THE CHURCH ON THE WORLD'S TURF: THE MCMASTER IVCF

THE CHURCH ON THE WORLD'S TURF:

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

INTER-VARSITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1997)
(Religious Studies)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: THE CHURCH ON THE WORLD'S TURF: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE MCMASTER UNIVERSITY INTER-VARSITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 348

ABSTRACT

The McMaster University Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) is the largest IVCF chapter in Canada and the second largest recognized group of any kind at McMaster. The majority of its members are conservative Protestants who espouse "fundamentalist" interpretations of the Bible, womens' roles, the age of the earth, alcohol consumption, sexual ethics, and the necessity of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. IVCF members perceive a sharp distinction between themselves and their "non-Christian" peers and professors. An analysis of the apparently paradoxical success of this particular group should elucidate the relationship between contemporary evangelical groups and other secular institutions in North America. Drawing upon fieldwork with the McMaster IVCF, I argue that the chapter promotes two strategies for interacting with the non-Christian majority. First, the "fortress" strategy protects evangelicals and the evangelical ethos from a campus ethos many believers consider to be hostile to their values and beliefs. Second, the "bridge" strategy facilitates constructive and non-confrontational interactions between these evangelicals and their non-Christian peers. These two strategies help IVCF participants to negotiate metaphorical "contracts" between their faith on the one hand and their secular education and social setting on the other. Creative strategies such as those employed by McMaster IVCF members seem both to fortify and mitigate against evangelicals' sense of difference from non-Christians.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter One

Introduction

One warm Sunday evening in September 1993, I found myself walking aimlessly around the McMaster University campus, wondering what the next four years of my life would be like. I had just entered McMaster's doctoral program in Religion and the Social Sciences, and was still unsure whether I would be comfortable in my new university, city, and province. Earlier the same week I had seen a poster advertising something called the "Church at the John," organized by the McMaster chapter of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). Since I was academically interested in conservative Protestantism, and since I knew no one in the city or Religious Studies Department, I decided, for lack of other options, to attend this meeting. What I found there fell completely outside of my expectations, prompted an elaborate series of questions, and ultimately steered me toward the present dissertation.

Since I assumed that the meeting would be small, I worried that being ten minutes late might cause a problem. Such an entrance, I thought, could draw unwanted attention to my presence. As I descended the stairs of the Downstairs John (or simply "The John"), McMaster's largest student bar, I could hear the noises of a large group of people. I thought I might have misread the poster a few days earlier; when I entered the bustling room, I was virtually certain I had.

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Except for the well lit stage at one end of the room, The John was dark, and almost six hundred people were crowded into a space designed for no more than four hundred and fifty. The room was narrow and long, with a low stage at one end, pool tables at the opposite end, and a bar along the side of the room. People were standing and sitting in the aisles, on the bar, and against the walls beneath the bikini-clad models and slogans which festooned the neon beer signs. I discretely asked one person who was standing against the wall if this was the right room for the IVCF meeting, and he replied that it was. I looked at him more intently to determine if he was joking, but he just smiled at me politely and bowed his head. After a few confusing moments, I realized he was praying. I turned away from him and noticed that everyone in the room had bowed their heads in a prayer being led by a demure young woman on the stage.

I had to proceed slowly and sideways to make my way through the throngs of people filling the minimal standing room. After the prayer was over, the "worship band" mounted the stage and led the audience in singing several up-beat folk-rock worship songs, the lyrics of which were projected onto three white bed sheets hung from the ceiling throughout the room. Everyone sang heartily, and some people swayed, closed their eyes and raised their hands as they sang. Standing in the middle of a large group of other late-comers, I was struck by my neighbours' fervour. For the next three hours, I was absorbed in this event, which also included announcements, skits, and a forty-five minute sermon.

I have attended four Canadian universities during the course of my undergraduate and graduate education and have never experienced any event (including sporting events)

at which so many students displayed so much of what Durkheim would have called "collective effervescence," (Durkheim 1973:181) the solidarity-producing enthusiasm which is sometimes generated during religious gatherings. I experienced an unsettling moment of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962) when I remembered I was standing in a campus bar, its floors still sticky from the previous night's revelry, singing "As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longs after you." I am not a Christian, so the words of these songs (in this case, from the 42nd Psalm) probably meant something quite different for me than they did for my neighbours. But still, somehow the act of singing and being with so many spirited believers drew me closer to the uneasy lives of the members of McMaster's Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. Since this initial exposure to the IVCF, I have entered more fully into the social and religious lives of these Christians. The official context of this immersion was the ethnographic research I began conducting in 1994 on this student-led, nondenominational evangelical group.

Context and Methodology

The group at McMaster is the largest and most active IVCF chapter in Canada, with a total membership of over 200 students[1] out of a campus population of approximately 14,000. Although the following chapters of this dissertation will provide

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[1] Early each year the chapter publishes a "chat sheet" which lists members' names, student numbers, departmental affiliations, and telephone numbers. The chat sheet for 1995-96, the academic year I was most involved with the group, included 200 students. There were people who chose not, or who were not able, to have their names appear on this sheet. Since there is no formal procedure for becoming an IVCF member, throughout this dissertation, a "member" denotes anyone who by frequent association or self-definition so identifies himself or herself.

the descriptive texture essential for understanding such a diverse group, some preliminary

generalizations will provide a rough sense of the group's composition. The participants

are almost exclusively white and approximately 70% female. Most of them were raised

in conservative evangelical families. Based on the interviews and observations I

conducted, McMaster IVCF members belong mainly to the middle and upper middle

classes. Throughout Canada the IVCF includes evangelical Christians from a wide

variety of denominations: from Mennonites to Baptists to Pentecostals to Brethren to

Presbyterians. By 1995, the IVCF had chapters in fifty-seven universities, over forty

colleges, three hundred high schools (through Inter-School Christian Fellowship), and

forty nursing programs (Stackhouse 1993).[2]

Like many other chapters in Canada, the McMaster group has a "Staff Worker"

who raises her own salary through appeals to students, parents and community leaders,

as well as through fund-raising events. The McMaster chapter's Staff Worker is Carla,[3]

a forty year old ordained Baptist woman with deep roots in the Hamilton community.

Carla pays special attention to the composition and direction of the chapter's "Executive

Committee," comprised of eight students[4] who, with Carla, set the tone of the group's

activities, oversee the larger mission of the chapter and try to strike a balance between

the various tendencies within the evangelical tradition. Although the group is officially

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[2] For more current information, see the IVCF's website: www.dar.com/ivcf.

[3] All first names of IVCF members mentioned in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

[4] The Executive Committee includes the following positions: President, Clubs Administrator, Large Group Co-ordinator, Church at the John Co-ordinator, Church at the John Worship Leader, Outreach Co-ordinator, Small Group Co-ordinator, Treasurer, and IVCF Staff Worker.

student-led, with Carla serving technically only as a trained advisor, most of the Executive Committee members admire and rarely contradict her. Nevertheless, group members do not slavishly obey Carla. As we shall see, the group is too complicated to be characterized as a simple hierarchy or an example of charismatic domination.

I conducted participant-observation fieldwork with the McMaster IVCF chapter from January to April 1994 and from September 1995 to June 1996. The 1994 period of the research was focused solely on the Church at the John, the event I describe at the beginning of this chapter, and was intended in part to determine whether a larger study would be welcomed by the group's leaders and members. The warm reception I received during this preliminary project convinced me that I would not encounter any serious obstacles from either the group's "gatekeepers" or the general membership.

The fieldwork I conducted entailed attending all of the weekly "Large Group" worship meetings, "Friday Lunch" discussion groups, "Small Group" Bible studies, monthly "Church at the John" praise events like the one I described above, a weekend retreat in January 1995, and several prayer meetings. As well, I attended and participated in a variety of special events and business meetings, including end of term banquets, Executive Committee and Nominating Committee meetings, parties, and fundraisers such as car washes, clothing drives, and all-you-can-eat dessert events. The final and most intensive section of my fieldwork involved joining a group of seven IVCF missionaries on their May 1996 mission trip to Lithuania, where the Canadian "team" supported the nascent evangelical groups that have emerged on Lithuanian campuses. This final stage of fieldwork entailed participating in fundraising, pre-trip meetings, a full

day post-trip debriefing session, and post-trip social events. After spending three weeks in Lithuania with the mission team, I accompanied them as they enjoyed a five day holiday in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

During my fieldwork, I conducted sixty open-ended interviews with members of the chapter. About three quarters of the participants in these interviews were drawn from a sign-up sheet I circulated after I introduced myself at one of the Large Group meetings. I personally invited certain other members to participate in interviews because they seemed to be key members of the group, represented an interesting position on some issue, or were absent when the original sign-up sheet was passed around. During interviews I collected information on each member concerning his or her present age, age and context of conversion, denominational background, parents' denominational background, academic discipline, and other factors. During interviews, we spent most of our time discussing a loosely structured series of questions I had prepared in advance.[5] Their answers determined the pace and essential content of these conversations, which lasted an average of one and a half hours. As the following

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[5] The questions were purposely open-ended and often elicited answers and conversations I could not have predicted. Quite often, the participant and I would discuss the possible meanings of the question itself at length before he or she offered an answer. The questions were: How and why did you become involved with the McMaster IVCF? Is there tension between your school world and your IVCF world? Is there any tension between your IVCF friends and non-IVCF friends? What role do you see IVCF playing on campus? Why do you think this chapter is growing? What would your university life be like without the IVCF? What do you think of the references to Satan and battle imagery in the songs and addresses at IVCF events? Would you describe yourself as "alienated" from non-Christian students or from McMaster University itself?

information reflects, the sixty students in the official data set represent a wide variety of evangelical beliefs and backgrounds.

Total sample:	60 participants					

Gender:	male	female				
	26	34				

Age Distribution:	19	20	21	22	23	24+
	15	9	16	9	5	6

Age of Conversion:	4-7	8-11	12-15	16-20	no specific date
	17	8	9	16	10

Denominational Background:[6]

Convention Baptist	10
United Church	9
Christian Reformed	6
Brethren	6
Fellowship Baptist	4
none	4
Pentecostal	3
Anglican	3
Canadian Reformed	2
Nazarene	2
other evangelical	11

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[6] These figures refer to the churches in which students received the majority of their religious education. Very often, their families left these churches for reasons ranging from doctrinal disagreements to occupational resettlement (cf. Bibby and Brinkerhoff 1973). I was surprised to discover that many of the students in my sample were raised in the United Church tradition. However, the families of almost all of these members left their churches as a result of what they perceived as the United Church's excessive moral and theological liberalism.

Present Church Affiliation:[7]

Fellowship Baptist	24
Convention Baptist	8
Mission Baptist	4
Christian Reformed	3
Associated Gospel	3
Pentecostal	3
Canadian Reformed	2
United Church	2
Vineyard Christ. Fell.	2
Other evangelical	9

Academic Disciplines:

Social Sciences	19
Natural Sciences	10
Humanities	8
Engineering	8
Kinesiology	5
Social Work/Occ. Therapy	5
Nursing	5

Ethnography, the social scientific tradition which undergirds this dissertation, is

barely a century old. Nevertheless, even in its short history, ethnography has undergone

major upheavals. Since the mid-1970s, ethnographers (e.g., Badone 1989; Balmer 1989;

Danforth 1982, 1989; Geertz 1973, 1994; Narayan 1989; Rosaldo 1989; Tedlock 1983;

Titon 1988) have largely abandoned the positivistic ideal of scientific objectivity in favour

of a more modest and reflexive dialogue with the people they study. Marcus and

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[7] Only about half of those I interviewed appeared to have strong attachments to a particular church or denomination, probably because many of these students are living away from their homes. For example, many of the twenty-four students in the Fellowship Baptist category attend the same church, largely because of its charismatic pastor and close proximity to the McMaster campus. Consequently, it is important to be cautious when drawing conclusions from the differences between participants' denominational backgrounds and their current affiliations.

Fischer (1986; cf. Hammersley 1992) argue that current shifts in cultural anthropology are derived from a "crisis of representation" which has affected most human sciences. Such a crisis has thoroughly problematized the academic confidence that it is possible to represent a group of people adequately without objectifying or diminishing them. In response to this predicament, previous disciplinary divisions have been deteriorating. Two decades after Geertz's groundbreaking work (1973), ethnographer Robert Pool writes:

> The blurring of boundaries within ethnography and between ethnography and other disciplines and genres has, especially since Geertz and the literary turn, become commonplace. The boundaries between fact and fiction and personal and subjective and interpersonal anthropological experience have become less sharply defined (Pool 1991:325)

While previous models of ethnography assumed the ethnographer could visually engulf his subjects, coolly observing them with an unwavering scientific eye (Marcus 1994:45), in *Writing Culture,* James Clifford observes that current ethnographic approaches are based on "a discursive rather than a visual paradigm" (Clifford 1986:12; Marcus 1994:48). A discursive paradigm allows both the writer's and the participants' "voices" to be "heard." Whether one calls this new approach "experimental," (Marcus 1994) "post-modern," (Tyler 1986; cf. Tyler 1991) "reflexive," (Myerhoff 1982; Okely 1992; Rabinow 1977) or "discursive," this form of ethnography has elucidated the larger "social discourses" (Geertz 1973:20) in which our participants' discrete utterances make sense. Instead of the putatively clear separation between scientist and subjects which exists in conventional social science, recent ethnographers have opted for a relational mode of study which allows these boundaries to be both criticized and compromised.

Although most contemporary ethnographers are aware of the dangers of what Edward Said (1979; cf. Marcus 1994:42) has called "orientalism," the projection of a brittle exotic otherness onto one's participants, ethnographic research typically entails the study of an exotic or at least distant community of people who, on the surface at least, are very different from most residents of modern, western, capitalist societies.[8] There is an implicit assumption among some ethnographers that serious fieldwork requires travelling, learning new languages, and some measure of physical danger or discomfort. The distance and danger entailed in an exotic field study not only create an aura of authority around both the project and the ethnogapher, but may also result in turning an ethnographer's subjects into ossified, remote others.

Moreover, ethnographers may also depersonalize their subjects though the medium of time as well as that of geographical space. Ethnographers often implicitly or explicitly treat their others as existing not simply "over there," in a fundamentally mysterious place, but "back then," in a simpler more traditional time. Ethnographer Johannes Fabian argues that conventional ethnographies often promoted western hegemony by accommodating

> the schemes of a one-way history: progress, development, modernity (and their negative mirror images: stagnation, underdevelopment, tradition). In short, *geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics* (Fabian 1983:144).

Largely because of the work of researchers such as Marcus and Fischer (1986), Fabian (1983), and Clifford and Marcus (1986), ethnographers are more aware of the

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[8] In Brian Morris's (1987) lengthy bibliography of anthropological studies of religion, all but two were situated in exotic locales.

spatial and temporal modes of objectification, both of which have been part of anthropology since its inception. But even in the midst of our growing awareness of our complicity in objectification, one might more optimistically propose that contemporary ethnographies may now allow the "voices" of others to be heard in a more nuanced manner than once was the case. Moreover, understanding these others in a less arrogant, more dialogical way may enable us to grasp more critically the assumptions on which our own cultures are based (Marcus and Fischer 1986; DaMatta 1994:120; Tedlock 1979).

It is not necessary for groups of people to head-hunt, arrange marriages, or fire-walk to be sufficiently different to attract ethnographic attention. Careful consideration of the North American groups and institutions which are our less remarkable cultural neighbours often reveals profoundly unfamiliar cultural practices (DaMatta 1994; Jackson 1987). In fact, the cultural heritage and symbols which North American ethnographers share with these apparently familiar others may present a more difficult obstacle than unfamiliar languages, unusual foods and illnesses do in the ethnography of exotic peoples. A great deal can be overlooked when the "natives" being studied dress, eat, speak, and for the most part, behave in the same way as the ethnographer does. However, when geographically and culturally proximate ethnographies are at their best (see Ammerman 1990; Badone 1989; Balmer 1989; Davidman 1991; Peacock 1989; Titon 1988), they can elucidate the creative ways in which people rearrange superficially familiar symbolic and cultural patterns to suit their unique situations and needs. In so doing, such studies offer us an opportunity to hear a previously unheard "voice."

Ethnographer Renato Rosaldo writes: "If classic ethnography's vice was the slippage from the ideal of detachment to actual indifference, that of present-day reflexivity is the tendency for the self-absorbed Self to lose sight of the culturally different other" (1989:7). Such an effacement of the other is always a possibility in explicitly post-modern ethnographies. Contemporary ethnography emphasizes "discourse," "poetics," and the co-construction of ethnographic texts (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Tedlock 1983; Tyler 1986:126). While the deprivileging of hermeneutical conventions clearly allows us, as it were, to hear a fuller and more dynamic range of voices, I would suggest that it is also important not to abandon too hastily the empirical (and admittedly sometimes positivistic) tools on which anthropology has been dependent until the 1970s.[9]

Since ethnography requires the collaboration of a writer and a group of others, it is crucial that the writer includes in the text some sort of reflection on his or her impressions; otherwise a central and definitive element of the encounter is missing from the ethnography. In short, ethnography is always part autobiography. However, while this personal, or inter-personal, component is arguably a vital element of any ethnographic study, Rosaldo fairly warns scholars not to use this method to pursue their own self-justification or self-exploration. Following this caution, I will include my

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[9] In her critique of post-modernism, anthropologist Margery Wolf writes: "[Post-modernists]... suggest that we are in crisis... because we have claimed an authority that does not exist, told truths that are only partial, and (mis)represented an Other that conceals the construction of the Other by an invisible anthropological Self. [Post-modernists'] solutions to these problems, however, do not include better ways of doing fieldwork, but different (better?) ways of writing ethnographies" (Wolf 1992:136).

psychological and emotional impressions and reactions in this study; but I will attempt to do so judiciously. Although this thesis might be considered an example of "interpretive," "experimental," or even "post-modern" ethnography, I am least comfortable with the last description, unless by post-modern one means simply to imply the attempt to allow the other's voice to be heard often and clearly and the effort to foreground the conditional and partial (Clifford 1986) nature of my interpretations of IVCF life. In other words, in this text I problematize but do not relinquish representation.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I was raised in family and religious *milieux* extremely suspicious of religious conservativism.[10] While tolerance is a core religious value of Unitarianism, early in my pre-fieldwork period I realized that I was predisposed to be tolerant of almost everyone except evangelicals and fundamentalists, whose rational faculties, I once supposed, must be immature, repressed, or overly enchanted. However, my sense of their otherness was radically challenged as I learned during my fieldwork that several elements of my assumptions about evangelicals were not simply incorrect,

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[10] Unitarian Universalism (or simply Unitarianism) grew out of the Protestant Reformation. After centuries of development in Europe, the tradition began attracting adherents among liberal intellectuals and cultural leaders in the American northeast. Until the middle of the twentieth century most Unitarians would have understood themselves as liberal Protestants. Contemporary Unitarians are no longer required to believe in the divine or unique nature of Christ. Instead, Unitarians share a respect and enthusiasm for each individual's responsible search for religious meaning. The tradition is now non-creedal, theologically eclectic, and religiously liberal. For an introduction to Unitarian Universalism, see Buehrens and Church (1989).

but unfair.[11] Throughout my research, my resistance to several aspects of evangelicalism was mollified as I came very close to viewing our world through evangelical eyes.

