (149). I agree with Barrett that various pedagogies,

whether primarily expressivist, social-epistemic, feminist, Marxist, or liberatory, will

complicate students' primary discourses, most notably their faith.

219

More importantly, though, I agree with his concern that writing teachers need to be aware of the consequences of their pedagogies. What he was calling for in 1997 is what I'm advocating in 2010—that teachers of writing need to acknowledge the ways in which writing academically might implicate students' evangelical identities. This is all the more important because students themselves—even graduate students—are often unaware of how they are being asked to see their evangelical beliefs, values, and assumptions through a different lens, sometimes one that contradicts their beliefs. I don't know if I made this clear enough to Natasha and the other evangelical students I've taught. I certainly don't think this was clear to the students I discussed in this book. Take Austin, for example. The struggles he faced in writing his Christian Schools essay in large part stemmed from the fact that he was trying to find ways to appeal to his audience's values while remaining true to his own. As I argued in Chapter 2, his citation of Joshua 24.15 stretched his original principle to encompass one that does not necessarily align with his evangelical faith. Austin seemed largely unaware of this. He believed that citing scripture of any kind—in any way—would add weight to his paper. And it does. As I suggested, he finds a verse that allows him to appeal to the freedom of choice his audience certainly would value. In doing so, though, he is forced to re-see that verse through the lens of his audience's values. The emphasis in Joshua 24.15 shifts from *you should choose to follow Yahweh* to *you're free to choose one way or the other*. Austin must acknowledge plurality. To reach his audience, he must embrace it.

If Austin were my student, I'm not quite sure how I'd respond. Do I respond as a rhetcomp specialist who happens to have an evangelical background? Do I respond as an evangelical who happens to be trained in rhetcomp? My first inclination might be to point

out the repercussions of what he is saying. The tendency among many students, evangelical or otherwise, is to embrace a pat cliché when it comes to difference. Dawn Skorczewski's essay "'Everybody Has Their Own Ideas': Responding to Cliché in Student Writing" certainly comes to mind here, not only because it's about clichés, but because of the particular one it mentions in the title. When confronted with even the slightest degree of plurality, my students often respond with something like, "Everyone has their own beliefs." As evangelical missionary and theologian Lesslie Newbigin warns, though, such claims mark a significant ideological and epistemological shift. As he explains in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, there's a marked difference between making universal claims ("This is true") and subjective claims ("This is true *for me*") (19, emphasis added). For the evangelical who believes that John 14.6 is universally true— that Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life" for all humanity and that "[n]o one comes to the Father except through" Christ—saying that others are entitled to their own beliefs presents a significant contradiction.

There have been moments in class when I wanted to point out to my students that their claims, often made as platitudes to which they retreat when facing philosophical conundrums, put them in a bind. And yet, which values do I acknowledge? Which do I promote? Like many others in rhetcomp, I value pluralism and diversity. I strive to understand and value students' diverse perspectives. Yet this often conflicts with my evangelical values, with the sense of responsibility I have as someone many of my students look up to. I'm not their pastor by any means, but I'm asking them to write and think about their faith critically. I'm complicit in the ways in which I'm possibly implicating their faith. In such moments, I wonder if James 3.1 was written specifically

for me: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." I realize I'm straddling a fault line here—the fault line that lies at the volatile interstices between evangelical Christianity traditionally conceived and the pluralism embraced within postmodernity and, by extension, rhetcomp. What I say in response often boils down to the rhetorical situation in which I happen to find myself. Like Austin, Kimberly, Brian, and Kathryn, I shift my allegiances based on who's listening.

As writing teachers, then, we might question how much we ask our students—of any faith or none at all—to accommodate their audience's values. Of course, as a rhetorician, I'm not calling for anyone to ignore audience. Yet in exploring these students' writings, I have come to view accommodating one's audience as having significant implications for identity, especially when that identity is marginalized in relation to the discourse or community of practice in which it is being forged (see Dively, "Religious"). In "Some Reflections on Argument," Henry Johnstone writes that genuine argument occurs only when risk is involved, that is to say, when both arguer and respondent risk having their beliefs changed by virtue of the debate. And because belief is so central to identity—especially religious identity—having one's beliefs altered amounts to an alteration of self. The negative implications of Johnstone's concept of risk include alienation, deracination, or dislocation—an abandonment of one's beliefs and sense of self. Of course, the other possibility is a much more positive one. Johnstone puts it this way:

> My own position is that argument is in fact essential to those who engage in it—a person who chooses argument does in fact choose himself. For the tension between conservation and change which is felt by the interlocutors is precisely what enables them to inhabit the world. (6)

Johnstone doesn't use "essential" here lightly. In fact, he uses it in the strictest sense of the term—one's essence is at stake in, but also formed by, genuine argument. Thus it is that confronting the "tension between conservation and change" is that which leads to identity formation. Putting one's beliefs at risk is what forges identity.

The question then becomes, I think, how we intervene in our students' processes of drawing on their evangelical identities and literacies in writing academically. Austin's struggles to write effectively from his evangelical perspective within an academic context highlight the importance of such intervention, as does Brian's inability to acknowledge the ways in which he was subjecting his evangelical beliefs to antifoundational premises. Do we bar students like Austin and Brian from drawing on their evangelical literacies? Given the reality that such literacies inform identities that invariably will shape the way students approach academic writing, attempting to contain evangelical literacies will be as successful as Kimberly's and Kathryn's attempts to compartmentalize their faith—that is to say, *un*successful. No, it seems that writing teachers, whether evangelical or otherwise, need to partner with their evangelical students—as well as with students of other faiths—to explore the ways in which writing academically implicates their values and beliefs. This might be accomplished by prompting students of faith to ask questions that help them acknowledge what they believe and how those beliefs intersect with what the assignment is asking them to do. What might be even more productive would be to ask students to articulate that which they feel they cannot say. I'm thinking specifically of Kathryn's decision to avoid any mention of her distinction between "good" and "bad" spirits or of Kimberly's response to her professor's stricture against faith-based

perspectives. As my research suggests, these moments of silence are often motivated by a clash of competing values, beliefs, or premises.

Question 4: How Has My Faith Been Implicated in Writing this Study?

There is, of course, a drawback to articulating one's beliefs and values. Naming them can have the potentially adverse effect of, in James W. Fowler's words, "demythologizing" spiritually significant symbols. In *Stages of Faith*, Fowler, a developmental psychologist, recalls a story he heard Harvard professor Harvey Cox tell about "the loss of the primal naiveté regarding a central symbolic act for Christians" (181). According to Fowler, Cox, who grew up Baptist, often went with friends to a nearby Catholic church. On one particular occasion, Cox attended a Christmas Eve mass with a friend who has just returned home from her first semester at college.

> As the mass climaxed and the people were receiving the Eucharist, [Cox] said his college-aged girl friend, who had just completed Anthropology 101, turned to him and whispered, "That's just a primitive totemic ritual, you know." [Cox] said, "A what?" She replied with great self-assurance, "A primitive totemic ritual. Almost all premodern religious and tribal groups have them. They are ceremonies where worshipers bind themselves together and to the power of the sacred by a cannibalistic act of ingesting the mana of a dead god." Communion, Cox said, was never the same again. (181)

Echoing Paul Tillich, Fowler goes on to add that "[a] symbol recognized as a symbol is a broken symbol" (181).

My experiences researching and writing this book have been far less dramatic than Cox's. It might be due to the fact that I am older now than Cox was when the act of communion was demythologized for him, but I have had no similarly traumatic moment of coming to terms. That said, Fowler enumerates an actuality that has played itself out much more subtly in my own identity negotiations. This involves the fact that naming or

acknowledging aspects of one's faith can serve to objectify it, to distance oneself from it—McLuhan's fish standing outside the water in order to gain a degree of objectivity. Fowler talks about this as a process of critical reflection in which individuals attempt to separate the meaning of their faith "from the symbolic media that express them" (180). Fowler recognizes the risk that such reflection entails:

> For those who have previously enjoyed an unquestioning relation to the transcendent and to their fellow worshipers through a set of religious symbols, [the act of translating] their meanings into conceptual prose can bring a sense of loss, dislocation, grief and even guilt. (180)

Though he wasn't writing specifically about evangelical Christian students, it is certainly true that many evangelicals, especially those of similar age to Austin and Kimberly and my evangelical students at Lee, have at some point in their lives "enjoyed an unquestioning relation to the transcendent and to their fellow worshipers."

But it's the idea that "conceptual prose can bring a sense of loss, dislocation, grief and even guilt" that is particularly bothersome to me, largely because it describes precisely what I'm trying to do here. In coming to terms with evangelical identity in rhetcomp, I'm trying to render my faith and the faith of others in conceptual prose. On top of that, the concepts I'm using come from rhetcomp theory more than from evangelical Christianity. Take, for example, the fact that I've used the terms *evangelical literacy* and *evangelical identity* throughout this book. On the surface, they're quite harmless. No one from my evangelical upbringing—parents, pastors, friends—would look at those terms and think, "He's been deracinated!" But in using such terms to name the faith about which I am talking, I'm using concepts that belong to my academic community of practice, not my evangelical background. There's a convergence of literacies here, and it's one that is far from ideologically neutral. I use both *literacy* and

225

identity in ways that are shaded by social constructionism. Both terms announce contingency, situatedness, temporality. In using them, I am subjecting my own evangelical identity (there's that term again!) to such concepts. I am acknowledging that who I am is an accident of the discourses and communities of practice to which I have belonged. Had I grown up, say, in India, I'd likely be talking here about Hindu literacy and identity. Sure, I might be able to argue that *identity* and *literacy* as concepts can both fit within the larger and more mysterious context of a divine purpose and will, but I am too familiar with Bakhtin to reject the double-voicedness of such terms. *Identity* and *literacy* are populated with the meanings, the intentions—the ideologies—of others. As James Gee would put it, discourse is most certainly speaking through me.