Many of the IVCF students I encountered were at least nominally aware of my religious background. Consequently, several of them were eager to discuss and debate Unitarian theology. I was drawn again and again (and sometimes slightly against my will) into conversations about heaven and hell, my more inclusive understanding of salvation, my egalitarian views about women, and other topics on which we often fundamentally disagreed. While such conversations could have driven a wedge between myself and IVCF members (cf. Hammond and Hunter 1984), in most cases, our theological differences served as a point of entry into many issues we might otherwise have never discussed.

IVCF students usually adopted a thoroughly respectful approach to my own religious tradition, even when they would politely inform me of its errors and of their grave ramifications. IVCF members sought to understand and refute my faith; however, this endeavour stemmed not only from their radically different convictions, but also from the friendship and respect that had emerged between us. Although I was initially irritated

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[11] Of course, the prejudices I once held are hardly unique to Unitarians. I have found that these condescending presuppositions are very popular among liberal Christian, atheist, Roman Catholic, Buddhist, Jewish, academic and non-academic colleagues and friends. Many people from such backgrounds rolled their eyes when I told them that I took the religious organization and aspirations of evangelicals seriously. After I told him about my project, one liberal United Church minister sneered and asked, "But aren't you just going to end up justifying these people?" Other peers and professors worried aloud that I was at risk of "going native," or, to use evangelical rhetoric, accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and personal saviour.

by their concern for my endangered soul, eventually I came to appreciate that my friends, almost all of whom have very well-defined ideas about the afterlife, simply wanted to prevent me from burning in hell for eternity. The sincerity of my new friends' fairly regular (and sometimes, it seemed, almost scheduled) attempts to "draw me closer to Christ" affected me considerably. I could discern the anguish on their faces when I remained respectfully steadfast in my own faith. "You know so much," an earnest second year student said during an interview, "and we know you're close. We just don't understand why you won't become a Christian."[12]

One day in Lithuania, a member of the IVCF mission team revealed just how "close" he thought I was to conversion. IVCF participants sometimes speak of the "God scale," a scale on which zero represents being born, fifty represents the decision to become a Christian, and one hundred represents the end of a life fully devoted to God. "Sometimes our job is just to help someone move from twenty-nine to thirty on the God scale," another mission leader explained one day. "Eventually they have to make the decision. And of course there is no telling what the Holy Spirit can do in that process," she continued. During the mission to Lithuania, I asked this team member where he would situate me on the God scale. He paused for a moment and then responded flatly: "Forty-nine. No question." "Forty-nine and holding," I teased.

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[12] In Chapter Three (on rhetoric), I discuss the way IVCF students, like many other evangelicals, restrict the term "Christian" to people who have "a personal relationship with Christ," a criterion which excludes the vast majority of people who consider themselves Christians. Only a few of the members with whom I spoke seemed uncomfortable with the exclusivity of this term.

The repeated and loving questioning of my IVCF friends, in so many voices and from so many angles, has deeply affected my own faith. I have been compelled to come to terms with some of the problems associated with my own tradition. Moreover, I understand Unitarianism much better now that I have lived with evangelicals who in most significant theological and ethical senses are categorically different from Unitarians.

From the point of view of some IVCF members, their interactions with me led to spiritual growth and development as well. To my knowledge, no one has been "led away from Christ" by my participation in the group. Much to my surprise, many IVCF members told me weeks after an interview that our conversation had actually strengthened their faith. In fact, several members claimed that God had "used me" to show them something. To say the least, this is an unusual statement for a Unitarian to hear from an evangelical.

Surprisingly, the IVCF has a historical link with Unitarianism, although few members are aware of this fact. The Canadian IVCF was founded in 1929 as a result of the missionary efforts of the British Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF). However, the IVF itself emerged as the conservative side of a 1910 schism in the Student Christian Movement (SCM), which was a fairly loose agglomeration of evangelical students from Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The SCM broke into two (liberal and conservative) wings over a variety of issues.[13] One of the most divisive of these involved the question of whether the SCM "Basis of Membership" could be broadened to include

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[13] See Bruce (1982) for an account of the relationship between the SCM and the IVCF.

Unitarians, who were liberal Christians at that time (Stackhouse 1993:91). "This was

the inclusivist principle gone mad!" claimed Oliver Barclay, one of the leaders of the

conservative faction (Donald 1991:12). Although I was unaware of this historical

episode when I started my research, it stands as a constant and somewhat ironic reminder

that the estrangement I sometimes felt from the group has, in fact, a well-entrenched

historical precedent (cf. Johnston and Weaver 1986:55).

Terminology

The terms "evangelical" and "fundamentalist" appear regularly in the major

media, and are often used interchangeably. Although there continues to be debate on

their precise meanings, it is important to develop an operational definition of these terms.

Throughout this dissertation, I use a modified version of George Marsden's 1991

definition[14] which lists the defining characteristics of evangelicalism as its emphases on:

1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible; 2) the belief that the real

historical character of God's saving work is recorded in scripture; 3) the belief that

salvation to eternal life is based on the redemptive life of Jesus Christ; 4) evangelism and

missionary work; 5) the necessity of a spiritually transformed life (Marsden 1991:5).

Unfortunately absent from Marsden's definition is a factor that I have found to

be a central and perhaps the definitive element of contemporary evangelicalism as it is

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[14] For a similar discussion of this term, see the definition propounded by George
Rawlyk, Mark Noll, and David Bebbington, three of the leading scholars of
evangelicalism, in their edited volume *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular
Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond: 1700-1900* (1994:6).

expressed by McMaster IVCF members -- namely, the emphasis on having a "personal relationship" with Jesus Christ.[15] The five elements Marsden describes are important to the evangelicals I have met during this project. However, all but the fifth criterion describe theological commitments, which for IVCF members are not as crucial to their faith as their personal relationship with Christ. Marsden's fifth criterion alludes to what IVCF students mean when they speak about the consequences of their personal relationship with God; but since a "spiritually transformed life" absolutely requires this relationship, I think the latter element belongs explicitly in the operational definition I will use throughout this study.

What, then, distinguishes evangelicals from fundamentalists? The term "fundamentalism" is normally attributed to Curtis Lee Laws, a Baptist preacher who between 1910 and 1915 published a series of texts entitled *The Fundamentals* (Marsden 1988). The term "fundamentalist" originally referred to a person who believed in the conservative, evangelical orthodox teachings explained in *The Fundamentals* (Marsden 1980:107; 1991:57). However, the contemporary meanings of the term now have little to do with Laws's texts (Marty 1991). Protestant fundamentalists in the last decades of the twentieth century adhere to all of Marsden's criteria for an evangelical, but add to these characteristics a typically militant opposition to a) liberal theology or b) what they perceive as the relaxation of cultural values in North America during the past century

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[15] Rawlyk (1996) found an emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ to be characteristic of the evangelicals represented in the comprehensive 1993 Angus Reid Poll on religion in Canada.

(Marsden 1980, 1991).[16] Fundamentalists, in other words, are evangelicals who are, on some level, angry about what they perceive as the disenchanting and liberalizing effects of contemporary culture. Radical fundamentalists are inclined toward separatism from what IVCF participants call "non-Christian" institutions, but this perspective is more indicative of American than Canadian fundamentalism.

Although Canadian evangelicalism shares many roots with the analogous American movement, John Stackhouse, perhaps the leading scholar of twentieth century Canadian evangelicalism, argues that this tradition is neither a "branch plant operation of American groups," nor a "colonial residue" (1993:196).[17] The fundamentalist-modernist split of the 1920s which continues to shape the relations between evangelicals and fundamentalists in the United States (Wuthnow 1988:12)[18] was not a significant influence in shaping the Canadian tradition (Stackhouse 1993:200; Gauvreau 1991:11), which is less militant than the analogous American phenomenon (Stackhouse 1993:198). Moreover, while evangelicals in the United States tend to be vocally conservative in their politics (Simpson 1994), this trend has had a limited appeal in Canada (Grant 1988:237).

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[16] These changes are often associated with secular humanism (Marsden 1991:1).

[17] Canadian evangelicalism has its roots in a combination of Scottish Common Sense Philosophy (the theory that all truth is obtainable through the use of uncomplicated observation), Baconianism, Calvinism, the philosophy of the Enlightenment (Gauvreau 1991), and American conservative Protestantism. Eventually, the Canadian forms of evangelicalism differentiated themselves from their European and American progenitors. For historical accounts of the Canadian tradition, see Bebbington, Noll, and Rawlyk (1994), Rawlyk (1990), Gauvreau (1991), and Stackhouse (1993).

[18] This debate involved differences of opinion about evolution, new approaches to interpreting the Bible, and the appropriate posture to adopt in one's relations with "the world" (Marsden 1991; Wuthnow 1989).

McMaster IVCF students reflect this distinction: on the whole, they espouse conservative moral and political sensibilities; but most of them do not identify passionately with a particular political party or ideological movement.[19]

IVCF members would almost unanimously see themselves reflected in Marsden's (1991) definition of evangelicalism, provided that an emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ was added to his criteria. While the IVCF caters to both sides of the theological and moral spectrum within Canadian evangelicalism, the majority of McMaster's members may be described as conservative evangelicals or fundamentalists,[20] although they are obviously not of the separatist variety (otherwise they would attend an evangelical university). But there are also participants who describe themselves, or could be described, as liberal evangelicals in that they accept a less literal interpretation of the Bible, the ordination of women and a comparably progressive ideology.

Although students do not have to agree formally to the following principles in order to become members, the five official goals of the IVCF are:

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[19] Further comparative research would be required to determine if this lack of interest in politics distinguishes IVCF members from their secular peers. IVCF participants' apoliticism may, however, distinguish them from American evangelicals. After all, in the United States, conservative evangelicalism has become significantly allied with the Republican Party (Cox 1987; Simpson 1994; 1983; Wilcox 1992).

[20] This conclusion is based on three sources. First, during interviews, I asked respondents both whether they would consider themselves fundamentalists and what this term meant to them. Second, we also discussed their opinions about "the modern world." Third, Carla, the chapter's Staff Worker, also confirmed that most members could be accurately described as fundamentalists.

1) To witness to the Lord Jesus Christ as God incarnate and to seek to lead others to a personal faith in Him as Saviour and Lord; EVANGELISM IS A PRIME OBJECTIVE;

2) To deepen and strengthen the spiritual life of students and others by the study of the Bible, by fellowship, and by prayer; THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANS IS AN EQUALLY IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE;

3) To encourage Christians under the enablement of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate responsible Christian love; THE LOVE OF ONE'S NEIGHBOUR IS A COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD;

4) To assist Christian students and faculty to explore and assert to the educational community the relevance of the Christian faith to every issue of private life and public concern; ALL TRUTH IS IN CHRIST;

5) To affirm our vocations as full-time service to God; to pray, give and serve in the global mission of the church. EVERY CHRISTIAN IS CALLED TO BE SENT INTO THE WORLD.[21]

Only one of the students I met between 1994 and 1997 referred to this statement explicitly. However, it seems clear that even though most students are probably unaware of these official goals, such principles are already inherent in their own faiths.

Theoretical Issues

Although this dissertation is neither a defence nor a refutation nor an elaborate discussion of the theory of secularization, this contentious theory forms part of the backdrop of virtually all contemporary discussions about the nature and role of religion in the modern world. However, of what specific relevance is the secularization debate to understanding the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at McMaster? The group is, *de jure*, non-denominational and open to students of all backgrounds. At many IVCF events, worship leaders encourage participants to "worship in whatever manner you feel

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[21] Capitals in original. This Statement of Purpose is published by IVCF Canada on its website: www.dar.com/ivcf. For commentary on the slightly different 1968 version of this Statement, see Stackhouse (1993:104).

comfortable," and advise the audience that the IVCF is neither exclusively a Protestant nor a denominationally-affiliated group. However, as we shall see, the worship, preaching, and biblical hermeneutical styles commonly practiced at IVCF events are, *de facto*, broadly evangelical and Protestant.[22]

Since the IVCF is thoroughly evangelical and Protestant in its self-presentation and membership, it is helpful to understand the major interpretations of the argument that ours is an era of conservative Protestant vitality in the midst of a combination of mainline religious inertia and, according to many evangelicals, a secularized, permissive society run amok. Since these interpretations are elaborated primarily in discussions about the secularized, differentiated, or fragmented nature of religion in North American life, it is important to outline these theories and the ways they are relevant to an ethnography of the McMaster IVCF. Following these theoretical considerations I will present the thesis to be explored in the next seven chapters.

British sociologist Bryan Wilson, one of the major proponents of the theory of secularization,[23] offers an operational definition of secularization as "a process of transfer of property, power, activities, and both manifest and latent functions, from

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[22] During two years of fieldwork with the IVCF, I have met only one Roman Catholic and no Ukrainian Catholics or students of Greek or Russian Orthodox backgrounds. Furthermore, the Roman Catholic woman referred to herself as "a Christian, but a cultural Catholic." This distinction will be explored in the penultimate chapter. See Stackhouse (1993:138-142) for an historical account of the issue of the role of Catholics in the IVCF membership and national executive.

[23] Space does not permit an account of the evolution of the notion of secularization from Auguste Comte to the present era. For insights into the major issues in this debate, see Berger (1967), Bibby (1993), Bruce (1992) and Dobbelaere (1981; 1984).

institutions with a supernaturalist frame of reference to (often new) institutions operating according to empirical, rational, pragmatic criteria" (Wilson 1985:12; cf. Berger 1967:107). Wilson points out that while "religion once provided legitimacy for secular authority; endorsed and at times sanctioned public policy;... was seen as the font of 'true learning'; socialized the young," (Wilson 1992:200) it no longer officially nor in most cases even unofficially functions in this way. Although Wilson's definition is set in an institutional context, secularization may diminish the formal role of religion in formal organizations as well as the more intimate role of religion in the cognition and moral sensibilities of believers (Luckmann 1967; Stout 1988). The diminished public and personal power of religion is the heart of the secularization thesis.

The inherited model of secularization, Wilson explains, does not necessarily predict the complete collapse of religion as such. Rather, religion may occasionally reconfigure itself and emerge elsewhere in the culture (Wilson 1985; cf. Stark and Bainbridge 1985). However, when it does re-emerge, it does not wield as much social power as it once did. Once it is driven out of government and public education, unless these two institutions opt in the future to reclaim this part of their history, religion cannot play the role it once played and is likely to survive mainly in "a privatized form, at society's margins or interstices" (Bruce 1992:20).

On the surface, "secularization" does not seem to describe the situation of religion in the United States, where, (with the exception of the 1960s) personal and public commitment to religion have been fairly stable in the twentieth century (Finke 1992:155; Finke and Stark 1992; Wuthnow 1988). In fact, the resurgence of conservative

Protestantism in the United States may constitute a striking refutation of the secularization thesis (Hammond and Hunter 1984). If, on the whole, Americans are, on both public and personal levels, as religious now as they were before World War II, and are, according to most measurements, more religious than citizens of other westernized countries, one might argue that the secularization theory must be fundamentally flawed. According to George Rawlyk (1996), Canadian data also support this critique of the secularization thesis. Rawlyk suggests that liberal scholars have incorrectly assumed that since they and their academic peers are less committed to traditional faith, therefore the majority of the populace must share this experience. On the contrary, Rawlyk argues that ordinary (or, to use his terminology, non-élite) Canadian Christians have retained and in some cases, increased their personal loyalty to traditional religiosity (Rawlyk 1996:54). Canadian surveys continue to evidence a high (86%) and generally stable level of belief in God (Rawlyk 1996:56). The majority of Canadian respondents also maintain some form of affiliation with the denomination in which they were raised (Bibby 1993:128). So, while Hammond and Hunter (1984:221) observe that "it is, beyond debate by almost any definition, that modern society is more secular" than ever before; and while fewer people are explicitly involved in religious groups (Bibby 1987; 1993), survey data seems to support Rawlyk's claim that on the whole, Canadian Christians are no less personally devout in the 1990s than they were in the nineteenth century (Rawlyk 1996:225).

Although this evidence illustrates some of the flaws inherent in what might be called a "vulgar" or positivistic form of secularization theory -- which predicts that

religion in all forms will simply disappear -- it does not nullify a more modest theory of secularization. James D. Hunter, an advocate of such an approach, suggests that the apparent empirical stability of American religiosity may disguise a central shift in its essence. Hunter contends that the contemporary interest in evangelicalism in North America obscures the fact that in order to attract members, evangelical churches and para-church organizations such as the IVCF have succumbed to or compromised with certain aspects of the dominant secularity of the surrounding culture (Hunter 1985; cf. Berger 1967:108). Hunter writes: "Conservative Protestantism's survival in the modern world can... be brought into question. Modernization, in other words, exacts costs from orthodoxy -- costs expressed in terms of accommodation" (Hunter 1985:159).[24]

On the surface, thriving evangelical groups in a secular society challenge the secularization thesis and force us to re-think the questions we might ask when studying contemporary religion. Should we understand burgeoning evangelical groups as institutional embodiments of the compromises these groups have been compelled to make with the secular ethos in order to survive (Hunter 1985), and as is currently the case, to thrive? Or, should we understand these organizations as resolute uprisings against the overwhelming disenchantment (Weber 1948:155) supposedly concomitant with

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[24] Hunter suggests that in response to the prevalent cultural pluralism in North America, evangelicalism has diminished its public reliance on inflammatory concepts such as sin, hell, exclusivism and final judgement and has adopted a conciliatory posture towards non-Christians. Moreover, Hunter asserts that as a concession to the trend towards subjectivism in the culture at large, evangelicalism has focused on the emotional needs and psycho-spiritual growth of its members, a trend which distances the movement from its ascetical and doctrinal roots (Hunter 1985:160).

contemporary culture?[25] Neither one of these explanations is sufficient. Hunter's approach is valuable because it reminds scholars to pay attention to the compromises a given group has made with its surrounding cultural *milieu*. However, while many evangelical groups and individuals make compromises with non-evangelical institutions, believers also find ways to protect and strengthen central and often very conservative elements of their worldviews. Moreover, while the second approach helps us to reflect upon the role of religion in a possibly disenchanted world, religion seems too much with us to embrace any theory which predicts the progressive retreat of religion from contemporary society.