That's one of the chief conclusions I've reached: naming one's faith in terms of academic discourse giveth and taketh away. While writing about and from the vantage of one's faith perspective can validate evangelical identity as a legitimate source of academic work, it is also the case that such integration, by virtue of my own and these four students' rhetorical situations, subtly implicate that faith. This is the double-edged nature of what I've referred to as convergence. It is true that moments of convergence represent instances in which students' evangelical identities and values align with their academic practice. It is also true, though, that such moments result in different ways of seeing. Writing about personal faith from the vantage of academic discourse realigns the believer to that faith. This occurs subtly but powerfully. In a Burkean sense, our selection of terms, which is always an ideological act, reflect certain aspects of reality while deflecting others.

226

To varying degrees, Austin, Kimberly, Brian, and Kathryn all were able to integrate their evangelical perspectives into their academic work. All four, though, had to do so in ways sanctioned by their academic community of practice. They could speak from their evangelical identity, but it had to be in terms of academic discourse. And doing so, for each, represented a subtle but significant shift in the way that they could identify themselves. Thus, though giving evangelical faith a voice in rhetcomp may represent an accomplishment in terms of the antifoundational, cultural-studies infused pedagogies that seek to value students' diverse identities, it seems to be the case that evangelical identities cannot be rendered as-is in academic discourse. Rendering their faith in terms of academic discourse changes students' understanding of and relationship to faith. The same has certainly been the case for me. Donna LeCourt is right: "academic discourse *does* influence the construction of self" (143, original emphasis)

That's not to say I think we—and here I mean rhetcomp specialists and writing teachers—should give up on helping students come to terms with their evangelical beliefs and acknowledge how they intersect with writing academically. Though there is potential for loss in naming one's faith—Barrett's deconversion represents the worst-case scenario—there is also possibility for great gain. Fowler again provides insight here: "Meanings previously tacitly held become explicit," he writes, adding that "[d]imensions of depth in symbolic or ritual expression previously felt and responded to without reflection can now be identified and clarified" (181). Faith, along with the values, assumptions, and beliefs that comprise that faith, can be named and acknowledged. Such articulation can lead to agency. Fowler argues that naming one's faith can make "[c]omparisons of meanings [...] more easily possible" (181). In other words, through

acknowledging what they believe, students will be more aware of when they are being asked to write, speak, and think in ways that may conflict with their religious identities.

As William Perry has shown, one can get beyond relativism, the perspective where it's all up for grabs, to a position of commitment in which individuals define themselves by their affirmations (135). Of course, Perry's definition of commitment may not sit well with all evangelicals. Perry writes that commitment "refers to an act, or ongoing activity relating a person as agent and chooser to aspects of his life in which he invests his energies, his care and his identity" (135). The focus is on the individual choosing, and it assumes that there are multiple, valid perspectives from which to choose. Indeed, Perry further defines commitment as "an affirmation made in a world perceived as relativistic" that comes "*after* detachment, doubt, and awareness have made the experience of personal choice a responsibility" (136, original emphasis). Commitment to a faith or set of beliefs—an identity—can only come in the context of relativism. As I pointed out earlier, there's a difference between saying something is personally true versus universally true (Newbigin 19). But given the pluralistic world in which we live, and given the fact that many evangelical Christian students learn in the secular academy, it seems inevitable that we all of us, whether religious or otherwise, would do well to name what it is we value and believe. Who we are, after all, derives from our beliefs, our faiths. And that seems worth acknowledging.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Chris. "The Description of an Embarrassment: When Students Write about Religion." *ADE Bulletin* 94 (Winter 1989): 12-15. Print.

Anson, Chris. "Response Styles and Ways of Knowing." *Writing and Response: Theory, Practice, and Research*. Ed. Chris Anson. Urbana: NCTE, 1989. 332-66. Print.

Bakhtin, M.M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1986. Print.

Balmer, Randall and Lauren F. Winner. *Protestantism in America*. The Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. Print.

Balzhiser, Deborah, and Susan H. McLeod. "The Undergraduate Writing Major: What Is It? What Should It Be?" *College Composition and Communication* 61.3 (2010): 415-433. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 12 May 2010.

Barrett, Stephen R. *This Gonna Hurt Like Hell: A Pentecostal Student Enters the Academy*. Diss. U of New Hampshire, 1997. Print.

Barton, David and Karin Tusting. "Introduction." *Beyond Communities of Practice: Language, Power and Social Context*. Eds. David Barton and Karin Tusting. New York: Cambridge UP, 2005. 1-13. Print.

Bawarshi, Anis. *Genre and the Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2003. Print.

Berlin, James A. "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class." *College English* 50.5 (September 1988): 477-94. Print.

Bizzell, Patricia. *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1992. Print.

_____. "Faith-Based World Views as a Challenge to the Believing Game." *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning* 14 (2008-2009). 29-35. Print.

_____ and Bruce Herzberg, eds. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. 2d ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. Print.

The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church. New York: Church Hymnal Co., 1977. Print.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. Print.

_____. "The Rhetorical Stance." *College Composition and Communication* 14.3 (1963): 139-45. Print.

Brandt, Deborah. *Literacy in American Lives*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2001.

_____, et al. "The Politics of the Personal: Storying Our Lives against the Grain." *College English* 64.1 (2001): 41-62. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 4 May 2010.

Bruffee, Kenneth A. "Social Construction, Language, and the Authority of Knowledge: A Bibliographic Essay." *College English* 48 (1986): 773-90. Print.

Brummett, Barry. "Rhetorical Epistemology and Rhetorical Spirituality." Buley-Meissner, Thompson, and Tan 121-136.

Buley-Meissner, Mary-Louise, Mary McCaslin Thompson, and Elizabeth Bachrach Tan, eds. *The Academy and the Possibility of Belief: Essays on Intellectual and Spiritual Life*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton P, 2000. Print.

Burke Kenneth. *Attitudes Toward History*. Berkely: U of California P, 1984. Print.

_____. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969. Print.

_____. *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984. Print.

_____. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969. Print.

_____. "Terministic Screens." *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*. Kenneth Burke. Berkeley: U of California P, 1968. Print.

Campolo, Tony. *Speaking my Mind: The Radical Evangelical Prophet Tackles the Tough Issues Christians are Afraid to Face*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004. Print.

Carter, Shannon. "Living inside the Bible (Belt)." *College English* 69.6 (July 2007): 572-95. Print.

Carter, Stephen L. *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*. New York: BasicBooks, 1993. Print.

Chambers, Oswald. *My Utmost for His Highest*. Uhlrichsville, OH: Barbour, 1997. Print.

Chappell, Virginia. "Teaching—and Living—in the Meantime." Buley-Meissner, Thompson, and Tan 39-53.

Claiborne, Shane, and Anthony Campolo. "On Evangelicals and Interfaith Cooperation: An Interview with Tony Campolo." *Cross Currents* 55.1 (2005): 54-65. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*. EBSCO. Web. 12 May 2010.

Clark, Romy and Roz Ivanič. *The Politics of Writing*. New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Connor, W. Robert. "The Right Time and Place for Big Questions." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 52.40 (2006): B8-B9. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 4 May 2010.

Cox, Harvey. "The Warring Visions of the Religious Right." *The Atlantic Monthly* Nov. 1995: 59-69. Print.

Cross, Terry L. *Answering the Call in the Spirit: Pentecostal Reflections on a Theology of Vocation, Work and Life*. Cleveland: Lee UP, 2007. Print.

Crowley, Sharon. *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2006. Print.

Cushman, Ellen, et al. *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. Print.

Daniell, Beth. *A Communion of Friendship: Literacy, Spiritual Practice, and Women in Recovery*. Studies in Writing and Rhetoric. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois U P, 2003. Print.

_____. "Composing (as) Power." Interchanges: Spiritual Sites of Composing. *College Composition and Communication* 45.2 (May 1994): 238-46. Print.

_____. "Whetstones Provided by the World: Trying to Deal with Difference in a Pluralistic Society." *College English* 70.1 (September 2007): 79-88. Print.

Davies, Brian. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.

DePalma, Michael-John, Jeffrey M. Ringer, and Jim Webber. "(Re)Charting the (Dis)Courses of Faith and Politics, or Rhetoric and Democracy in the Burkean Barnyard." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38.3 (2008). Print.

Dinitz, Sue and Toby Fulwiler. "Introduction." *The Letter Book: Ideas for Teaching College English*. Eds. Sue Dinitz and Toby Fulwiler. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2000. vii-xii. Print.

Dively, Ronda Leathers. "Censoring Religious Rhetoric in the Composition Classroom: What We and Our Students May Be Missing." *Composition Studies* 25.1 (Spring 1997): 55-66. Print.