Nevertheless, if some (even merely institutional) form of secularization seems to be evident in North American culture in general, it is especially evident in the social and academic contexts of secular universities. Although most universities in North America began as outgrowths of Christian denominations, during the past century the majority of these institutions have become explicitly secular (Marsden and Longfield 1992). For an excellent example of this process, we need look no further than McMaster University itself. McMaster was founded as a Baptist university in 1887 by the affluent Canadian Senator, William McMaster. Although there was no "theological litmus test" for its students, George Rawlyk observes that McMaster students were to be educated by evangelical teachers "and thoroughly equipped with all the resources of the best and most

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[25] In other words, perhaps evangelical groups are temporarily among the most vigorous Christian organizations in the country because they are perceived by adherents as being the least complicitous in the irreversible disenchantment of secularism (cf. Bibby 1993).

liberal culture to enable them to meet the polished shafts of a refined and subtle infidelity" (Rawlyk 1992:285). The university sought to offer its students the best of the liberal and scientific disciplines, partly so graduates could fight for the place of Christian faith in a world increasingly characterized by liberal and materialist sensibilities (Johnston and Weaver 1986).

Until 1957, the Governors of McMaster University were elected by the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (Johnston and Weaver 1986). After the passage of *The McMaster University Act, 1957*, McMaster became a non-denominational private institution, which was funded then as it is now, from a combination of endowment income, gifts, tuition, and annual grants from the city, regional, provincial and federal governments.

There are a variety of explanations for the changes that have occurred in Canada between the nineteenth century, when a broad (and broadly evangelical) consensus on the seminal role of Christianity in a university education was well-entrenched (Rawlyk 1992), and the end of the twentieth century when such a consensus is completely alien to most universities (Gauvreau 1991; Grant 1988; McKillop 1979, 1994; Rawlyk 1990, 1992, 1994; Stackhouse 1993). However, one common denominator among these explanations is the observation that by the late 1920s, universities which had once been guided mainly by evangelical principles had become "enthusiastic proponents of secular learning" (Rawlyk 1992:280).

The secularization of the Canadian academy (cf. Marsden and Longfield 1992) seems to have occurred for a variety of reasons. Historian A.B. McKillop writes that

the "English Canadian university of the first quarter of the twentieth century, like the society itself, was in a precarious balance between the weight of tradition and the currents of change" (McKillop 1979:229). Eventually this balance tipped definitively in favour of the currents of change, powerfully embodied in the advent of higher criticism[26] and the liberalization of Protestantism (McKillop 1994:206, 230). These forces, writes McKillop, problematized evangelical religious assumptions "by pointing in the direction of historical relativism and a liberal ethical religion" (McKillop 1994:204).

> In 1909, the McMaster University Senate wrote:

> While complete freedom should be accorded in the investigation and discussion of facts, no theory should be taught which fails to give its proper place to supernatural revelation or which would impair in any way the supreme authority of the Lord Jesus Christ (from the minutes of the McMaster University Senate meeting of 2 December 1909; in Rawlyk 1992:287).

Near the end of the same century, teaching or assuming supernatural revelation and the "supreme authority of the Lord Jesus Christ" would be fundamentally opposed to McMaster University's publically-funded secular mandate.

The Senate's 1909 prohibition indicates both the prevailing evangelical conviction that Christian faith and science were essentially compatible (Rawlyk 1992:288), and the portentous evangelical anxiety about the power of the increasingly liberal non-evangelical culture. McMaster was the stage for a clash between the evangelical tradition in which it had originally been rooted and the currents of change rushing in from an increasingly

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[26] McKillop defines higher criticism as "the quest for the historical Jesus and for a critical understanding of the biblical record" (1994:204).

liberal culture (McKillop 1994:209). If the Senate's bold statement can be likened to sandbags added to reinforce the dike built to protect evangelicals from the corruptions of modernism, by the mid-1920s, the dike was almost completely ruptured. By the early 1920s, the sciences and liberal arts (rather than the Bible or Christ) were emphasized as the best vehicles for, as then Chancellor Whidden put it in his 1923 inaugural address, "the modern emancipation of the mind" (Rawlyk 1992:297; cf. Rawlyk 1988).

In the late 1920s, plans were drafted for the relocation of McMaster University from Toronto seventy-five kilometres south-west to Hamilton. The original plans for the new university featured a beautiful chapel a the focal point of the campus. The chapel was to be, in Chancellor Whidden's words, "a silent symbol of the place of true Religion in relation to the study and pursuit of truth as contained in the Arts and Sciences" (Whidden in McKillop 1994:316). However, when Cyrus Eaton, a patron of the new university, reneged on his promise of a large donation, Chancellor Whidden chose to cancel the construction of the chapel, leaving the rest of the construction plans intact. McKillop writes: "In such ways did the place of religion slowly recede in the hierarchy of priorities of this university and others" (McKillop 1994:316). In fact, by the end of the 1920s, virtually every Canadian Protestant university and college had evolved in the McMaster manner: "the conservative evangelical consensus was replaced by an accommodating liberalism" (Rawlyk 1992:298).[27]

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[27] Similarly, George Marsden links the secularization of American Protestant universities to the rise -- again, culminating in the early part of the present century -- of pluralism and a broadly defined liberal Christianity which came to be equated with civilization itself (Marsden 1992:9-45).

The process of institutional secularization which led to the marginalization of evangelical faith and sensibilities within most Canadian academies continues to this day. Contemporary evangelicals still interested in expressing, exploring, and cultivating their faiths on contemporary Canadian university campuses find these secular institutions less and less open to their goals. Dozens of IVCF students told me that their professors offer them no opportunities to relate the Christian faith to the subject matter of their courses, and that in many cases faculty seem to be determined to destabilize and mock the beliefs on which the university was originally founded.

It is probably not entirely coincidental that the first IVCF groups in Canada were established in 1929 (Donald 1991; Stackhouse 1993). At the end of a decade which had witnessed the quiet banishment of evangelical Christianity from the mandates of most Canadian universities, evangelical students, perhaps sensitive to this rapid de-Christianization, began to organize IVCF chapters.

Now let us return to the theoretical level to consider differentiation and fragmentation as alternatives to secularization. Interpreted within the framework of differentiation, the role of religion in our society appears to be more enduring and complex than the secularization framework seems to suggest. The roots of this alternative to the theory of secularization may be found in Durkheim, who asserted in his pioneering work on the division of labour that modern societies are characterized by "organic solidarity," in which activities within institutions are differentiated, that is, assigned to specific sub-groups (Durkheim 1973). Niklas Luhmann, a contemporary differentiation theorist, asserts that differentiation "is not simply a decomposition into

smaller chunks, but rather a process of growth by internal disjunction" (Luhmann

1982:231). Moreover, according to Luhmann the form of ("functional") differentiation

most typical of modern societies

> is not simply a process of delegation or decentralization of responsibilities, and
> not simply a factoring out of means for the ends of society. The displacement [in
> our case, of religion] integrates each specific function into a new set of
> system/environment references and produces types of problems and solutions
> which would not, and could not, arise at the level of the encompassing system
> (Luhmann 1982:241; cf. Schofthaler 1980).

According to the differentiation thesis, religion is not expelled from the larger social

system in which it might previously have occupied an undifferentiated position. Rather,

religion simply becomes more concentrated in a different part of an expanding social

system (Luhmann 1984).

Interpreted in this light, the IVCF might be understood as a well-defined group,

existing within a system of other religious and non-religious groups, all of which must

determine their difference from each other (Luhmann 1982:245) and from the larger

system of which such groups are constituent members. Within differentiated groups such

as the IVCF, religion continues to exert a powerful influence on believers and perhaps

even on the larger social system (Luhmann 1984:32). Nevertheless, since religion is no

longer diffused throughout the entire social system, some sort of secularization is

correlated with this process of differentiation. But this secularization need not be

construed as a function of a reduction in the absolute "quantity" of religion within a

system,[28] or as the hegemony of Weberian disenchantment. Rather, one might understand this form of secularization as Luhmann does, as a result of functional differentiation (Dobbelaere 1985; Luhmann 1984, 1982). For example, McMaster is secular in the sense that it is not the responsibility of the didactic or administrative elements of the larger university system (of differentiated functions) to promote faith. But religion still exists on campus, in differentiated groups and in individual lives. This new, more specialized function of religion is evident at McMaster, which was transformed from a "Christian school of learning"[29] to a pluralistic institution in which the tradition on which the university was founded is now best represented by the IVCF, one club among others. The changing status and locus of evangelicalism at McMaster may be fairly interpreted as evidence of secularization.[30] However, by attributing institutional secularization to differentiation (Dobbelaere 1981) and by underlining the persistence of faith within the larger system, the differentiation thesis may more clearly portray the complex position of religion in contemporary society.

Although IVCF students may occasionally perceive themselves, as one member put it, as "aliens" in McMaster's non-Christian ethos, the differentiated academic, administrative, and student governance components of the university continue to exist

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[28] Such a construal seems especially false given the fact that the IVCF has grown from 40 members in 1988 to 200 in 1997.

[29] McMaster University Act of Incorporation, 1887.

[30] The change exemplified at McMaster is also evident in the world outside the university's gates, a world in which, as philosopher Jeffrey Stout observes, "belief in the existence of a specific sort of God and in certain aspects of a vision of the good cease to function as a presupposition of our moral discourse with each other" (Stout 1988:79).

alongside and even in some ways to support these allegedly endangered groups.[31] The differences believers perceive between themselves and their non-Christian peers and professors are based upon real differences of worldviews, ethics, and theologies (Hammond and Hunter 1984:232). However, the differentiation thesis reminds us that the otherness that IVCF students experience from McMaster as a putatively secularizing institution may be, as I shall outline throughout this thesis, partly self-inflicted.

In *Fragmented Gods* (1981), sociologist Reginald Bibby advances another interpretation of the place of religion in contemporary Canadian society. Bibby argues that in lieu of the all-encompassing worldviews previously embraced by Canadians, believers now select "fragments" of established faiths. According to this interpretation, Canadians have adopted the same "selective consumption" approach to religion as they have to the purchase of clothing and other consumer goods. While people continue to have the same psycho-spiritual needs -- for a supportive community, mystery, unconditional divine love, and answers to spiritual questions -- mainline Protestant churches in Canada have not found a way to meet these needs in a manner that inspires their members or "affiliates" to return to the pews (Bibby 1993:177). Bibby maintains that while people might be members of a particular church or believe in God, they pick and choose among the offerings of their church.

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[31] In the case of clubs such as the IVCF, this support comes in three forms: the McMaster Students Union's annual contribution of $400 (derived from student fees) to each group; the university's provision of free meeting space for the group's many regular and special activities; and McMaster's official "Anti-Discrimination Policy" prohibiting discrimination against any student on the basis of his or her "creed," among other factors.

Although Bibby is not a proponent of secularization, his fragmentation thesis depicts religion as reduced to "a privatized [fragmented] form" (Bruce 1992:20). However, according to Bibby, many evangelicals are less willing than other Canadians to adopt fragments of existing religious traditions. Bibby and Rawlyk suggest that although evangelicals constitute only between 8% (Bibby 1993; 1994) and 16% (Rawlyk 1996) of the Canadian population,[32] their members are far more committed to and involved in their churches than are non-evangelical believers.[33] Bibby argues that compared to Canadian mainline Protestant churches which are failing to attract and keep Canadian believers involved, evangelical churches are succeeding not only at attracting new members, but at keeping these members very active.[34] Bibby gently laments the increased hegemony of consumeristic spiritual sensibilities (Bibby 1987; 1993) which has

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[32] Bibby points out (1993) that this proportion has not changed significantly since the 1871 census. For a consideration of the differences between the Bibby's lower and Rawlyk's higher figures, see Rawlyk (1996:224).

[33] Moreover, Bibby and Brinkerhoff report that while Project Canada's 1990 comparison of Canadians' "original" versus "current" affiliation indicates that 400,000 people had joined mainline Protestant churches, 425,000 joined evangelical churches (Bibby and Brinkerhoff 1994:278). In other words, Bibby and Brinkerhoff point out, while the net gain is only 25,000 people in favour of evangelical churches, the real significance of these figures is that 8% (or 16% according to Rawlyk) of the population is competing with the vast majority of mainline Christian churches and claiming a numerically small but proportionately large victory. When Bibby and Brinkerhoff project this trend forward, they predict that in approximately twenty years, the total "market share" for evangelicals will exceed that of mainline Protestants and will be closing in rapidly on the Roman Catholics (Bibby and Brinkerhoff 1994:278). This new trend is of personal interest to Bibby who is an evangelical himself and whose intellectual energies appear to be turning more openly toward defragmenting religious traditions (Bibby 1993).

[34] About 50% of evangelicals are what Bibby calls active members, 30% marginal members, and 20% inactive members. The figures for the mainline Protestant churches are reversed: 20% are active, 30% marginal, and 50% inactive (Bibby 1993:173).

led to the fragmentation of traditional worldviews.[35] However, he maintains that the victors in a secular, fragmented Canada, are evangelicals and avowed secularists. The latter group explicitly rejects the conventional offerings of religion, and the former group succeeds partly because it offers adherents all-encompassing worldviews which are explicitly critical of the permissivism, liberalism and pluralism that have become central themes in Canadian culture. According to this interpretation of religion in contemporary society, the success of the IVCF may suggest that its members have rejected the fragmented religious sensibilities of their non-Christian peers. Moreover, since some degree of fragmentation is bound to occur even within the worldviews of believers, Bibby's thesis may help us to understand the contradictions evident in the discourse of some IVCF members.

When considering religion in contemporary society, there are at least three options. It is possible to interpret the contemporary role of religion in Canadian life (or on a university campus) as manifesting an overall reduction or marginalization of religion in society and/or in individual lives. Second, one might interpret the same role as implying that religion has simply become concentrated in its own differentiated sphere(s). Third, one might argue that the place of religion in Canada suggests the increasing fragmentation of traditional religiosity on the one hand and on the other hand, the

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[35] As a result of the small total numbers of evangelicals in Canada, the evangelical successes at retaining active members have not profoundly impacted the generally decreasing levels of overall Canadian church attendance. Bibby observes that before the 1950s, approximately 60% of Canadians worshipped publically; by the 1950s, this number had dropped to 50%; in the 1970s, the number dropped again to 33%; and in the 1990s, only about 20% of Canadians worship regularly (Bibby 1993:4).

successes of evangelical churches at responding to this situation. Throughout this thesis I blend elements from these three approaches.

There can be no doubt about which approaches seem most plausible from an emic, or a believer's perspective. For IVCF students, institutional and cognitive secularization as well as the fragmentation of orthodox Christianity are clearly evidenced on the McMaster campus and in North American culture in general. Thus, many IVCF students described the group as "a light in the darkness" of indifferent or inhospitable Canadian and campus cultures. Most IVCF students would likely perceive that the differentiation thesis does not adequately capture what Clark Pinnock, an evangelical professor at McMaster's Divinity College, described convincingly as McMaster's "bias against God" during a lecture to the IVCF.

From an etic, or social scientific outsider's perspective, however, the most credible theory is not so clearly apparent. While institutional secularization seems to be quite evident at McMaster, the presence of cognitive secularization is more difficult to establish. Since my study did not involve a comparison between IVCF students and non-IVCF members, I cannot theorize with much confidence about whether secularization, differentiation, or fragmentation best characterizes the general processes at work in the religious lives of non-Christians at McMaster. Moreover, it is also difficult to determine whether or not cognitive secularization is occurring among non-Christians in this age

group because there is a paucity of Canadian ethnographic data focusing on this specific generation and educational category.[36]

One can argue that religion at McMaster has become localized in what the McMaster Students Union calls "clubs" such as the IVCF and the Muslim Students Association, and thus that religion remains a potent element of McMaster life. However, I would argue that by being relegated to one of many clubs, alongside the chess and ski clubs, these campus religious groups are, *de facto* and *de jure*, diminished in significance relative to the historical position of religion at McMaster. Students may proclaim the universal significance of their gospel; but they must do so as members of one group among others with competing truth claims.[37] Moreover, as I discuss in subsequent chapters, IVCF students tell me that as a result of the unofficial hegemony of liberalism on campus, they are neither encouraged nor comfortable introducing their convictions into the context which drew most students to McMaster: the classroom. Students seem to be either intuitively or intellectually aware that inserting their beliefs about the "Lordship of Christ" into the academic discourse of the classroom or the social discourse of the cafeteria, would be considered, in Ingram's terms, an unwelcome "frame intrusion" (Ingram 1989; cf. Goffman 1974).

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[36] For quantitative data on the religious beliefs and degree of involvement of Canada's young adults, see Rawlyk (1996:49-116) and Bibby (1993:95-114).

[37] Clubs such as the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Association and the Muslim Students Association receive the same level of financial support from the McMaster Students Union; and all clubs are entitled to staff display tables during the annual "Clubsfest" at the beginning of each academic year.

The McMaster IVCF chapter may be thriving, but it is doing so on what is arguably the periphery of the university system. Moreover, it is surviving in a *milieu* if not dominated, then at least distinguished by pluralism, moral secularization (Stout 1988) and the selective acceptance of traditional worldviews (Bibby 1987). Whether or not such groups will survive further marginalization is impossible to predict.[38] But the contrast, and perhaps even the antagonism between the IVCF's interests (as embodied in its Statement of Purposes) and McMaster's pluralistic ethos reminds us that differentiation may entail more than simply a new locus for religion, but rather a devaluation of its position within the social system. It is my task in this thesis to explore the individual and corporate responses to the marginalization or differentiation (both negatively evaluated by evangelicals) of evangelical beliefs and values from McMaster's central academic and social contexts.

Conclusion

I want to problematize the secularization thesis by underlining Rawlyk's (1996) illustration of the endurance of religion in Canada. As I mentioned, my own approach combines the insights entailed in the theories of secularization, fragmentation and differentiation. However, I find myself more compelled by the argument that instead of being simply re-positioned in the on-going discourse of Canadian or McMaster society, conventional expressions of religion are now less welcomed by institutions (Wilson 1992;

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[38] Such increased marginalization might be inspired by the shortage of meeting space in a potentially overcrowded university, or the cessation of the basic funding all clubs receive.

Berger 1967) and less wholly (Bibby 1987; 1993) or unquestioningly accepted by individuals.

Rawlyk reports that the total levels of reported personal commitment in Canada to Christianity in general are basically stable (Rawlyk 1996:54). This insight is a helpful component of an interpretation of religion in Canadian life, but it does not go far toward explaining how believers actually maintain their faith. In addition, while Hammond and Hunter (1984) provide a helpful analysis of why evangelical beliefs might flourish at secular universities, they focus solely on the way an evangelical "fortress mentality" (1984:232) helps believers fortify the boundaries between themselves and non-Christians. My fieldwork with the IVCF suggests that these believers' continued affiliation with evangelicalism in a pluralistic context is more complex than Hammond and Hunter might suggest. In short, such loyalty is facilitated by a complex process of negotiation which I discuss throughout this dissertation.

Although these evangelicals have had to make significant accommodations to remain involved in an officially secular and increasingly permissive society, as we shall see, believers have also developed creative strategies for protecting and celebrating the most conservative elements of their faith. The balancing of tendencies toward accommodation and resistance (cf. Berger 1967:153; Marcus 1994:45) is manifested clearly by IVCF members and the group as a whole. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that McMaster's IVCF students have each made what might be understood as an implicit metaphorical "contract" with the dominant secular ethos in which they live. Some of the compromises Hunter (1985) enumerates have been, so to speak, written into

many of these contracts; but Hunter ignores the creative resistance evidenced by IVCF students in their negotiations with the non-evangelical world.

The development of these contracts (cf. Bruce 1992:18) is an on-going process which occurs so that students can reduce the cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962) generated by what Peter Berger (1977) might have called their dual citizenship in an evangelical world often characterized by biblicentrism, apocalypticism and conservative morality on the one hand, and an academic world often characterized by liberalism, relativism, secularism,[39] materialism, and moral permissivism on the other. These contracts are not always negotiated consciously nor in a neat, finite period. Furthermore, the level of awareness about such contracts depends primarily on the extent to which each student perceives either (or both) the academic and social experiences he or she has at university as threats to his or her worldview. All IVCF students, however, negotiate contracts, even though these vary depending on the personalities of the students involved. In some cases these contracts were negotiated with the help of parents, pastors, youth groups, and evangelical camp counsellors years before students began university. For these students, the transition to university life was not especially traumatic. In other cases, however, students explained that they when they began studies at McMaster, they found themselves completely unprepared for the secular and often Dionysian environment they encountered. For this group of participants, the IVCF is large and well-organized

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[39] Secularism refers to the more rigid, ideological form of secularization. Secularization describes the retreat of religion from the public or personal spheres. Secularism involves the active attempt to exclude religion from public life (cf. Wilson 1992:209).

enough to act as a supportive alternative community and a socialization context in which students can learn to negotiate their own personal contracts with the dominant secular environment.

The contracts forged by IVCF members seem to evidence what Steve Bruce (1988) and Clyde Wilcox (1992) describe as "the politics of lifestyle defence." According to this interpretation, participation in the IVCF is not only a protest against or lament over secularism. Rather, IVCF membership is primarily an intentional positive strategy for sustaining the evangelical subculture. More specifically, my analysis suggests that as an alternative institution, the IVCF enables students to cope with their essential social and spiritual estrangement from the lifestyles, values, and relative irreligiosity of their secular peers. For every secular student social function, the IVCF offers a unique evangelical counterpart.[40] The group also organizes regular meetings in which participants refute elements of classroom teachings such as evolution and relativism, and critique aspects of their peers' behaviour, such as promiscuity and drinking.[41] These meetings, small group workshops, and social events provide students

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[40] It is possible to argue that just as non-evangelical Canadian Christians adopt fragments of extant Christian worldviews to suit their needs, evangelical Canadians adopt fragments (Bibby 1987) of the non-Christian worldviews celebrated at secular universities.

[41] The modern university is to many people epitomized by its scientific methodology and its concomitant reductionism, evolutionism, and materialism. IVCF members are not primarily opposed to science *per se*. Only a small number of IVCF participants are aware of the implicitly (and perhaps explicitly) secularizing effects or challenging elements of the scientific method (Grant 1986). For most participants, the only intellectually threatening feature of their education is evolutionary theory. Moreover, most IVCF students are in faculties (e.g., Engineering, Commerce, Kinesiology, English) in which the opposition between their faith and the theory of evolution rarely manifests

with an alternative social network which not only equips them with a sense of social solidarity, but also provides them with opportunities to address the cognitive dissonance often generated by being an evangelical on a secular campus.

During my fieldwork, I noticed two distinct ideal types of responses to McMaster's secular ethos. The first I call the "fortress strategy" (cf. Hammond and Hunter 1984:232) to connote the defensive posture believers assume to protect themselves from the evils of the non-Christian world. Hammond and Hunter employ 1983 quantitative data to explore issues closely related to those I discuss in this thesis. Their article examines the apparent paradox that evangelicals on non-Christian university campuses tend to retain and even cultivate their religious commitments, while their co-religionists at explicitly evangelical colleges demonstrate a tendency to abandon their faiths (Hammond and Hunter 1984:230). Hammond and Hunter assert that believers on non-Christian campuses employ defensive boundary-maintaining strategies to maintain the plausibility of their worldview. In short, the pattern Hammond and Hunter illustrate supports what I describe as the "fortress" strategy. In support of their thesis, they argue that

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itself explicitly. Even students in explicitly scientific departments report only minimal levels of intellectual conflict between their faith and their academic pursuits. This academic armistice is achieved through their belief that science is the disciplined study of a natural world created (according to some, fewer than 6,000 years ago) in every detail by God. The opposition of IVCF students is directed primarily at the liberalism which is another major feature of the modern secular university. More specifically, IVCF students identify the moral laxity of their peers, the relativism of their professors, and the university's sometimes "anti-Christian" climate as the main sources of their otherness. For example, during an interview in December 1995, one woman said that "the university sets up rules that mean that basically we can't discriminate against anyone except Christians."

groups such as the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship... encourage the development of 'Christian ghettos' on public university campuses.... In this situation the believer's identity *qua* believer is accentuated and reinforced; one's worldview is annealed (Hammond and Hunter 1984).

I find no evidence to support the severity of this generalization. Far from being ghettoized, McMaster's IVCF members are actively involved (albeit selectively) in campus life. Moreover, Hammond and Hunter assert that the practice of witnessing to non-Christians "elicits a seige mentality... and provides an opportunity to hone and renew one's own faith" (Hammond and Hunter 1984:232). This observation is true in the case of some and perhaps many IVCF students. However, Hammond and Hunter ignore the friendships between evangelicals and non-evangelicals which both precede, result from, and often have nothing whatsoever to do with such witnessing (cf. Chapter Seven). In other words, while Hammond's and Hunter's survey data clearly evidence the "fortress strategy" and the emic experiences of otherness to which this approach responds, their findings do not reflect the existence of a second distinct strategy. I call this second approach the "bridge strategy" to suggest the way the IVCF can facilitate a constructive, friendly and not directly evangelistic rapport between its members and non-Christians. McMaster IVCF participants use these two strategies so they can belong (though not unproblematically) to both the evangelical and student worlds.[42]

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[42] It should be noted, however, that each IVCF chapter is unique. Hammond's and Hunter's survey sample of ten universities and colleges included only one non-Christian institution. The IVCF at that institution may have emphasized what I call the fortress strategy.

The "fortress" and "bridge" ideal types describe two sometimes simultaneously deployed strategies oriented both toward establishing clear boundaries and possible commonalities between Christians and non-Christians. I doubt that these two strategies and the contracts to which they contribute, are unique to the IVCF. On the contrary, I would suggest that all three of these elements are evidenced in other situations in which evangelicals (and other religious minority groups) must interact with a secular ethos. I would expect to find analogous strategies and resolutions manifested in the interactions between Muslim students and McMaster's academic and social contexts. Moreover, I would also contend that these two basic ways of approaching the other would be evident in the relationships between dominant and minority groups outside the sphere of religion. For example, the relationships between female surgeons and their mainly male peers might also involve contracts and the two styles of interaction I have outlined.

In addition to elucidating the fortress and bridge strategies, this thesis demonstrates that evangelical students employ what I call a "selectively permeable membrane" which operates according to fortress and bridge approaches, which themselves are designed to generate contracts. This metaphorical filter is sufficiently permeable to ameliorate the tension between evangelicals and their non-Christian peers, but sufficiently impermeable to enable evangelicals to achieve a strong sense of separateness and solidarity, or, as one IVCF participant described it, "a good sort of alienation" (cf. Hammond and Hunter 1984). Evangelicals both suffer as a result of their difference from the culture of their secular peers *and* employ a "good sort of alienation" as a central strategy in their efforts to survive and thrive in a secular context.

The social and academic opposition to the surrounding McMaster culture of which IVCF students often speak have at least two sources. First, in their extra-IVCF social lives, IVCF members (especially those participants who live in the campus residences) are exposed to relative moral permissiveness with respect to homosexuality, non-marital sexual activity and alcohol and drug consumption; and in the context of their classrooms, these students are, albeit less frequently, exposed to challenging ideas such as biological evolution, relativism and pluralism. In other words, Hammond and Hunter are correct to argue that "the threat to the sustained plausibility of this worldview is not just fancied in the minds of adherents but is, in fact, *external* and *communicated*" (Hammond and Hunter 1984:232). But the second source of the sense of otherness perceived by IVCF members is their practice of utilizing elements from their experiences of difference as symbolic instruments with which to *define themselves* as different, as Wuthnow writes, "in a positive sense" (1989:182).[43]

To date there have been no ethnographies published on any North American IVCF chapter. Indeed, I have found no ethnographies published on any evangelical campus group in North America. This makes the present ethnography both exciting and challenging. On the one hand this project breaks new ground. On the other hand, I am not able to stand in a tradition of insights and methods from recent work; nor am I able to test or disprove previously articulated theories advanced by other ethnographers working on this particular subject. Nevertheless, the present study is not written in a vacuum. In addition to utilizing the wealth of scholarly literature related to the history

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[43] Again, this process of definition requires both fortress and bridge approaches.

and theology of evangelicalism in North America, throughout this thesis I will discuss numerous social scientific studies of evangelical denominations, movements, and churches.

By using the ethnographic method to study this group, I intend to add a new dimension to the study of Canadian evangelicalism. Although the apparent paradox of a large and vigorous evangelical group on a non-Christian university campus forms the central focus of the present study, my interests extend well beyond the IVCF chapter at McMaster University. Throughout the following ethnography, my focus will alternate between the specific features and individuals of this group and larger issues surrounding the relationship of conservative faith to contemporary North American social institutions.

In the present chapter, I have described the group and tradition I am considering. I have also laid the foundations for the larger arguments I will make throughout this dissertation.

In order to provide readers with as "thick" (Geertz 1973) an account of this group as possible, in Chapter Two I outline and interpret the life histories of four group members. Although these members are not intended to represent "typical" IVCF participants, their spiritual and personal biographies feature themes and issues which would be familiar to most members.

Chapter Three includes a consideration of the rhetorical practices of the IVCF. At all IVCF meetings and events, specific forms of speaking and singing are employed to establish an atmosphere of solidarity among participants and a sense of distinction from the surrounding secular *milieu*. While social scientific research on the nature and

function of evangelical rhetoric (e.g., Harding 1987; Sutton 1980; Titon 1988) confirms that evangelicals employ forms of speaking and singing which set believers apart from non-believers, previous studies mostly concern groups such as the Primitive Baptists which are already relatively isolated (either geographically or culturally) from the non-Christian world. In contrast, I discuss the extent to which IVCF rhetoric evidences the attempt to employ both the fortress and bridge strategies in the context of living within an urban, educated, non-Christian social context.

Virtually every student I interviewed reported feeling worried about his or her role in what is perceived as an unpredictable if not hostile post-university economy. Moreover, in addition to experiencing a sense of separation from the post-university world of careers and families, evangelical students often experience estrangement from the morés and intellectual commitments of their secular student peers (Hammond and Hunter 1984:232). In Chapter Four I explore what might be termed the "double alienation" (cf. McCarthy Brown 1994) I have encountered among IVCF participants. I focus on the process whereby this compounded sense of otherness motivates IVCF members to band together for protection and support (Ammerman 1987). Significantly, while most students confirm this experience of estrangement, all of the members I interviewed believe God will protect and guide them through their lives. As a result of this conviction, these evangelical students do not experience a profound sense of anxiety about their futures. Nevertheless, members frequently described having to guard constantly against what one participant called her "human" tendency, and what another

called "Satan's temptation," to fall into periods of doubt and anxiety about their economic

or personal prospects.

In Chapter Five I explore the role of women in evangelicalism in order to

determine possible explanations for the high female to male ratio of IVCF participation

(approximately 70% females to 30% males). Randall Balmer (1994) argues that the

feelings of cultural and political alienation experienced by evangelicals are to a significant

degree the result of the changing roles of women. While this assertion is fairly

representative of other social scientific work on the role of women in evangelicalism

(McCarthy Brown 1994; Patterson 1980; Shapiro Davie 1995; Wilcox 1989), it is only

partially helpful for understanding the place of women in the McMaster IVCF. If,

broadly speaking, evangelicalism is supposed to be inhospitable toward women, why are

women found throughout the IVCF, and not simply as administrators, but as Executive

members, worship leaders, Staff Workers, and preachers? I argue that while all

evangelical students experience two forms of otherness (cf. Chapter Four), female

students may experience an additional complex form related to being evangelical women

in an androcentric institution which paradoxically celebrates egalitarian gender roles.

The most likely explanation for the high proportion of women in the McMaster IVCF

chapter is that the group is able to respond to womens' triple sense of otherness at

McMaster.

In Chapter Six I analyze the role of the figure of Satan in the lives of IVCF

participants. Satan is often described by these students as both the mediate and

immediate source of evil in the universe, evil that ranges from murder to lustful

thoughts. A consideration of Satan's crucial significance in members' personal lives and the group's forms of worship illustrates a central element of their shared theological sensibilities and *raison d'être*. From an IVCF or emic point of view, Satan is a formidable, persistent, and personal foe; from a social scientific or etic perspective, the figure of Satan for the IVCF may be a symbolic reflection of the secular culture's antagonism towards conservative Christianity (Howard 1994).

In the seventh chapter I consider the practice of "witnessing," both during the mission to Lithuania and at McMaster. Throughout the 1995-96 academic year I attended a Small Group which focused on the practices of witnessing to non-Christians. These practices are also known as "friendship evangelism." This form of evangelism is non-confrontational and, from what I have observed (and experienced myself as one of the "friends"), quite sensitive to non-Christian convictions. This relatively tactful form of witnessing allows IVCF members to maintain and express their sense of the absolute and exclusive veracity of their faith (Hammond and Hunter 1984) as well as to ensure their positive rapport with their non-Christian peers. During all IVCF events, the value of missionary work is stressed, whether the missionary "field" is conceived of as the campus, the workplace, or a foreign country. In Chapter Seven I also discuss my participation in and observation of the IVCF's annual mission to Lithuania to foster that country's evangelical college groups. This trip serves as a case study of the role international missionary work plays among group members.

My general argument that the IVCF serves as an alternative social and religious institution in which believers can negotiate contracts with their surroundings is woven

throughout the seven major chapters. In the final chapter I summarize the insights I have gained throughout my fieldwork and discuss the larger implications of the theoretical framework I develop for understanding the relationship between conservative Christianity and secular institutions in the broader context of Canadian society.

Chapter Two

Four Life Histories

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:1-4).

Apart from adapting theory and other constructs to understand the subjectivity of particular life histories in different cultures, we might want to reverse the process and start with the life history as a basis for constructing theories about the role of individual behaviour in culture change and culture transmission. If we look carefully at the life history as a subjective document, we can see the individual's self-perceived impact on his social environment (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:204).

When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths (Personal Narratives Group 1989:261).

Introduction

One of the challenges of ethnography is that it requires one to enter into a community and become to some degree enmeshed in the web of affinities, opinions, gossip, rhetoric and beliefs which characterize this group. Then, at the end of fieldwork, one must step outside of the others' world and interpret it for (other) others and oneself.

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This analytical stage, however, compels one to condense one's experiences and indeed, one's newly acquired friends, in order to make them more manageable, less indeterminate elements of an academic study. This challenge constitutes both ethnography's strength and its weakness. Moreover, such a challenge is what makes ethnography a social *science*: that the vast array of fieldwork experiences must be distilled and communicated in a non-idiosyncratic manner. Unfortunately, the very analytical processes by which the ethnographer's personal experiences are rendered communicable often flatten out the most interesting parts of the "other." Ethnographer David Mandelbaum describes this dilemma with poignant clarity. He writes:

> When an anthropologist goes to live among the people he studies, he is likely to make some good friends among them. As he writes his account of their way of life, he may feel uncomfortably aware that his description and analysis omitted something of great importance. His dear friends have been dissolved into faceless norms; their vivid adventures have somehow been turned into pattern profiles or statistical types (Mandelbaum 1973:178).

Such diminishing of the unique features of specific individuals is rarely the intention of the ethnographer; rather, this effacement is a natural bi-product of analyses in which one attempts to make, as I do, for example, broader claims about the place and coping strategies of traditionally religious individuals in a secular culture. Even when the means of making such assertions is a "thick" description (Geertz 1973) of a religious group, the minimization of individual differences is inevitable.

Throughout the following chapters, I refer to and often quote many IVCF members at length. The ideal way to render these students' comments comprehensible would be for me to provide a complete life history of each speaker before quoting his or

her words. However, since I refer to most of the sixty students I have interviewed (and several I have not formally interviewed), such thorough contextualization would impose an onerous burden on the reader. Usually, the only elements of the person's life space permits me to include will be their pseudonyms, ages, and degree programs. Nonetheless, since I have been drawn into these evangelicals' religious and personal lives, I am reluctant to begin this thesis without providing readers with a "thicker" sense of the multi-dimensional and irreducible people I met in the course of my fieldwork with the IVCF.

As a partial solution to this problem, I offer in the present chapter brief "life histories" of four IVCF students. In preparation for this chapter I re-read my fieldnotes from the sixty interviews I had conducted and then requested a second interview with four students who were chosen for a variety of reasons. First, I had spent a month in Lithuania with three of these participants, and had established a positive rapport with the fourth. Second, all of these students had demonstrated during our interviews and their testimonies that they were both capable of and comfortable with discussing their religious and personal lives. Third, two of these participants are women and two are men. Fourth, two of them "became Christians" when they were children, while the other two had converted more recently. Finally, these members are fairly representative of the ideological and theological diversity within the McMaster IVCF.

David Mandelbaum, whose pioneering study of Gandhi has become a classic in the life history approach in anthropology, accurately proposes that no single person "can be labelled 'typical' in all respects" (Mandelbaum 1973:183). While these four IVCF

students were not selected to represent all "types" of IVCF students, meeting them should allow the reader to appreciate the diverse life situations in which IVCF students are embedded and the personal histories from which they have emerged as evangelicals. Most IVCF participants would find in these stories significant similarities between themselves and at least one if not several of the four people I introduce in this chapter.

Since the first scholarly use of the life history method in the early part of the present century (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918), this approach has become an important but not widely used social scientific research tool and the subject of critical appraisal (Langness and Frank 1981; Linde 1993; Mandelbaum 1973; Rosenwald 1992; Watson and Watson-Franke 1985). As Mandelbaum (1973:179), Langness and Frank (1985:70), and Watson and Watson-Franke (1985:2) point out, one of the persistent problems associated with the early use of life histories in the social sciences was the tendency of commentators to devote most of their energies simply to reporting the details of the given life, while neglecting to interpret these lives sufficiently. However, recent life histories written by Behar (1994), Crapanzano (1980), Narayan (1989:41-56), and Strozier (1994), as well as comparatively early studies by Mandelbaum (1973) and Mintz (1960), have avoided this deficiency. As part of a larger project, the life histories contained in the present chapter are comparatively limited in length and depth of interpretation. Moreover, my exposition and minimal interpretation in this chapter will not culminate in an argument as such. Rather, the following four life histories are meant to evoke a richer sense of the complex identities of IVCF members than would be possible if these individuals were simply referred to sporadically throughout the thesis.