_____. "Religious Discourse in the Academy: Creating a Space by Means of Poststructuralist Theories of Subjectivity." *Composition Studies* 21.2 (Fall 1993): 91-101. Print.

Downs, Douglas. "True Believers, Real Scholars, and Real True Believing Scholars: Discourses of Inquiry and Affirmation in the Composition Classroom." Vander Lei and kyburz 39-55.

Elbow, Peter. "The Believing and Doubting Game—An Analysis of the Intellectual Enterprise." *Writing Without Teachers*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. 147-91. Print.

_____. *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.

Faigley, Lester. *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1992. Print.

Foucault, *The Order of Discourse*. Bizzell and Herzberg 1460-1470.

Fowler, James W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. Print.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th Anniversary ed. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 2002. Print.

Gee, James Paul. "Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics: Introduction and What is Literacy?" Cushman et al. 525-44.

_____. *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Gere, Anne Ruggles. "Articles of Faith." Brandt et al. 46-47.

Gerschick, Thomas J. "Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender." *Race, Class, & Gender: An Anthology*. Ed. Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2007. 185-89. Print.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook P, 1973.

Goodburn, Amy. "It's a Question of Faith: Discourse of Fundamentalism and Critical Pedagogy in the Writing Classroom." *JAC* 18.2 (1998): 333-53. Print.

Hairston, Maxine. "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 43.2 (May 1992): 179-95. Print.

Hansen, Kristine. "Religious Freedom in the Public Square and the Composition Classroom." Vander Lei and kyburz 24-38.

Harding, Susan Friend. *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000. Print.

232

Hardy, Lee. *The Fabric of This World.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990. Print.

The Harper Collins Study Bible. New Revised Standard Version. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1989. Print.

Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways With Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms.* 1983. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print.

Herrington, Anne J., and Marcia Curtis. *Persons in Process: Four Stories of Writing and Personal Development in College.* Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2000. Print.

Hunt, Doug. *Misunderstanding the Assignment: Teenage Students, College Writing, and the Pains of Growth.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2002. Print.

"Is American Christianity Turning Charismatic?" *Barna.org.* Barna Group, 7 Jan. 2008. Web. 7 May 2010.

Ivanič, Roz. *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing.* Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1998. Print.

Johnstone, Henry W., Jr. "Some Reflections on Argumentation." Introduction. *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Argumentation.* Eds. Maurice Natanson and Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. University Park, PA: Penn State UP, 1965. 1-9.

Kimball, Charles. *When Religion Becomes Evil.* New York: HarperCollins, 2002. Print.

King James Bible. Project Gutenberg ed. Champaign, IL: Project Gutenberg, 2005. *NetLibrary.* Web. 22 May 2010.

Lave, Jean and Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation.* New York: Cambridge UP, 2003.

LeCourt, Donna. *Identity Matters: Schooling the Student Body in Academic Discourse.* Albany: SUNY P, 2004. Print.

Lewis, C.S. *The Abolition of Man.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972. Print.

_____. "Christian Apologetics." *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1970. 89-103. Print.

_____. *Mere Christianity.* New York: Macmillan, 1952. Print.

Lindsay, D. Michael. "Evangelicalism Rebounds in Academe." *The Chronicle Review* 7 May 2008. Web. 9 May 2008.

_____. *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite.* New York: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.

Lu, Min-Zhan. "Issues I am Wrestling with in My Work." Presentation handout. Dept. of English, U of New Hampshire, Durham. 13 Apr. 2007. Print.

Lunsford, Andrea A., Helene Moglen, and James Slevin, eds. *The Right to Literacy.* New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990. Print.

Mackenzie, Debora. "Will Cancer Vaccine Get to All Women?" *New Scientist* 186.2495 (2005): 8-9. *Academic Search Premier.* EBSCO. Web. 4 May 2010.

Magolda, Peter and Kelsey Ebben Gross. *It's All about Jesus! Faith as an Oppositional Collegiate Subculture.* Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2009. Print.

Marsden, George M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture.* 2d ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

_____. *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.

_____. *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief.* New York: Oxford UP, 1994. Print.

Marty, Martin E, ed. *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism.* New York: K.G. Saur, 1993. Print.

McLaren, Brian D. *A Generous Orthodoxy.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Miller, Donald. *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003. Print.

Miller, Richard E. "The Nervous System." *College English* 58.3 (1996): 265-86. Print.

Moffett, James. "Censorship and Spiritual Education." Lunsford, Moglen, and Slevin 113-19.

_____. *Storm in the Mountains: A Case Study of Censorship, Conflict, and Consciousness.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1988. Print.