Since the 1970s, scholars have become increasingly aware of the powerful influence exerted on ethnographic interpretations by the assumptions, biases, and predilections the researcher takes into his or her fieldwork (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Danforth 1989; Geertz 1973; Narayan 1989). This general insight has begun to permeate most social scientific methodologies, including the life history approach. In fact, so sensitive are many life history interpreters about their roles that they now describe the life history as "a joint production," (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:12), and "a collaborative venture" (Langness and Frank 1985:61). The ethnographer and the "other" "co-produce" (Kapchan 1995:484) the life history. The person telling his or her story will alter it in some ways to be understood (and often appreciated) by his or her listener, while the researcher "simply" recording the story imposes his or her own set of expectations on the narrative in the process of conveying, paraphrasing or interpreting its details and major themes.[44] Linguist Charlotte Linde argues that the always present and by definition significant influence of the researcher on the subject's self-report casts aspersions on the scientific rigor of the life history (Linde 1993:47).[45] However, I think

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[44] In the case of the following four life histories, I wondered occasionally whether the students were using the stories of their spiritual lives to lead me, a "non-Christian," to Christ. They are all certainly aware of my own religious convictions; it is unlikely that this awareness would not have affected the telling of their stories. See Harding (1987; 1990; 1992) for accounts of the ways believers employ evangelical rhetoric to convert listeners.

[45] Linde distinguishes between the life history method associated with ethnography, and what she considers the more scientific life story approach favoured by socio-linguists. Her insights into the creation of coherence in and among life stories are illuminating for ethnographers working in life histories. However, her treatment of these stories and their tellers might seem overly detached to many ethnographers. For example, in Linde's Acknowledgments section, she reserves her deepest appreciation for

one can argue that by highlighting the interpenetration of researcher and subject and the concomitant conditions this places on the final text or interview, ethnographers are, ideally at least, emphasizing a variety of analytical influence which regrettably remains veiled in most social scientific studies. Ethnographic uses of the life history thus best capture what Linde calls the "structurally and interpretively open" nature of the stories which constitute a life (Linde 1993:31), even if these histories are always interested, always collaborative. However, the classical social scientific warnings against the excesses of subjectivity ought still to remind the ethnographer not to abandon any attempt to convey at least a less mediated portrait of a person. Nevertheless, I am mindful of folklorist Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's observation that "presenting the text as a quotation by a researcher is, among other things, a technique for lending to that text the imprimatur of scholarship" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989:131). I mediate all of the narratives in this chapter; I also situate these narratives and their speakers within a structure of academic discourse. For these reasons, it seems responsible to try to make my interpretive presence as apparent as possible.

In addition to providing a paradigmatic example of the life history approach through his application of this method to the life of Mahatma Gandhi, Mandelbaum's (1973) classic article makes a key theoretical contribution by introducing the concepts of "dimensions," "turnings," and "adaptations" evident in a person's life story.

"the people who told me something of their lives and whose stories are treated here dispassionately as objects for analysis."

Mandelbaum proposes these categories as tools to organize the profusion of data frequently included in life history narratives.

By "dimensions," Mandelbaum means "experiences that stem from a similar base and are linked in their effects on the person's subsequent actions" (Mandelbaum 1973:180).[46] "Turnings" denote the "major transitions, that the person has made... [in which] a person takes on a new set of roles, enters into fresh relations with a new set of people, and acquires a new self-definition" (Mandelbaum 1973:181). Finally, he describes an "adaptation" as a "built-in process" through which individuals alter some of their "established patterns of behaviour to cope with new conditions. Each person *changes* his ways in order to maintain *continuity*, whether of group participation or social expectation or self-image or simply survival" (Mandelbaum 1973:181). In the present chapter, my interpretations of these four life histories focus mainly on the place of turnings and adaptations in these students' personal and religious narratives. Illustrations of these turnings and the context in which such changes occur best epitomize what it means to be an evangelical on a thoroughly secular campus (or, for that matter, in a secular world).[47] Let me introduce these four students.

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[46] Mandelbaum's dimensions include: the cultural, biological, psychosocial, and social (Mandelbaum 1973:180).

[47] Throughout this chapter, all references to turning(s) and adaptation(s) are derived from Mandelbaum's 1973 article.

Gabrielle[48]

Gabrielle is a twenty-one year old English student who was raised in Waterloo, Ontario, approximately fifty kilometres west of Toronto. Her parents were nominal Christians, raised in the United Church. When she was five years old, a friend invited Gabrielle to attend her Sunday school at the Gospel Hall, the local Closed Brethren church. "They had this great little bus and they'd come right to your house on Sunday morning and pick you up and then drop you off after," Gabrielle recalled. Eventually, her father decided he should investigate the church his daughter was attending because

> [h]e was curious about what kind of Bible teaching we were getting, not that this was super important to him at the time, but he was interested. So he came and checked it out and then started coming on a regular basis. One day he went out to the church picnic, and I can just see him sitting there between two of the church's elders, talking.

Gabrielle's father increased his involvement in the church and eventually decided to become a Christian. Considering that these events occurred when she was seven years old, Gabrielle remembers her conversion and that of her father with unusual clarity.

> Dad became a Christian on July twenty-fourth, 1983, a couple of years after he started going to church. I guess I remember these details so vividly because I've heard him tell his story so many times. My mom was a bit stand-offish about the whole thing. She wasn't hostile or anything. That's just the way she is, sort of reserved and cautious. She wasn't saved until 1986. She had to make sure it was right for her.

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[48] As in previous and subsequent chapters, information such as an individual's name, distinguishing physical attributes, and place of residence, has been altered. In Steve's life history, this policy had to be bent, if not broken, because his Presidency (1995-1996) was both a crucial element of his personal development and a fact which will make his real identity obvious to many people. Steve was aware and accepting of this situation.

One of the most striking features of Gabrielle's life history is the prominent role played by her father. The turning represented by her own conversion is intractably bound up with her father's turning, and as she tells his story, she weaves parts of her own into his. At several points during our interview, it was difficult to distinguish between these two narratives. When describing her conversion, Gabrielle commented that

> I can't exactly pinpoint what brought me to the point that I knew I needed to be saved. It was partly because of all the stories from the Bible I'd heard for so many years. But really, I guess what brought it home for me was the issue of baptism, which became a big thing for me when my dad was about to get baptized. I remember my dad was going through the interviews before baptism and one day when he was talking about it I heard him and started asking him questions.

> Then, on the day itself, it was September eleventh, I got really curious. In our church at that time we had a baptismal pool that we could put together or take down whenever we want. I can remember the pool being put up and watching the water being poured in. It was a Sunday afternoon, after church, but before the evening service when my dad was going to be baptized. I went into the room where my dad was getting dressed for his baptism, with shorts and a T-shirt under his robe, and I started asking lots of questions, but especially why he needed to be baptized. He said to me that it was a public expression of faith, a spiritual dying to your sinful nature and being resurrected like Christ. Of course he said this in simpler words, so I could understand. I asked him what being baptized had to do with being saved and he said it had to do with obedience to scripture, since Christians in the Bible were all baptized. We talked about that and ended up back on the topic of salvation. He said that the only way for Christ to save us from our sins was for him to die on the cross. Up to that point the whole thing was just a story -- it didn't really mean a lot to me. But gradually the fact that Jesus Christ did all these things so we could be saved from our sins became real for me.

> So, I guess you could say that my father led me to the Lord, for sure. I told him that I wanted to be saved and that I had done some bad things. Like I remember cutting off my sister's hair when I got some new scissors, and sometimes telling lies or disobeying my folks. I told him I wanted to have these sins forgiven. Dad said that the only way to do this is to ask Christ for forgiveness. Then he read some biblical verses which emphasized the act of asking and then we prayed. Actually, he did something for me I'll never forget: he let me pray myself. It

was around three P.M. on September eleventh, 1983, just a few hours before he was baptized. I can still see the shadows on the wall. I was baptized four years later on March twenty-second, 1987, when I was eleven. Nothing major happened between when I became a Christian and when I was baptized, except for going to church a lot.

After ten years as members of their Closed Brethren congregation, Gabrielle's family moved to London, Ontario and joined another less conservative Brethren church. When I asked her to describe the differences, she replied, "Like in this one, women were allowed to cut their hair and wear earrings as long as they weren't really obvious about it. That was a real change from the Waterloo church we were at." However, because this new church placed very little emphasis on religious education, and was far from their home, they only remained there for a year and a half. For the rest of their five and a half years in London they were members of the Highbury (Fellowship) Baptist church.

My own spiritual walk [after her conversion] until I went to Highbury, and even a little while after, was pretty stagnant. I mean, at the Gospel Hall there wasn't a lot of creativity -- mainly there was an emphasis on repetition, and there were no instruments allowed in worship. But at Highbury, there were drums and guitars and pianos -- it was great. And at Highbury, women took a more active role, compared to the Gospel Hall, at least.

In Gabrielle's Roman Catholic junior high school,

there were only two Christians there, and I wanted to fit in with the non-Christians, so I went to dances and even started swearing sometimes. Actually, and you'll get a kick out of this, one day my friend and I, the other Christian, were kicked out of religion class, if you can believe it. The teacher was talking about the importance of priests, and I asked why they were so important since people could talk to God themselves without priests as mediators. So she said we should leave the class. Bizarre, eh?

After grade nine, Gabrielle transferred to a public French Immersion school which many

of her friends from Highbury attended. As well, the Inter-School Christian Fellowship,

the IVCF's high school equivalent, had an active chapter at her new school, which

provided her with an explicitly Christian alternative to the secular academic and social

contexts.

> This was such a huge relief. It meant I didn't need to lead a double life. That's what it felt like -- one with my school friends and another with my church friends. I was starting to feel badly about this, the difference between the ways I'd act at school versus the ways I'd act at church. This way I could hang around with my church friends at school and I could continue to be a Christian there, too.

When Gabrielle was sixteen, she was raped by a private math tutor hired by her

parents. This traumatic experience challenged and destabilized her faith and personality.

Using Mandelbaum's category, Gabrielle adapted to this experience by "retreating into

a kind of Christian bubble" as she described it during a conversation in Lithuania. She

attributes her psychological survival to her Christian community.

> If I hadn't been at public school with all my church friends and Highbury, I don't think I would have made it. Things got pretty rough. Before this I had been growing spiritually, reading my Bible regularly, focusing on discipleship.... The crisis with that creep when I was sixteen led to a bunch of little crises with my family and teachers. The burden just grew and grew. I didn't tell my parents about the creep for months and they didn't know what to do. Then I started therapy with a Christian therapist from my church. If it wasn't for her, I'm not sure what would have happened to me. God placed her in my life as a support and to reassure me that what happened wasn't my fault. She was a Godsend, literally.
>
> This whole experience made me more cautious, and I was angry at God for a long time. I mean, how could he have let this happen to me, I kept wondering.

You always hear Romans 8:28[49] whenever someone needs to comfort someone. Or else you hear people saying something about Job. I've used both of these with people I've been trying to help. But when you're experiencing the suffering yourself, this isn't always a big help. Time helped me get over the anger and just helped the healing process -- not just as a Christian, but as a human being. Just like it says in that "Footprints" poem, you know. God was carrying me when I was too weak to walk.

Shortly before she began her B.A. at McMaster, Gabrielle's family moved again, this time to a town outside of Montreal. Her arrival at McMaster further tested the staunch fundamentalism of her childhood and adolescence. "I mean, Highbury is more liberal than the Gospel Hall, but not as liberal as Carla [the IVCF staff worker]," Gabrielle related.

Gabrielle's stories of her first experiences with McMaster's secular ethos echoed the accounts shared by many IVCF members. Moreover, her recollections illustrate the liberating role the IVCF can play for evangelical students at McMaster. For example, to explain the social estrangement she felt at the university before she discovered the IVCF, Gabrielle shared the following story. Since she was living off-campus and had few friends in Hamilton, Gabrielle joined the Society for Off-Campus Students (SOCS), an alternative social group for people who do not live in the residences. At her first SOCS event,

they put a beer down in front of me and said 'Drink!' That event was modelled on the olympics -- you had to drink a beer after each event. But, as you know, I had never had a drink in my life. I was just 'no thanks,' and got out of there.

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[49] "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Soon after this incident Gabrielle went to an IVCF event and met Wanda, the 1996

Lithuania team leader. Wanda invited Gabrielle to the Church at the John, "and I was

just so stunned. I loved it." After this initial excitement, Gabrielle became a regular

participant in the McMaster chapter, an environment in which she encountered

> a lot of new ideas, especially on the role of women -- it was a real eye-opener.
> I mean, I guess I knew people thought this way, but not that they felt it so
> adamantly. I came away with new things to think about, but I still think the same
> way as I used to, like about women's role in the church. I think it's okay and
> biblical for women to be deaconesses, as long as that doesn't mean that they have
> spiritual authority over men. If they're going to be in administrative roles, that's
> fine.

Gabrielle's faith has been, to use IVCF rhetoric, "stretched" by her association

with the IVCF. However, while her growing awareness of the diversity (and especially

the liberal component) within the evangelical world has led her to make some

adaptations, she has maintained, as she explained above, many of the fundamentalist

values and beliefs she brought with her to McMaster. She continues to believe in the

"young earth hypothesis,"[50] the literal truth of the Bible, and the subordinate role of

women in her church. In subsequent chapters I will discuss the way the IVCF

paradoxically facilitates both this "stretching" and the entrenchment of previous (and

usually fundamentalist) convictions.

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[50] The young earth hypothesis is the fundamentalist assertion that the earth is not older than 10,000 years. See Morris and Parker (1982:252) for a discussion of the scientific evidence supporting this theory.

At the end of our conversation, I asked Gabrielle why her mother is almost completely absent from her story of her spiritual development. Gabrielle responded that

> My mom doesn't play a very active role in my faith, you're right, but that's probably because women don't play active roles in our church in general. Like they can't speak, for example, as you know. She just hasn't been that involved in this part of my life. It's not that she's not a Christian or isn't supportive of me; but she's not the driving force behind my faith.

Gabrielle's general acceptance of women's ancillary roles in her community may be interpreted as a reflection of her will to assume the feminine roles[51] played by her mother and sanctioned by her father. She describes these roles as biblically-mandated, but the centrality of her father in her narrative suggests that biblical authority may be less important for Gabrielle than her father's authority and approval.

However, in response to a question about how she would describe her father's present role in her faith, Gabrielle smiled and commented:

> I'd like to say that my dad plays a small role, but he still has a huge influence because I really respect him. He's just taught me so much. But his word is not final; otherwise I wouldn't have gone to Lithuania or applied to Moody [see below]. He wasn't crazy about either of these ideas, to say the least. But I went anyway.

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[51] This issue is addressed in Chapter Five on the role of women in the IVCF.

The mission to Lithuania was an important turning point in Gabrielle's IVCF "career."[52] Although she had been active and comfortable in the IVCF prior to the Lithuania trip, by the end of the mission there were some misunderstandings and disagreements between herself and Carla (the IVCF Staff Worker), and the mission team's leader. As Gabrielle explained, these disagreements alienated her from the chapter's core responsibilities and from Carla herself. In theory, since the chapter is entirely student-led, Carla's indifference or opposition to Gabrielle should not impede Gabrielle's career within the group. However, Carla is, in fact, what ethnographers call a "gatekeeper." Carla played this role with respect to my own research, and more subtly and less decisively, for the group's members, whose full participation can be curtailed by Carla's opposition. Carla cannot, in the end, ostracize anyone from the chapter. The group and its student Executive are open to and welcoming toward anyone; nevertheless, because Carla is the group's oldest participant, an ordained minister and a highly respected Christian, the Executive members and other highly visible core members hold her and her opinions in very high esteem.

Gabrielle had hoped to increase her involvement in the chapter, perhaps even leading a Small Group in the future or becoming a member of the Executive, but Carla discouraged Gabrielle from assuming such responsibilities. Apparently Carla had decided that Gabrielle's behaviour reflected her need for "discipling" and her lack of maturity.

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[52] The sociological term "career" refers to a person's movement through the role expectations and systems of prestige associated with a particular institution. Thus, each person I interviewed had a "career" within the IVCF. Gabrielle's life history, for example, relates the early peaking and then fairly sudden diminishment of her career within the chapter.

"[Carla] basically said I should step back and think about not taking such a prominent role in the group for a while," Gabrielle said during a phone conversation. During our interview, Gabrielle commented that

> The flak between me and Carla after Lithuania has never been resolved. I've tried several times to set up a time to meet with her and talk it through, but she never gets in touch with me. I know she's busy. I don't think her not calling me is on purpose; just a matter of timing. But still, I want things between us to be better, but that may not work. She and I have never seen eye to eye. There's just no connection there between us. I don't have bad things to say about her. I just don't have anything to say about her. But I guess I would have appreciated more support from her.[53]

During the long return train trip to Vilnius from the mission team's four day holiday in Saint Petersburg, Gabrielle had a "vision" that

> God wanted me to do mission work in Eastern Europe. Remember that day we sort of had to ourselves? Well, I think I was sitting in the Winter Gardens and thinking about how I was going to fit what had happened to me in Lithuania into the rest of my life. And then, you know when something just feels right? Well, that's how it was. I just got a real sense that this was where God wants me to be.

Gabrielle suffered the worst culture shock of anyone on the 1996 Lithuania Team. She spoke of this culture shock during several of the team's evening "debrief" sessions. She also had trouble sleeping, was often ill, and was occasionally frightened when walking with the mission team through the streets of Vilnius during the day. When she told the rest of the team about her vision, one of the members of the team (apparently confused

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[53] These tensions and Carla's success at limiting Gabrielle's career may explain why, earlier in her narrative, Gabrielle seemed to identify the IVCF with Carla when she said that "Highbury is more liberal than the Gospel Hall, but not as liberal as Carla," rather than "...not as liberal as the IVCF."

by Gabrielle's seemingly dramatic transformation) asked, "Are you sure it wasn't just a

dream?" Gabrielle insisted somewhat defensively that it was an authentic spiritual vision.

A few days later, Gabrielle told me that this vision's imperative was augmented by

> all of the conversations we all had at night [in Lithuania]. Do you remember the
> one you and I and Kelly and Wanda had in Vilnius that night? We talked about
> the role of women. We totally disagreed with you in some ways, but because of
> these sorts of conversations, and others I had had before, I was already
> questioning the things I was taught. I mean, I still would never be a pastor,
> because I don't think women should have spiritual authority over men, but I think
> God wants me to do mission work.

After returning from Lithuania, Gabrielle applied to and was accepted by the

fundamentalist Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, where in September 1998 she will

begin working toward her Masters of Arts and Biblical Studies. She continues to pursue

her B.A. in English, which she will finish at McMaster before she enrols at Moody.

Simon

Simon is a twenty-two year old second year Geography student who was raised

in Hamilton in what he describes as "an ideal Christian environment." His father and

mother were both raised in fundamentalist communities, and most of his uncles and aunts

continue to be affiliated with evangelicalism. Although Simon's family attends a

relatively moderate fundamentalist Baptist congregation, his family still has ties to strict

fundamentalism. Simon explained that

> My grandmother, my dad's mom, who lives with us, is still a strict Brethren.
> She thinks rock music is the devil's tool, that sort of thing, and she prays for me

when I go to movies. But I admire her -- she has a great Christian faith, but she's from another time. There's no point in trying to change her.

During our interview, I asked Simon to discuss his conversion and its role in his life. His account is typical of a minority (approximately 15%) of IVCF participants whose faith has been a part of their lives since childhood and who did not experience a profound moment of conversion. When I asked Simon when he became a Christian and what that experience means to him, he replied:

> My conversion? I can't really remember, you know. My mom told me it happened when I was five and I prayed and asked Jesus into my heart. So I guess that's when it happened. But the exact date is not really important to me. I've just always been a Christian as long as I can remember. I guess the actual moment is significant, but I can't really remember it. [pause] When I have kids, though, I think I will ask them to receive Jesus at an early age. Even though what happened when I was five was important to God, I think he was always working within my life.... It was a starting point for me.

Within the evangelical community, one is often expected to be able to remember the moment, or at least the period, of one's conversion.[54] One might become a Christian over a period of days, weeks, and sometimes even months; but ideally, one should be

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[54] During my fieldwork, I was a regular participant in and observer of a Small Group devoted to exploring the phenomenon of witnessing on campus. At one of these meetings, Cindy, a graduate student member of the chapter, said "This morning as I was driving to school I was listening to Chuck Swindol on the radio, and he said 'If you can't remember exactly when you became a Christian, then you probably aren't one.' That totally makes sense to me." One afternoon in Panavegyz, Lithuania, Jocelyn, one of the members of the Lithuania mission team, told another team member that she does not remember the moment she became a Christian. The other team member then asked Jocelyn, "I don't mean to be critical or anything, but isn't that like saying that your parents make you Christian?" After a short, pregnant pause, Jocelyn replied tersely that, "That's just one of the things that makes us different, I guess." The tension implicit in this conversation was not resolved during the trip.

able to specify this moment or period with some certainty. One of the reasons for this ideal is that in sharing one's testimony with non-Christians, it is more effective to focus on a particular moment or period in one's life. According to Susan Harding (1987), this strategy helps non-believers imaginatively situate crucial elements of the convert's salvation narrative in the context of their own lives (cf. Chapter Three). In cases such as Simon's, in which no memorable or profound experience marks the inauguration of evangelical faith, believers often emphasize what many have described as a "second conversion" experience, which usually occurs during their teen years. Such experiences are major turnings for these individuals. As Simon described it,

> Well, you know how it is. As you're growing up you look to the older Christians for guidance on how your faith should develop. Now it's definitely more my own faith. Around when I was sixteen or seventeen was when I sort of took control over my own faith. I guess you could call this a second conversion.

I asked Simon what led to this second conversion.

> It was probably a number of things, like a few retreats and a bunch of conversations I had heard or been a part of. But there wasn't a single big moment, even in this second conversion. Maybe it was a little more random. But I think the main thing that happened personally is that there was an acknowledgment of God, that he cares deeply for me personally. If I was the only one on earth, Christ would still have come down to die for me. For *me.* That's just so awesome.

> Also, there was an acknowledgement of the forgiveness of sins around that point. When I was a kid, I asked God to forgive my sins, you know, but it was like blah blah blah, forgive me, like what all little kids ask for. But really, what sort of sins had I committed? Not many when I was five. Now [when I ask for forgiveness] it's a total humbling before God because I understand more clearly that I need my sins forgiven. Now when I sin I feel a real separation between me and God. Not that he's left me, but that I've left him. Sometimes I think I've done something so bad I need to let God have some time to cool off to forgive me, but that's *so* not true. I might need time, but he's always there. This need for the forgiveness of sins was pretty new for me back then.

Throughout Simon's childhood and adolescence, he was involved with church youth groups, an involvement which provided him with an alternative *milieu* in which he felt more confident than he did at school.

> In school I was short and skinny, and I didn't really share my faith much. Like I said, I stuttered a lot and actually failed the second grade. So, it was great to have church. But still, it's not like I had a terrible time in school. I had a good time. I wasn't a leader or a follower, but maybe more of a follower if anything.

Another major factor in Simon's life has been the example of his older brother, who was also an active IVCF participant when he was at university. Simon actually began attending the McMaster IVCF meetings with his brother before he became a McMaster student.

> I had a bit of an in, I guess. People always teased me about being Kevin's little brother, but that's okay, because I liked being that. I guess there has been a lot of copying between him and me in my time at IV. I mean, Kevin was asked to go to NSLC [the IVCF's National Student Leaders Conference] one year and then to be on the NSLC committee the next year, and he also went to Lithuania. Then I did all of that stuff. But that doesn't bug me.

When he arrived at McMaster, Simon already knew many of the group's most popular and active members through his brother. This familiarity meant that he avoided what younger members often describe as the bewildering experience of trying to feel comfortable at the group's events. Simon is acutely aware of the special treatment he enjoyed because of his brother and previous exposure to the group. As a result, he

makes a concerted effort to welcome younger students to IVCF events and make sure

they never feel abandoned.[55]

In his first year at McMaster, Simon was asked to attend the NSLC with several

other prominent members of the chapter. That same year he decided to join the final

Lithuania mission in May 1996. When I asked him what led to his decision, he replied,

> Well, I know it might sound bad, but my brother went to Lithuania three years
> ago, and I wanted to go, too. Also, I wanted to travel and see Christianity in
> another country. I had never been anywhere really, and since Kevin had been
> there I sort of knew what to expect, but sort of not, you know?

In an attempt to confirm his own inclinations to go to Lithuania, Simon asked the

1995 mission team's trip leader how it was possible to be sure that God wanted one to

go on missions. "He just told me that that shouldn't really be an issue because it already

says in the Bible that all Christians should go. I just said hmmmm, okay."

In his second year at McMaster, Simon was asked to be a member of the NSLC

committee to plan and facilitate the December 1996 conference.

> [The conference] was great. The people who came were just so spiritually thirsty
> it was unreal. [A leader of a mission for street youths in Toronto] spoke and the
> whole group of us went on a 'street walk' down Yonge Street. He told us to
> pretend we were fifteen year old girls who have to survive. He also told us to
> go into strip clubs and porno theatres and sex shops. I didn't do this, but some
> of us also went to the Church and Wellesley area of town, which is where a lot

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[55] Simon commented, "I see my personality as a gift from God. I don't want to say 'gift,' because that sounds so, I don't know, bold. But really, I think I am pretty personable and that I have to use this to make people who are new to IV feel comfortable. Now I'm totally comfortable at IV, but I want to remember how difficult it can be to fit in there sometimes."

of the homosexuals hang out. [At the conference,] I attended a workshop on homosexuality where a former homosexual told us about how God helped him stop being a homosexual. It just really gave me hope. You know, before, if I had walked around the Church and Wellesley areas and had passed all these gay people, I might have somewhere deep down in me said 'Oh no, these people are doomed. There's no hope for them.' But listening to him just really made me see that this was not true and that there is always hope for them.

Simon's participation in the IVCF, and especially his involvement in the Lithuania mission cultivated his already strong faith and growing confidence as an adult. His comfort, popularity, and prestige within the IVCF have been mirrored on the extra-curricular level as well, since he has recently assumed new responsibilities at his Baptist church as a member of the Missions Committee and a co-leader of the junior high school group.

By his own accounts, Simon has had to face only minor faith crises during his spiritual "walk." However, in ways which will become clear in subsequent chapters, the IVCF has exposed Simon and many others from similarly "ideal Christian environments" to the diversity within the evangelical tradition and to the major issues with which this tradition is struggling.[56] One of these issues concerns the arguably inferior status of women within many churches in the evangelical tradition (cf. Chapter Five). I had not intended to discuss this issue during our conversation. However, although (or perhaps because) he is aware of my strong opinions on this topic, Simon raised the subject independently, indicating that he had been affected by discussions with me and by the presence of dissenting voices on this issue within the IVCF chapter.

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[56] As a consequence of this exposure to diversity, Simon has, to use Mandelbaum's (1973) terms, adapted himself to new ideas and values.

You know, I went to Sunday school all my life as a kid. And I was thinking the other day that all of the teachers who had such a huge influence on me when I was a kid, all these people who taught me so much about the Bible and God, were women. I remember all those conversations we all had in Lithuania about that issue. Remember? I don't know, I guess I have some confused feelings about it. I think I'm leaning toward equality. At least that's what I want to think, that's the direction I want to be heading. But then, maybe not, you know? I mean, I want there to be evidence behind what I think. I don't just want to say 'Hey, I want to believe this, so it's true,' you know? I'm just not sure about this any more.

Simon's experiences with Lithuanians and Canadians whose family histories have been less "ideal" than his own have had a significant impact on him. Because of his growing awareness of the privilege he has enjoyed, he feels compelled to support the faith development of "new Christians," new members of the IVCF, and potential Christians in other countries. Near the end of our conversation, Simon commented that

I know I've been raised in the totally ideal Christian environment. Great parents, great church, great friends. It's hard to imagine how it could be better. I mean, I come home from school and my mom comes up and kisses me and asks me about my day and then on Sunday the whole family gets up and goes to church together. I know this is an ideal situation, and because of this I think God probably has more expectations of me than other people, since I've had it so easy all my life. I look at what Steve's experienced for example, and how much more difficult his life and faith have been than mine and I'm just blown away. I mean, I've seen God's grace throughout my life; but watching God work in other peoples' lives really brings that home to me.

Steve

Steve is a twenty-two year old student at McMaster's Baptist Divinity College. His parents were born and raised in an impoverished Caribbean nation. Each of his

parents had eleven siblings. Steve is an amiable, extroverted, soft-spoken and extremely handsome West Indian of East Indian descent. Steve's narrative began with his father's life in the West Indies and his eventual immigration to Canada twenty-two years ago. Steve's father quit university at nineteen to support his brothers and sisters after his own father's death. Steve's grandfather

> was super strict, which might explain my dad's way of relating to us. My dad is basically the head of the house and he dictates what's going to happen and we are all supposed to accept it.... I come from a basically non-communicative family.

Soon after Steve was born in 1974, his parents moved to Canada and earned enough money to sponsor other members of their family to become Canadian citizens. The family lived in Toronto until Steve was four years old, and then moved to Oakville, a suburb of Toronto, where they have lived ever since.

When he was sixteen, "spiritual questions" began to trouble Steve. These questions were

> mainly about the meaning of life, and life after death, and stuff like whether there was a God, and are humans the only life in the universe. These were mainly philosophical questions, especially the question of life after death. For me, I couldn't separate the question about the meaning of life from the question of life after death. I thought that, I mean, if everything about me just ended after my eighty years on the planet, then my life now would be totally meaningless. I still think that.

Steve's search for answers to these questions led him back to the faith of his forebears.

> I really didn't have any answers to these questions, so I started looking into Hinduism, which was the religion of my family. I thought maybe I'd find

answers there.... Well, it's not really just the religion of my family; it's more a question of Indian culture or their way of life. Religion is just a part of that. Where my family is from, Hinduism and just their culture totally determine everything you do or who you should be.

Anyway, I looked into Hinduism a little and just couldn't find any answers there. Buddhists believe in reincarnation, right? I thought a lot about reincarnation, too. Yeah, I looked into reincarnation, into Buddhism and Hinduism, and I still didn't find answers. But I just had a strong sense that the answers were somehow outside of me. I just wasn't convinced by the whole 'the truth is within you,' or the 'God is inside me' idea. These things just didn't satisfy me.

Although "[a]t that point in my life [grade eleven] I was a little overweight and didn't have a lot of friends," Steve decided to try out for his high school's volleyball team, a decision which was to have profound consequences for his life. He made the team, where he met Jeff, a committed evangelical (and later, an active McMaster IVCF member) with whom Steve spent a lot of time during volleyball training.

One night Jeff invited me out to an outreach at his church, so I went. I was totally interested in this sort of thing, like I said, so I figured I should check it out. Of course I was really intimidated and totally ignorant. I had no idea about Christianity, about denominations, or the Bible. I thought that whatever happened at Jeff's church must just be Christianity. For me, it had always seemed like the cultural religion of white people like Hinduism seemed like the cultural religion for Indians. But I knew three of the people there that night, so it was okay. Actually, it was great.

This experience aroused Steve's curiosity.

After this I got my hands on a Bible. The only one I could find around the house was a children's picture Bible my mom had given me when I was a kid. I have no idea why. In any case, I was really drawn to it as I started reading. Just the possibility of finding spiritual answers was exciting to me. Also, I felt really welcomed by the community at Oakville First [a Fellowship Baptist congregation]. That was a first for me -- a strong community worship experience. I had been to the Hindu temple a few times, but it was totally different, and in another language.

One of the pivotal experiences in Steve's spiritual journey occurred on a church

hay ride with Jeff a week after Steve began reading the children's Bible. Steve recalled

that during the hay ride, "Jeff had his evangelist hat on, for sure." As they drove

through the night on the hay ride, Jeff turned to Steve and said "'I know where I'm

going when I die.' Man, that really set off bells for me," Steve remembered. Jeff's

fateful questions, his cultivation of Steve's budding spirituality, the power of the

children's Bible, and the warmth of the Oakville First community all played roles in

Steve's eventual commitment to Christianity. However,

> What clinched it for me was that 2000 years ago, the crucifixion and resurrection actually happened. I don't know if I believed him right on the spot, but I was a vacuum about this stuff. I was amazed. I remember just looking at him with wonder. On the bus ride home I was just processing what he had said. When I got home I felt a real heart feeling, an excitement, like something was about to explode in me. Like I said, the actual events of the crucifixion clinched it for me. This is where the Holy Spirit comes in. I'm not going to simplify it and say that the Holy Spirit put these thoughts in my mind or anything like that. But when I look back, I believe the Holy Spirit worked in me. I don't know exactly how it worked, but I know those first questions were of God. It's not really far-fetched for me to believe that God or the Holy Spirit personally interacted in my life. I mean, look at how Jesus interacted with people. I'm not totally sure if what was happening to me is an innate part of the human being to seek God, or the Holy Spirit working in me. I just don't know yet.

The human or social influences Steve described above do not fully explain what finally

made Christianity compelling, or in Steve's words, "inescapable." The two "clinchers"

are, respectively, more scientific and more mysterious than these influences. In Steve's

narrative the historical accuracy of -- and not simply blind faith in -- the events of

Christ's life and death, and the gracious activity of the Holy Spirit played these two

major roles. His faith is supported both by historical reality and the Holy Spirit.

Judging by other conversations I have had with Steve, this latter metaphysical component

is an emotionally significant foundation of his faith.

However, during our formal conversations, the historical truth of the resurrection

seemed to be a pivotal component of Steve's commitment. Consequently, I asked Steve

how he determined when he was sixteen that the events described in the Bible had

actually occurred.

> I didn't research it in a history book, if that's what you mean. I can't really
> remember.... Umm.... The way I looked into it was by, hang on, it was so long
> ago. I think I did it by talking with other Christians and reading the Bible and
> thinking about the longevity of the Bible, you know, how long it's been around,
> and how long people have been believing what it says. I don't know, but I think
> I looked into the archaeological evidence, like the Dead Sea Scrolls. Part of me
> needed to see some scientific evidence, some hard evidence. But the majority of
> it came from reading the Bible itself and looking at it as a historical document
> and seeing the prophecy of the Old Testament coming true in the New Testament.
> All of these things contributed to my seeing it as true; but the historical truth of
> the Bible was crucial to me. Without this I'm not sure I would have become a
> Christian.

A crucial element of Steve's self-understanding is that he had to establish the

veracity of the Bible (or at least the death and resurrection of Christ) in order to provide

a valid basis for conversion. I asked Steve to describe how he verified these facts

because he had mentioned the importance of this evidentiary *fait accompli* three times

during our conversation. However, the uncertainty and confusion so obvious in his voice

when he tried to recall how he had determined that Christ's resurrection actually

happened suggest that for Steve, *maintaining the belief* of having firmly validated these

facts is so important to his faith commitment that he becomes nervous when answering

questions about this proof.[57] This uneasiness is likely a function of the cognitive

dissonance generated by the need to maintain his self-understanding as a person who

knows rationally that Christ died and rose again when his own memory and explanation

seemed to suggest (to both of us) that his adolescent investigations were preliminary at

best.[58] As life history scholar Charlotte Linde argues, the factuality of elements in

personal narrative has little bearing on the more interesting question of how and why

these stories provide individuals with a sense of "coherence" demanded both by society

and the individual psyche (Linde 1993:222). Recognizing this need for coherence, I did

not pursue my question for very long once I intuited Steve's discomfort about the topic

of proof for the resurrection.

Steve's conversion was not instantaneous, but nevertheless had a profound impact

on his life.

> I don't think there was an exact moment when I became a Christian, like as
> though I came home that night after the hay ride and just boom all of a sudden
> I was a Christian. It was an experiential thing. I found out about a month later
> about the sinner's prayer, so I prayed it, but that itself was not the turning point.

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[57] This brief episode of anxiety stands in contrast to his normally calm demeanour.

[58] It is possible that Steve chose to emphasize the authenticity of the Bible in his life
history for my benefit. He may have assumed that because I am a scholar of religious
studies, if he could persuade me to appreciate the veracity of these biblical accounts, I
would be encouraged to become a Christian. However, it seems to me that as he began
to answer my question about how he had authenticated the events in the Bible, he became
suddenly (or perhaps subconsciously) worried that my academic background (which
actually includes only a limited familiarity with the historical issues he was addressing)
would enable or incline me to question his assertions. Thus, his disorientation when
faced with this question might be the result either a) of concern that I might try to refute
his commitments, or b) of his troubling recognition of the fideistic basis for these
commitments.

I think if I had to pinpoint my moment of becoming a Christian, I would say it was in the week between reading the book and after the hay ride, or maybe in the few weeks between the hay ride and the sinner's prayer.

This conversion was the beginning of a lengthy, painful, and radically transformative process for Steve. After he became a Christian he started attending Oakville First frequently and gradually re-orienting his values, ambitions, and self-understanding. His conversion

> ...totally changed my priorities. For three months after I became a Christian there was this uncontrollable energy in me, kind of an unfocused curiosity. I was so excited I just went *aaaahhh*, you know? I just wanted to know more and more and be fed.

> But then my parents reacted. I mean, in a sense they were right, because my grades were slipping since my focus was totally on learning about Christianity. My parents said I was a Hindu, not a Christian, and had to stop being a Christian, and that was that. The church I was at had a mission to Central America, and I wanted to go on it, but my parents really put their foot down at that point. So, after that, Christianity became quite nominal for me. So, I hid my Bible and kept lots of secrets from them. But it was also embarrassing to me that I didn't have Christian parents like all the other kids in my church. I was so frustrated. I just wanted to know why I couldn't know God better.