Montesano, Mark and Duane Roen. "Religious Faith, Learning, and Writing: Challenges in the Classroom." Vander Lei and kyburz 84-98.

Murray, Donald M. "All Writing Is Autobiography." *College Composition and Communication* 42.1 (1991): 66-74. Print.

"A New Generation Expresses its Skepticism and Frustration with Christianity." *Barna.org.* Barna Group, 24 Sept. 2007. Web. 7 May 2010.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989. Print.

Newkirk, Thomas. "The Dogma of Transformation." *College Composition and Communication* 56.2 (December 2004): 251-71. Print.

_____. *The Performance of Self in Student Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1997. Print.

The NIV Study Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985. Print.

Noll, Mark A. *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. Print.

_____. "The Future of Protestantism: Evangelicalism." *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism*. Eds. Alister E. McGrath and Darren C. Marks. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. 421-38. Print.

Norris, Kathleen. *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*. New York: Riverhead, 1998. Print.

Perkins, Priscilla. "'A Radical Conversion of the Mind': Fundamentalism, Hermeneutics, and the Metanoic Classroom." *College English* 63.5 (May 2001): 585-611. Print.

Perry, William G. *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970. Print.

Placher, William C., ed. *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocatioin*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005. Print.

Pollitt, Katha. "Virginity or Death!" *Nation* 280.21 (2005): 9. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 4 May 2010.

Ramge, John D. *Rhetoric: A User's Guide*. New York: Longman, 2006.

Rand, Lizabeth A. "Enacting Faith: Evangelical Discourse and the Discipline of Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication* 52.3 (February 2001): 349-67. Print.

Regnerus, Mark. *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers*. New York: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.

Rice, R. Eugene. "Faculty Priorities: Where Does Faith Fit." *Spirituality in Higher Education Newsletter* 3.3 (April 2007): 1-7. Web. 28 June 2009.

Ringer, Jeffrey M. "Faith and Language: Walter Hilton, St. Augustine, and Post-structural Semiotics." *Christianity and Literature* 53.1 (2003): 3-18. Print.

Roose, Kevin. *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*. New York: Grand Central, 2009. Print.

Russell, David. "Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis." *Written Communication* 14 (1997): 504-554. Print.

Saint Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine.* Trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. New York: Liberal Arts P, 1958. Print.

Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing As Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences.* 2d ed. New York: Teachers College P, 1998.

Sider, Ronald J. *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study.* New York: Paulist P, 1978.

Skorczewski, Dawn. "'Everybody Has Their Own Ideas': Responding to Cliché in Student Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 52.2 (2000): 220-239. *MLA International Bibliography.* EBSCO. Web. 7 May 2010.

Smart, Juanita M. "'Frankenstein or Jesus Christ?' When the Voice of Faith Creates a Monster for the Composition Teacher." Vander Lei and kyburz 11-23.

Smit, David W. "Hall of Mirrors: Antifoundationalist Theory and the Teaching of Writing." *JAC* 15.1 (2006): n. pag. Web. 3 May 2010.

Smith, Christian. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998. Print.

The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose: Executive Summary. Higher Education Research Institute. 2004. Web. 18 November 2008. <http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu/>.

Sprigg, Peter. "Pro-Family, Pro-Vaccine—But Keep it Voluntary." Editorial. *The Washington Post* 15 July 2006: A21. *LexisNexis.* 5 May 2010.

Stenberg, Shari J. "Liberation Theology and Liberatory Pedagogies: Renewing the Dialogue." *College English* 68.3 (January 2006): 271-90. Print.

Street, Brian V. "The New Literacy Studies." Cushman et al. 430-42.

Stump, Eleonore, and Michael J. Murray, eds. *Philosophy of Religion: the Big Questions.* Malden: Blackwell P, 1999. Print.

Swearingen, Jan. "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Other Doubting Games: Clearing the Way for Simple Leaps of Faith." Buley-Meissner, Thompson, and Tan 137-152.

Thomson Bunn, Heather. "When God's Word Isn't Good Enough: Addressing the Tensions between Academic Norms and Christian Discourse in the Composition Classroom." Convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Hilton San Francisco. 12 Mar. 2009. Lecture.

Tillich, Paul. *Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Harper & Row, 1957. Print.

Tobin, Gary A., and Aryeh K. Weinberg. *Religious Beliefs & Behavior of College Faculty*. Vol. 2. San Francisco: Institute for Jewish & Community Research, 2007. Print.

Trimbur, John. "Taking the Social Turn: Teaching Writing Post-Process." *College Composition and Communication* 45.1 (1994): 108-118. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. Web. 20 May 2010.

U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Web. 7 May 2010.