After his parents virtually forbade him to be a Christian, Steve felt "spiritually two-faced." On the one hand, he knew he was a Christian, but on the other hand, he was not allowed to develop fully the new consciousness or lifestyle associated with this new state of being. Nevertheless, as a result of his parents' restrictions, his marks improved, gaining him acceptance to every university to which he applied. But, as Steve explained, "I had already decided to go to [the University of] Guelph, but then at the

moment I was about to write down Guelph on my acceptance form, I wrote McMaster. Don't ask me why. It was weird."

Unlike many students from staunchly fundamentalist communities, Steve's first year in residence at McMaster was exciting and nurturing because of the relationships that developed between people on his floor; relationships that were "intimate, but not sexual like in a lot of residences. I was having a great time here. But I was also empty." After the winter break in his first year at McMaster, he decided he "didn't want to live like this any more."

> It wasn't anything against the residences or anything. I know a lot of IV people hate the residences, but I loved it. No, I mean I didn't want to live without God any more. This was like a second conversion for me. I remember it so clearly. It was the first Sunday back in January after Christmas, and I took a long walk down Cootes Drive talking and crying and yelling and whispering things to God.
>
> At that point -- again I have to use the word inescapable -- I wanted the intimacy I knew when I became a Christian in high school. Then I went to the [Church at the] John and sang and it was amazing. I believe this is the work of God. I felt like a prodigal son coming home from another country. It was a hugely significant moment in my life. I could just feel God telling me that something special was going to happen to me. The Holy Spirit was saying that this was the beginning of something new. Within a week of this I was asked to be outreach coordinator on the next year's Exec. Carla said I was the risk on the Executive, because I hadn't been out very much, really just a few Large Groups and some Small Group meetings in my first year.

Being asked to be a member of the Executive Committee represents an enormous honour and responsibility for IVCF students. As I explained in Chapter One, the Executive is organized according to portfolios. Each member's job requires not only attendance at weekly two or three hour Executive meetings and most other major IVCF events, but (primarily) completion of the usually quite time-consuming tasks included in

his or her portfolio. Although Steve accepted the Nominating Committee's proposition

in the early part of the winter term, by the summer of the same year (1994) he decided

that he could not assume this position, since "I felt I would be lying to my parents and

to IV people because a lot of them didn't know my parents were non-Christians -- not

to mention Hindus -- and that they were so against my being a Christian." However, the

woman who was to assume the job of President for the 1994-1995 academic year

convinced Steve to accept the responsibility of Outreach Co-ordinator. Nevertheless, this

was not the end of Steve's dilemmas. In November 1994 he was asked to attend the

NSLC as one of the McMaster delegates. He worried both about whether he should go

and whether he should tell his parents.

> But at the Church at the John, I heard a presentation where the speaker asked: 'Is Your God Able?' He was talking about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego [Daniel 3], you know, the three Jews who refuse to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar. At some point they say something like 'If our God is able to deliver us from the furnace,... then let him. But if not, we will not serve you or the Gods you worship.' That really hit home for me. I told my parents about going to the NSLC, and they weren't happy, but they had a wait and see attitude. I guess they just hoped it was a phase.

> Then, just before I left [for the NSLC], [the Nominating Committee] asked me to be next year's President (1995-1996). I remember asking myself if I was going to keep letting my parents rule my life. And then a while later, Carla asked me the exact same question, and wow, it just really had an impact. Carla was great. Even when I was thinking about whether or not to become President, she took the pressure off me, and was really supportive throughout the whole process. I accepted the job as President, and I'm not really happy about this part, but I decided not to tell my parents.

Not all adaptations are beneficial for a person for a long period of time. Just as

Gabrielle retreated into a "Christian bubble" as a means of adapting to her crisis, Steve

adapted to the conflict he experienced between his parents and his faith by keeping them radically separated. However, this strategy required lying to his parents, a decision which is supported by neither his Hindu past nor his Christian present. However, this choice allowed him to forestall a potentially self-destructive conflict between himself and his parents for long enough to entrench his new Christian identity, and therefore, Steve considered it a necessary moral sacrifice. While his deception postponed a conflict with his parents, the consequent "incoherence" (Linde 1993) between the family and faith elements in his life's narrative generated significant anxiety for Steve.

In addition to concealing his steadily increasing Executive responsibilities (as Outreach Co-ordinator in 1994 and then President in 1995) from his parents, Steve also had not revealed his mediocre academic performance. "I never did well enough in my Science courses to get into med school or grad school, anyway. I didn't get into Biochem either," he reported. By the winter break in his third year at McMaster (when he was the President), Steve had decided to graduate in April 1996 with a three year degree in Science, rather than a four year Honours degree (which his parents assumed he would complete *en route* to medical or graduate school). More importantly, he had decided that he would apply to enter McMaster's Baptist Divinity College the following September (1996).

Steve agonized about lying to his parents, and remembers a Boxing Day conversation he had with his cousin, in whom he confided his situation. His cousin urged him to tell his parents what he wanted to do with his life. "Again, it was inescapable," Steve said.

I racked my brain trying to think of a good way and a good time to tell [my parents] about what I was going to do. I'm not very proud of this, but I didn't actually tell them about Div College and graduating in April until March of that year. I was just so fearful. I knew that the worst case scenario would be total rejection. I guess in my family, even among my dad's siblings and cousins, I'm kind of looked upon as sort of the son of the godfather; you know, nothing could go wrong with me, that sort of thing. So, I knew it would be a huge embarrassment to my dad that I was not going to be a doctor or whatever, and that I was going to go to Div College.

I remember around January receiving the verse in Matthew 6:24-25, you know, about denying yourself and taking up the cross. Jesus said "For those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

I asked Steve what he meant when he said he "received" the verse. He replied,

I guess I was already reading this chapter, but somehow I was really drawn to this part, but this was definitely spoken to me by God. Don't ask me how, like if he actually spoke or what, but I knew I received it from him. This verse alone carried me through that period. Paul, it was awful, just horrible. I never thought about killing myself or anything, but there were some times that I thought it would be better to be dead than going through this. It was my own personal Gethsemane. That's how I think of it now. I told my parents on March twenty-eighth. The week before I did this I prayed like I've never prayed before, and received messages of comfort and support and more than any other time I knew that God was speaking to me through the Bible. I told them on the phone. I look back on it and feel horrible about how I did it, but then I just couldn't face them in person. I was just so fearful that I'd get the same kind of response I got when I told them [about becoming a Christian] when I was sixteen.

His parents were "shocked and angry," but they were also highly suspicious that someone had coerced Steve to make these major decisions, a misgiving he has still not completely allayed. The conflict between Steve and his parents had been developing since he was sixteen, but had reached a new and acute level when he became deeply

involved in the IVCF. The period surrounding the phone call, Steve said, "was the hardest time in my life. I felt shattered. I didn't talk to them for a month after."

Not surprisingly, the tensions between Steve and his parents were exacerbated by the fact that at roughly the same time he told them he was going to seminary, he also decided and told them that he was going to join the IVCF's 1996 mission team to Lithuania. His parents reacted very coolly to this latter idea; but such a chasm had already opened up between them and Steve that the news did not categorically alter their separation.

At his emotional nadir in April 1996 (after he had told his parents everything), Steve had a dream which confirmed not only his decision to go to Lithuania, but Christ's power to save him from his tribulations. As Steve relates it, in his dream he is falling down a narrow, dark shaft, with his hands trapped and immobile at his sides. He is unable to see what is underneath him; but he can hear the screams and hisses of monsters and demons. Just as the noises become almost deafening and his death seems imminent, he succeeds at placing his hands in front of him in the prayer position. The moment he is able to pray, his descent ceases and he immediately and rapidly ascends toward the light above him.

Steve's experience in Lithuania served as a further affirmation of his convictions. During our conversation, Steve said that

> Lithuania was the best thing for me. Especially in the way the Lithuanian Christians received God and worshipped so passionately. It just really lifted me and it felt like God had wiped off all my tears. The whole trip just really showed me God again. And then, listen to this: after this great, awesome experience, I came home, my mom picked me up at the airport, and as soon as we got in the

door, she asked me if I could clean out the garage. My sister said, 'Hey, take it easy on him, he just got home.' My mom said, 'Yeah, but he's been on holiday for a month.' It was just *boom*. I was so totally up from Lithuania and then all of a sudden [making a fist and punching the air dramatically] *poooowwww*, back to reality.

Currently, relations between Steve and his family "are as good as they can be now, all things considered. But I know there still needs to be a lot of healing, emotionally and spiritually."

Every year several of the McMaster chapter's members attend a conference in Urbana, Illinois, in order to learn about international missions, to develop their faith, and to network with Christians from other North American evangelical organizations. The international planning committee for Urbana 1996 asked Steve to speak briefly to an audience of approximately 20,000 students about the McMaster team's mission to Lithuania. "This was a huge thing for me, too. I'm not sure why, but speaking at Urbana was a kind of a turning point. It was redemptive, too. It's hard to explain why, though." I speculated that with the invitation to speak not about his testimony but about his experiences as an evangelist, the conference may have symbolically marked his full immersion in and acceptance by the evangelical community. "Yeah, I guess that makes sense," he agreed tentatively.

Steve's life since he began classes at the Divinity College during the 1996-1997 academic year has been challenging, but also satisfying since he now knows, to use evangelical rhetoric, what God wants him to do. Steve now considers the anguish he experienced, especially during the two years he was on the Executive, as a lesson from

which other Christians can learn. In fact, in his eyes, his suffering has assumed biblical

proportions and significance (cf. Harding 1992:74). Steve reflected that

> I definitely see that there is some kind of redemption in my suffering. I'm not
> totally sure how that is. I think my testimony has been something for other
> Christians to see as an example, as something to edify other people. I now see
> that I was not just lying to my parents and to IV people, but to God, as well, and
> I had to stop that, too. You know, more than anything, I think that if I can relate
> at all to what Christ experienced, it's what he went through at the Garden of
> Gethsemane. The bottom line for me now is that I want to live my life with
> Christ. That's the basic guiding principle which guides my specific decisions
> about my faith and my life.

Rosenwald (1992:286) describes the subject's "longing to become identical with its story"

as the impetus for dramatic changes from between and within major self-understandings.

Steve's joy at finally being able to live the kind of public Christian life he has wanted

to live for six years may indicate that while he may not yet be identical with, at least he

bears a stronger resemblance to his preferred "story."

Rebecca

Rebecca is a twenty-three year old woman who grew up in London, Ontario in

a United Church context. Her parents continue to be affiliated with the denomination.

The United Church of Canada does not emphasize the necessity of an intimate

relationship with God or the centrality of the moment of commitment as most evangelical

churches do. Consequently, as Rebecca puts it,

> I guess I was just always aware of Christianity; I mean, I had the biblical cartoon
> books and that sort of thing. But the United Church doesn't stress the personal
> relationship with God thing. Looking back now I can see some truths in my

religious background, but they're buried in the United Church's political correctness and social justice orientation.

Rebecca's involvement with the United Church continued during her adolescent years when she was involved with her high school youth group.

> We went on retreats and that sort of thing, but the adults in charge didn't really monitor us closely or set very good examples. Actually, I can remember kids going off together into the bushes. I'm not sure I was really aware of what was happening back then, but now I've figured out that they were probably fooling around.... I would have been considered one of the more religious kids in my youth group and in high school in general. When I look back I suppose I was searching even then. In grade thirteen I wrote my independent study essay on the Song of Solomon -- as if you can say anything about that at that age.

Rebecca was not a rebellious teenager, "but after I turned eighteen I started doing things I should have gotten in trouble for but was careful enough to avoid getting caught." In the summer after grade twelve, she joined the Army reserves, a summer occupation that introduced her to a subculture in which alcohol and sexual activity played major roles. The summer after she graduated from grade thirteen, she went to Manitoba with the Army, at which point (and as an adaptation to the morally permissive ethic of her military surroundings) her drinking and sexual activity increased sharply. Rebecca continues:

> During the summer in Manitoba I went to church occasionally. [laughing] Actually, once I remember I got all excited because I met a Christian guy on the base and I thought I could go to church with him. That was great, but on Saturday nights we'd go out and drink so much we were often too hung over to make it to church the next day.

Rebecca recalls that "The key thing during all of this period, when I think of it, was that I desperately wanted to be accepted. I'm still dealing with this need now, but it's less important to me." During my interviews with IVCF students, participants often spoke of their need to be accepted by their peers. Sometimes they spoke of this need in the past tense, as a requirement which was fully supplanted by their awareness of God's acceptance and love. And sometimes they spoke, as Rebecca did, of this need as a gradually (and still) diminishing part of a process of psycho-spiritual maturation. Nevertheless, in Rebecca's self-understanding, she has made great progress.

> In my memory there are two different sides of me: the social side that craved acceptance and the Christian side which was still there, and learning, but not as central to me for most of my life.

After she finished her work with the Army, she entered the University of Western Ontario's Engineering program. As Rebecca put it,

> I don't know if you know this, but the Engineering culture is all drink drink drink, so I maintained the same habits I had developed in the Army. One night at a campus bar, I saw a guy with a Western IVCF T-shirt on with scriptural verses on the back, and I went up and started talking to him, and thought great, now I can get a ride with someone to church. I went with him to the Mennonite Brethren Church in London for a while.

It was through this connection that Rebecca became involved in the IVCF. Since Rebecca was enroled in a "co-op program," she would alternate between spending one semester on campus and the next at an Engineering work placement. This situation led to living what she described as "a double life." She explained:

I was heavily involved with the Western IVCF, but also with the Engineering culture of drinking and picking up guys and all that. There were a couple of people from the IVCF who were also in Engineering, and I remember feeling so ashamed whenever they would see me with the other Engineering people being drunk and stupid. I guess that's called conviction, right? Being caught was not the worst part -- it was realizing that I was leading two lives.

During the fall semester of her second year at Western, Rebecca and a small group of her Engineering peers had planned to spend their co-op work placements in Toronto,

having a great time and getting crazy. When we all planned to be together [in Toronto], this looked great, because by the summer before this term, I was drinking a lot and was with a new guy almost every weekend, even though I don't think I was really happy about it.

However, as part of her casual involvement with the IVCF during this pre-Toronto period, she decided to attend "Campus in the Woods," an IVCF retreat at the end of August. Her memory of the impact of this week-long experience of turning is quite vivid.

I thought it would be mainly a social thing, but it was a lot more. I was in the Explore Your Faith Track, which was about teaching us about prayer and concepts of God. During one of these workshops, I remember drawing a picture of God. There was this bright light in the centre of the paper and then a maze all around the outside, with little traps and dead ends, like drinking and sex. I wanted to be in the middle, but kept getting caught in the traps around the maze.

Suddenly in that week I realized that I [pause....]. Before, I thought I had to earn the approval of everyone, like my parents, and God, too, and because of the accumulated crap, but especially because by this time I had slept with more than one guy, I was ashamed of myself and thought I was beyond redemption. The fact that I had slept with these guys still haunts me. Not just because it

happened, but because I should have known better and I couldn't blame it on my ignorance or youth or drunkenness.

I remember several times before, setting all these goals for myself. I even made a list one day and put it up in my room at Western, saying I would stop doing this and that, especially having sex and drinking. I wanted to get out of this pattern, but every attempt I made failed totally. Then I realized that I couldn't do it by myself. If I had to pick a moment, I would say it was at the Campus in the Woods one day when I heard this song. I had heard it before, but suddenly the words just really made sense to me. The words were 'I will bring you home, whatever's the matter, whatever's been done, I will bring you home.' Home -- that's what I wanted more than anything. That's when I realized God's love was unconditional. I wouldn't be comfortable saying the song made me think this. I mean, I knew this philosophically before, but that's when it finally sunk in.

I asked Rebecca why God's unconditional love and acceptance finally became a

reality for her at the Campus in the Woods. She responded,

I could realize this then because until then I hadn't realized how much I needed it to be true. It could be that I was harbouring enough pride until then that I thought I could do it all myself or that I could earn the acceptance I craved so much. I remember crying at the time and feeling relief and gratitude. What I knew at that moment that I didn't know before was that I would not be continuing that lifestyle. I knew the acceptance I wanted was not going to be found among the people I drank with.

Since Rebecca had been so active in her church youth group (unlike Steve, for

example) I asked her whether she was a Christian before her conversion at Campus in

the Woods.

I would have said I was a Christian, but [pause].... I'm not happy about making that distinction [between Christians and non-Christians], although I know a lot of IV people are totally happy to do this; but in terms of the sheep and the goats and the wheat and the chaff, I was probably part of the chaff before. I guess the difference was that I didn't have a personal relationship with God before. At the Campus in the Woods my beliefs finally started to have an impact on my life.

When she moved to Toronto the week after Campus in the Woods, she disappointed her peers from the Engineering Department who invited her to go out with them to drink and meet men. At Campus in the Woods she had met and started to date a Christian man from Brampton, a suburb of Toronto. She quickly became very attached to his family, whose invitations to participate in their family life provided her with "good excuses to escape what all my other Engineering friends were doing in Toronto."

After this work term in Toronto, her university lifestyle changed dramatically. She became heavily involved with the Western IVCF and ceased her participation in the drinking and sexual activities associated with the Engineering ethos. The following summer during a work term in Ottawa, she decided to transfer from Western to McMaster, where she was accepted into the Computer Science program. "I had really started to dislike the stupid elitism of most of the engineers, and their whole subculture. And also, academically, I lost all interest in it."

Because of the support she had received from Western's IVCF, when she arrived at McMaster in 1995 she joined the IVCF immediately. Her sexual history sets her apart from the vast majority of female IVCF members, most of whom are not sexually experienced. However, as an adaptation to her new role as a fully committed Christian woman, and in an attempt to grapple with the role of men in her life, Rebecca recounts:

> In the summer of ninety-five I committed myself to not dating for a year, because I realized that I had still been seeking approval from the Christian guys I had been dating since Campus in the Woods. I felt I needed to learn to be content in the sufficiency of God. Now it's been more than a year and a half since that commitment. In the last year I've been growing into myself more. My long term goal is to become a Godly woman. And part of that is figuring out the

whole role of women thing and what sort of woman God wants me to become.

Although Rebecca is acutely aware (more than most IVCF women I interviewed) of the issues associated with the subordinate role of women in her tradition, "for now that's on the back-burner for me,"[59] she said. Nevertheless, she characterized her current opinion in the following manner.

> I was studying the passages on the role of women in the church in Ephesians a while ago. It says that wives should submit to their husbands and husbands should love their wives like Christ loved the church. Well, Christ loved the church so much he was willing to die for it and always put its needs above his own, so I guess if a man was willing to treat me like that I would be willing to submit to him. But I still haven't really worked out the women preaching thing yet. In London I go to an Associated Gospel Church, where women can't preach. But in Hamilton I go to an Anglican church, because I love the form and structure of the liturgy. But it's hard to get good teaching at the Anglican church, you know, because it's more and more like the United Church, so interested in political correctness.