Vander Lei, Elizabeth. "Coming to Terms with Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom: Introductory Comments." In Vander Lei and kyburz 3-10. Print.

_____ and bonnie lenore kyburz, eds. *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2005. Print.

_____ and Donald R. Hettinga. "A Comment on '"A Radical Conversion of the Mind": Fundamentalism, Hermeneutics, and the Metanoic Classroom.'" *College English* 64.6 (2002): 720-23. Print.

_____ and Lauren Fitzgerald. "What in God's Name? Administering the Conflicts of Religious Belief in Writing Programs." *Writing Program Administration* 31.1/2 (2007): 185-95. Print.

Wallis, Jim. *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005. Print.

Webber, Robert. *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals Are Attracted to the Liturgical Church*. Waco, TX: Word, 1985. Print.

_____. *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002. Print.

Welch, Nancy. *Getting Restless: Rethinking Revision in Writing Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1997. Print.

_____. "Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers." *College English* 55.4 (April 1993): 387-401. Print.

Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print.

Williams, Bronwyn T. "The Book and the Truth: Faith, Rhetoric, and Cross-Cultural Communication." Vander Lei and kyburz 105-20.

APPENDIX A

EMAIL TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

For the First Year Students

Hi [First Name],

My name is Jeff Ringer. I'm a graduate student at UNH. I got your name and email from [Contact's Name]. I'm working on a research project for my dissertation and I'm wondering if you'd be willing to help me out.

I'm a Christian who attends a state university, and I'm interested in the experiences of other Christians who attend state universities. I'm specifically interested in the experiences of Christians who are taking first-year writing courses like English 401.

Would you be willing to participate in my study? Participating would involve five interviews (each lasting about an hour long) over the next couple months. These interviews would take place right here on campus. Basically we'd be talking about your faith and your education and how they relate. I'd also take a look at some of the writing you do for 401, and I'd have you do a bit of short, informal writing for our interviews (nothing long or hard, I promise!). By way of compensation, I can offer you a $25 gift card to the bookstore of your choice. You'd also have a chance to reflect on your own experiences as a Christian in college (other students I've worked with have enjoyed this). And you'd be adding to a growing discussion of Christians in academia.

Anyway, thanks for considering this, [First Name]. I hope you choose to participate!

For the Graduate Students

Hi [First Name],

My name is Jeff Ringer. I'm a PhD candidate in rhetoric and composition at the University of New Hampshire. I got your name and email from [Contact's Name]. I'm working on a research project for my dissertation and I'm wondering if you'd be willing to help me out.

I'm a Christian who attends a state university, and I'm interested in the experiences of other Christians who attend state universities. I'm specifically interested in the experiences of Christians who are in PhD programs in rhetoric and composition.

Would you be willing to participate in my study? Participating would involve five interviews (each lasting about an hour long) over the next couple months. Since you're at [university name], we'd do these interviews over the phone. Basically we'd be talking about your faith and your education and how they relate. I'd also take a look at some of the writing you've done as a graduate student in composition studies, and I'd have you do

a bit of short, informal writing for our interviews (nothing long or hard, I promise!). By way of compensation, I can offer you a $25 gift card to the bookstore of your choice. You'd also have a chance to reflect on your own experiences as a Christian in grad school (other students I've worked with have enjoyed this). And you'd be adding to a growing discussion about Christian identity in composition studies.

Anyway, thanks for considering this, [First Name]. I hope you choose to participate!

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview 1: Educational and Religious Background

Writing Prompt: "Write a brief letter (1-2 pages) to someone in your FYW course [or GPRC]—either professor or peer—and describe yourself as a Christian. Some questions you might consider: What does your faith mean to you? What aspects of Christianity are most important to you? How does your faith influence who you are on a daily basis? How did you come to be a Christian? Please email this to me at least 24 hours prior to our interview."

Guiding Questions: Interview questions will aim to explore students' religious, educational, and family backgrounds and follow up on what students wrote in their heuristic writing.
- How did you come to be a Christian?
- Tell me about the kinds of churches you've attended.
- Who are the people who have mattered most to your faith?
- What role does the Bible play in your faith?
- Tell me about the kinds of schools you've attended.
- Talk about some of the more significant learning experiences you've had.
- Talk about some of the more significant spiritual experiences you've had.
- How did you come to be a college student at UNH (or a student in a GPRC)?
- Tell me about your family.

Interview 2: Current Educational Context

Writing Prompt: "Write a brief letter (1-2 pages) in which you describe—to the same person you wrote to last time—what it's like to be a Christian in your FYW course [or GPRC]. Some questions you might consider: What challenges have you faced? How has your faith made things easier/better/more difficult for you? How does your faith influence what you say, how you say it, and when you choose not to say anything? Like last time, please email this to me at least 24 hours prior to our interview."

Guiding Questions: Interview questions will aim to explore students' current educational contexts and how they identify as Christians therein.
- Tell me about this course/program. What's it like?
- What is it like for you to be a Christian in ENGL 401/a GPRC?
- How do you relate to your professor(s)?
- How do you relate to your peers?
- How does this course/program compare with your past educational experiences?

- Has faith—your own or someone else's—ever come up in class discussion? If so, why? What was the discussion like?
- Can you think of moments when you've felt your faith challenged in this course/program?
- Do people in your program know that you are a Christian? If so, how did they come to know that?

Interview 3: Text-based Interview

Writing Prompt: "We've decided to talk about this particular paper you've written. Take about 10 minutes and freewrite about how (or if) your identity as a Christian influenced how you wrote this. What does this essay mean to you as a Christian?"

Guiding Questions: Interview questions will derive from Ivanič's and Clark and Ivanič's methodologies and will aim to elicit students' responses to how they have positioned themselves in their writing. If necessary, this discussion will continue in Interview 4.
- Tell me about your experiences writing this paper. How did it go?
- Walk me through this paper. What are you trying to say and how are you trying to say it?
- Can you point to a specific section in this paper where the writing was easy. Why do you think that section was easy to write?
- Can you point to a specific section in this paper where the writing was difficult. Why do you think that section was hard to write?
- On page [#], you say, "_____". To me, that sounds like you are positioning yourself as an _____ [academic/evangelical/activist/scholar/student/and so forth]. How do you feel about positioning yourself in that way? Was that something you intended?
- Would you say that your identity as a Christian emerges in this paper at all? How and where?
- If one of your spiritual mentors read this paper, how do you think he or she would respond?
- The following passage is from *The Politics of Writing* by Romy Clark and Roz Ivanič. How would you respond to this in terms of your own writing? Do you feel you've done something like this in this essay we've been talking about?

> "Writers consciously or subconsciously adjust the impression they convey to readers, according to their commitments and what is in their best interests. These two forces may be in conflict, especially in situations like writing an academic assignment for assessment purposes. Writers often find themselves attempting to inhabit subject positions with which they do not really identity, or feel ambivalent about. [...] Readers in turn form impressions of writers as they read, based on the experience they are bringing to the reading. Different readers will construct the same writer slightly differently, and these 'reader constructions' of writer identity may well differ from the impression the writer consciously or subconsciously wanted to convey." (Clark & Ivanič 144)

Interview 4: Excerpts from Other Students

Writing Prompt: "Here's an example of how a FY student/graduate student with a similar kind of faith talked about being a Christian in the university. Take about 10 minutes and freewrite about how you respond to what this student wrote."

Interview Questions: Interview questions will follow up on what students wrote in their heuristic writing to get at their perceptions of other students' negotiations. If necessary, part of the interview will resume the text-based discussion from Interview 3.
- What kind of person do you think this is?
- Do you agree with what this person said?
- How does your faith suggest that you respond to this person if you were to meet him/her?
- Can you relate to what this person says? Why or why not?

Interview 5: Reflecting on Meaning

Writing Prompt: "Write a brief letter (1-2 pages) to one of your spiritual mentors—maybe a pastor, parent, sibling, friend, campus minister, youth pastor—and tell them how you see your faith as shaping your education and your education as shaping your faith. Feel free to reference anything you and I have talked about over the first four interviews—your religious and educational backgrounds, your current educational context, your academic writing, and your reflection on others' experiences. Please email this to me at least 24 hours prior to our interview."

Interview Questions: Interview questions will follow up on what students wrote in their heuristic writing and urge students to reflect on the meaning of their experiences as Christians in their academic contexts.
- Why did you choose this particular spiritual mentor as your audience?
- Why did you choose these particular events or examples to discuss?
- How do you think your spiritual mentor would respond to your letter?
- Is there anything for you that is non-negotiable in terms of your religious convictions or beliefs?
- Is there anything for you that is non-negotiable in terms of your academic convictions or beliefs?
- What have you learned about your faith in the process of this study?
- What have you learned about your education in the process of this study?

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

University *of* New Hampshire

Research Conduct and Compliance Services, Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building, 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

04-Jun-2008

Ringer, Jeffrey M
English, Hamilton Smith Hall
23A Bagdad Road
Durham, NH 03824

IRB #: 4316
Study: Who Do I Say that I Am? Evangelical Identity and Composition Studies
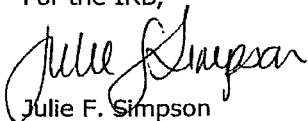**Approval Date:** 03-Jun-2008

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects.* (This document is also available at http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Manager

cc: File
    Newkirk, Thomas