Since Rebecca is enjoying self-directed faith development and involvement with her small group of Christian friends (many of whom are IVCF members), her participation in the chapter has dwindled to occasional attendance at social events. Nevertheless, she remains aware of the group's activities and still considers herself an IVCF member, albeit a "loosely" affiliated one.

Although at twenty-three, Rebecca is (chronologically) one of the oldest members of the group, other group members would consider her one of the chapter's "youngest

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[59] As I discuss in the fifth chapter on women in the IVCF, deferring resolution of this issue is a common IVCF strategy.

Christians." Measures such as abstaining from serious involvements with men help to diminish her need for the approval of others and, simultaneously, to dull the shame she still feels when she thinks about her previous sexual experience. Even though her experiences in the United Church had familiarized her with significant elements of Christianity, what she perceived as the distant and politicized God of her childhood and adolescence could neither inspire nor empower her to change her sinful life. Only an intimate, awe-inspiring, and categorically different sort of God could accomplish this. Her personal introduction and moral submission to this God have had such a profound affect on her life that

> I have a hard time believing that my pre-Christian life was really me. I just sort of look back and think of that person as a totally other person. Since the conversion experience, what I've gone through is very much growing into the kind of woman God wanted me to be all along. Now I finally know this, that's all.

Conclusions

The four lives explored above are in many ways distinctive. I have not encountered an instance of familial resistance to evangelicalism as profound as Steve's; nor are the vast majority of IVCF students members of a visible minority. I have encountered very few women in the chapter who share Gabrielle's austere fundamentalist convictions yet are committed to travelling to foreign lands to evangelize; and who are as friendly toward and appreciative of a committed non-Christian such as myself. I have met no other IVCF woman with as much or as thoroughly analyzed sexual experience as Rebecca; nor have I met many students in this chapter who can articulate their faith

in as thoughtful a manner. Finally, I have met few life-long Christians in the IVCF who are as gentle and considerate as Simon is toward others, especially non-Christian others; and who are as self-effacing as he is about his faith and limited life experience.

Although Steve, Rebecca, Gabrielle, and Simon are unique individuals, their life histories include situations and themes found in the stories told by other members of the chapter. In the next six chapters I explore most of the major narrative motifs evident in these histories and the larger patterns and tensions they reveal. However, some of the major strands woven through these four histories bear mentioning at this point, both to summarize some central issues in these four lives and to foreshadow the following chapters.

The status of women in the evangelical, and more generally, the Christian tradition, surfaced in all life histories except Steve's. This is ironic, since Steve is the only one of these four participants who supports the full equality of women in the church. His advocacy of this position is not, however, unambiguous; he continues to affiliate himself with a church and denomination which do not allow women to preach. The other three participants' views on the role of women in their tradition are still, to varying degrees, in a state of flux. This uncertainty reflects the growing problematization of the issue of female pastors and the role of women in general within the evangelical community. IVCF participants' dynamic and ambiguous views of women reveal the significant influence of feminism on evangelicalism generally (Stacey and Gerard 1990). In addition, these students' views may also reflect their exposure to McMaster's fully egalitarian academic and relatively egalitarian social ethos. In Chapter

Five I discuss the ways in which the IVCF offers evangelical students a forum in which to entertain often equivocal feelings about women in their faith.[60]

The role of evangelism, both at McMaster and abroad is a significant issue for these students. In the narratives recounted in this chapter, the mission to Lithuania is highlighted, largely because I shared this experience with three of the four students. The trip to Lithuania forced Gabrielle, Steve, and Simon to formalize their beliefs in order to communicate them, and to come to terms with the tremendous privilege they enjoy as North American Christians. The mission also altered (in Gabrielle's case) and consolidated (in Steve's case) the vocational course of their lives. In the following chapters, and especially in Chapter Seven, I explore what I term the "apostolic self-understanding" which undergirds so many IVCF participants' relations with non-Christians in North America and elsewhere.

Throughout this dissertation, but especially in the next chapter, I explore the system of body and spoken language which has come to characterize the group, and conversely, those outside the group. In the above life histories, the meanings of words such as "spiritual walk," "Christian" as opposed to "non-Christian," a "personal relationship with God," "salvation," and "sin" may strike readers as being elements of an unfamiliar jargon. This perception is accurate: Steve, Gabrielle, Simon, Rebecca, and

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[60] Also evident in two of the above narratives is the role of sexual activity and sexual violence within (respectively) Rebecca's and Gabrielle's life histories. The prominent role of sex in these two narratives may reflect a reason people are attracted to evangelicalism: it provides other-worldly forgiveness and discipline for one's sexual excesses and comfort for one's sexual woundedness. Two men (Oliver and Lewis, whom I introduce in subsequent chapters) also spoke of traumatic sexual experiences as inspirations to become or continue to be Christians.

all of the other IVCF members whom I have come to know, employ a set of well-defined spoken and acted rhetorical signs, some of which are more generically derived from their extra-curricular evangelical communities, but some of which also seem to be unique to the IVCF. Staples and Mauss (1987) claim that rhetoric is often used as a tool to effect personal self-transformation. The role words such as "Christian" play in this process will be explored in detail in the next chapter, which seeks to elucidate the IVCF's distinctive rhetorical signs and the larger semiotic system underlying them.[61]

One of the most conspicuous features of IVCF students' life history narratives is the prevalence of what might be termed the discourse of psycho-spiritual bifurcation. This discourse is also evident in the four narratives I have explored in this chapter. With the exception of Simon, these students spoke of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the evangelical community as helping them to cease, for Gabrielle and Rebecca, leading "double lives," and for Steve, being "spiritually two faced." Charles Strozier (1994) writes that

> The most general psychological observation about fundamentalists[62] one can make is that they demonstrate inner divisions that find expression in their beliefs.

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[61] Ethnographer Susan Harding (1987; 1990; 1992) illustrates both what she describes as the biblical rhythm (1987) underlying evangelical styles of communicating the gospel and the biblical subtext and motifs evident in evangelical narratives. Since biblical stories have played a role in most IVCF members' lives, biblical themes emerge frequently in these students' life histories and my own conversations with them. Although the Bible is not the focus of this dissertation, readers may be able to discern the connection between these students' comments and issues and stories rooted in the Bible.

[62] Strozier's use of the word "fundamentalist" is very broad and would include almost every IVCF student I have met.

All fundamentalists I met described their personal narratives as broken in some basic way. Before rebirth in Christ they described their lives as unfulfilled, unhappy, and usually evil. Their stories were discontinuous and full of trauma; faith healed them. That moment of finding a "personal relationship with the Lord," as they put it, was the great divide in their lives (Strozier 1994:42).

Strozier notes that for those who became Christians after their childhood, the divergence between their former lives and, as IVCF students sometimes say, their "new life in Christ," is often construed as categorical (Strozier 1994:43; cf. Harding 1992:63). Hence, Steve and Rebecca interpret their transformations, or turnings to have altered and elevated their spiritual essences in a dramatic manner.

However, even those who became Christians early in their lives often remember the moment of conversion as exerting a profound influence on their lives. Similarly, many of these students point to their teenage "second conversions"[63] as being virtually as significant as the moment they originally and officially became Christians. Whether one is born into the faith as Simon was, chooses at a young age to enter the faith as Gabrielle did, or has life-altering conversion experiences as Steve and Rebecca did, one is a Christian by virtue of one's will to initiate a relationship with Christ. For IVCF students, conversion involves a process of personal reorientation in pursuit of what ethnographer Salvatore Cucchiari describes as "more integrative systems of meaning, personal autonomy and moral responsibility" (Cucchiari 1988:418; cf. Snow and

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[63] See, for examples, Simon's more mature adolescent re-appropriation of his faith, and Gabrielle's accounts of the liberating effects of joining her Highbury friends at their school and of the support of her evangelical therapist. Many other older, or "cradle" Christians have described similar turnings in their teenage years when they grasped on a different level the meaning of their faith.

Machalek 1984:170). In some cases a second conversion is required for assurance that faith is more than a function of family tradition or adolescent needs; but in practically all cases, IVCF members describe having made conscious decisions to forsake one life in favour of another.

Once one begins to analyze both the conversion experiences described by these students and the larger biographical re-organizations which flow from these re-births, one quickly becomes mired in a basic social scientific dilemma. Some examples should illustrate this problem. Gabrielle's description of the intimate relationship between her own conversion and that of her father seems to suggest that she was partially motivated to become a Christian because she wanted to participate in the new endeavour with which her beloved father was so passionately engaged. It would be possible and interesting to offer a Freudian, or more generally, psychoanalytical interpretation of Gabrielle's relationship with her father and its role in her conversion. For Steve, the fact that his family was emotionally distant, authoritarian and uninterested in addressing his existential questions seems to have played a significant role in his desire to become a Christian: through this new community he could find emotional support, achieve self-actualization, absorb an encompassing and ethnically non-specific theological and cosmological framework, and have an opportunity to participate in leadership. Rebecca seems to have required the imposition of binding rules and mores from an authoritative transcendent source, a source which could control her sensual appetites and need to be accepted, and forgive her sins. And finally, Simon's wish to participate fully in his family's and his community's religious life may have prompted him both to become a Christian when he

was five years old and then (more memorably) to re-appropriate his faith between his sixteenth and seventeenth years. The former turning secured the love of his parents while the latter commitment secured his self-definition as a mature Christian and a *bona fide* member of the wider evangelical community.

When I ask IVCF students what led to their conversion(s), I usually hear two distinct explanations (not always in this order): first, these students speak of their shallow, unsatisfying if not simply desperate pre-Christian lives. Second, students also speak of the role of the Holy Spirit (or Christ) in drawing them to God. When asked to explain the relationship between their pre-Christian psycho-social conditions and the Holy Spirit, students normally explain that the Holy Spirit used their existing predicament to draw them to God. If I suggested either to Gabrielle that her "real" motivation for becoming a Christian was to secure the love of her father; or to Steve that his "real" motivation was to find a supportive alternative family in which his personal gifts would be welcomed and his concerns about mortality would be resolved, both students would be puzzled. On the one hand Steve and Gabrielle would agree that becoming a Christian greatly improved their personal lives. On the other hand, they would suggest that I had underestimated their autonomy and the role of the Holy Spirit in their conversions. For IVCF students like Steve and Gabrielle, any interpretation of conversion which restricts itself to psychological or social explanations neglects the more pivotal and irreducible divine element.[64]

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[64] During the two years I have known Steve, I have heard his "testimony," or story of his conversion, eight or nine times. I have heard two distinct versions. In one version, Steve emphasizes the active role of the Holy Spirit in directing Steve towards

One might argue plausibly that these students' searches for "new lives in Christ" are expressions of the basic existential quest for meaning and purpose which might have been satisfied in other ways such as converting to Buddhism or Islam, or devoting their lives to a political movement. However, almost none of the students I met would accept the religious relativism implicit in the previous sentence. For all but one of the sixty IVCF participants I interviewed, the choice to become a Christian is absolutely and universally required for a truly fulfilled life and a desirable afterlife. However, as a social scientist I cannot even begin to determine either whether the God to whom IVCF students are so devoted exists or whether the Holy Spirit actually participated in these students' conversions.

I do not mean reductively to dismiss these students' shared belief that their turnings were influenced by or led them into intimate contact with God. But there are limits to the sort of study I am conducting. I am not content to enclose these students' conversions in a mysterious "black box" (Cucchiari 1988:417), and focus only on the consequences of such enigmatic processes. I can interpret or translate for non-Christians what I think these believers mean when they speak of salvation, conversion, faith, etc.

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a certainty that God loves him and life has meaning. However, on other occasions, Steve tells another story in which he describes himself as a searcher who was not satisfied with the uncritical materialism of his non-Christian peers. Then Steve meets an evangelical friend who supplies convincing philosophical answers to virtually all of Steve's questions. Neither God nor the Holy Spirit is actively involved in this narrative. Rather, it is by the rational strength of the his friend's answers that Steve decides to become a Christian. During a long and intimate conversation in Lithuania, I brought up the difference between these two stories. Steve explained that the exclusion of the Holy Spirit in the second version was purely accidental. However, the styles and contents of the stories are quite different, possibly suggesting that Steve may alter his testimony depending on the size and religious affiliations of his audience.

And I can also relate that from an emic or believer's viewpoint, becoming a Christian decreases these students' alienation from God. As well, from an etic or outsider's perspective, I can posit that conversion also satisfies these students' psycho-social needs, such as belonging to a group, possessing an exclusive truth, and being directed by an established moral model.[65] Nevertheless, I will not subsume IVCF participants' (emic) postulations of the ontological independence of God and the veracity of the Bible under the common (etic) social scientific postulation of God and the Bible as symbolic fulfilments of essentially psycho-social needs. Clearly this study must ultimately propose a social scientific (rather than a theological) interpretation. However, I am inclined to allow the evangelical and social scientific truth claims to co-exist, albeit distinctly and uneasily, throughout this dissertation.

As I outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the life history method is an inherently "collaborative venture" (Langness and Frank 1985:61). In choosing which portions of the transcripts of our conversations to include, and when to interrupt the voices of my interlocutor to paraphrase or make theoretical observations, I have moulded these narratives into concise packages which serve as introductions to four individuals.[66] In so doing, I have of necessity omitted many details from these accounts. As Crapanzano argues, this "collaborative venture" probably reveals as much about the

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[65] For many students, this second assertion could also be made from an emic point of view, since these members would agree that conversion also inevitably strengthens or at least clarifies one's relationships with all individuals and institutions.

[66] See Behar (1993:19) for a discussion of the way life history ethnographers "snip" and "sew together" elements of an individual's life so they can be understood and heard as never before.

writer as it does about his or her subjects.[67] Nevertheless, ethnography is, or at least aims to be, more than an anthropologist's autobiography in disguise. Rather, my presence in these life histories is intended at least to problematize if not shatter what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes as "the illusion that nothing [stands] between the reader and the subject, that one [is] in the presence of a culture authoring its own text" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989:130). I am present in these life histories, but respectfully, and reflexively.

Most importantly, the four histories in this chapter are intended to remind the reader that the broader arguments I advance in subsequent chapters emerge out of my experiences with real people who wrestle with and wonder about the issues I explore. I hope I have been able to depict Simon, Gabrielle, Rebecca and Steve in such a way as to convey some of the complexities of their personalities and origins and to make these four individuals seem, as much as possible, familiar.

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[67] See Crapanzano (1980:139) for a discussion of this reflexive element of fieldwork. He writes: "Fieldwork must be understood within its temporal dimensions as a process of continual discovery and self-discovery. There is considerable truth in Paul Ricoeur's involuted definition... of the hermeneutic as 'the comprehension of self by the detour of the comprehension of the other.'"

Chapter Three

IVCF Rhetoric

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

Among orthodox Protestants, and especially among fundamentalists, it is the Word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, written, spoken, heard, and read, that converts the unbeliever.... It is the Word of God, the gospel, and believers would add, the Holy Spirit, God himself, that converts, that "changes the heart." We cannot understand Fundamental Baptist conversion by looking only at what causes a person to listen to the gospel; the causes are innumerable. We must listen too, and we must explore the consequences of listening (Harding 1987: 168).

You know, everyone in this country says they're Christians, but very few actually are. We talked about this whole thing in my Small Group. We tried to come up with a different word, like "believers," or "born agains," and I think these are maybe better. At least they're a way to separate ourselves from all the people who just say they're Christians but don't have a personal relationship with Christ (Denise, from fieldnotes).

Anthropologist James Clifford asserts that "the return of rhetoric to an important place in many fields of study... has made possible a detailed anatomy of conventional expressive modes." This new focus on rhetoric, Clifford continues, "is less about how to speak well than about how to speak at all, and to act meaningfully, in a world of public cultural symbols" (Clifford 1986:10; cf. Fernandez 1974; 1991). Even when groups use the same official language as the mainstream culture in which they exist, a

distinctive pattern of communication usually emerges within each group. In various ways this new pattern separates the group's members from non-members. This pattern of speech is often unique in terms of its characteristic intonation (cf. Tedlock 1983). Or, a group may distinguish itself through the rhetorical medium of song by virtue of the use of archaic language, as in the case of Roman Catholic monastic chanting, or through the employment of slang, as in the case of rap music.[68]

As anthropologist James Fernandez has observed, a sensitivity to local figures of speech is necessary for any good ethnography (Fernandez 1974:119). The most obvious distinguishing feature of a group's mode of communication is the array of insider's words -- for example, words such as "outing" among gays and lesbians, "fly" among young inner city African-American men, and "away" among residents of Prince Edward Island.[69] These words are not always incomprehensible to people outside of the group -- I am neither a homosexual nor an African-American nor an Islander, but I know what many of these group-specific terms mean. However, these terms originate in local communities and have a special significance within them that casual observers cannot always fully appreciate. In this chapter I introduce and interpret the IVCF's insider words, phrases and gestures and the broader rhetorical and social contexts which give these phenomena their meanings. However, my experiences with non-IVCF evangelicals

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[68] See Sutton (1980) for an account of the role of speech, chant, and song in a Southern Baptist church.

[69] "Outing" refers to the act of exposing another person's homosexual orientation without this person's consent. "Fly" means beautiful or sexy within the context of African American youth culture. "Away" is a term Islanders use to refer to all places except Prince Edward Island.

lead me to believe that the majority of IVCF rhetoric is shared by believers in the wider evangelical community. Therefore, the strategies manifested in IVCF students' uses of distinctive rhetoric may shed some light on the role of the same or similar terms and gestures in North American evangelicalism in general.

Instead of understanding expressions of distinctive rhetoric as disconnected episodes, it is more plausible to interpret them as elements of complex "performances," which folklorist Deborah Kapchan defines as "patterns of behaviour, ways of speaking and manners of bodily comportment whose repetition situates actors in time and space, structuring individual and group identities" (Kapchan 1995:479; cf. Bauman 1992; Narayan 1989:35; Titon 1988:192; Toelken 1979:93-117). By using the word performances, I do not mean to suggest that IVCF participants are "merely" acting, or pretending to believe or feel what they say they do. The paradigm which undergirds the present analysis follows anthropologist Victor Turner (1969; 1974) and conceives of social life as a drama with all individuals as actors. This model does not, however, dismiss the performers or their convictions as insincere. Rather, it suggests that we should pay close attention to the ways a person's surroundings and self-understanding combine so that he or she feels compelled or inspired to assume a metaphorical role in an unfolding play, and thus is to some extent bound by a script. IVCF rhetorical performances clearly manifest the students' religious sensibilities and the social networks

in which these individuals find themselves. Construing these students as performers simply reminds us of the drama's constructed and dynamic nature.[70]

While much of intra-IVCF communication strikes me as being what Kapchan calls "habitual practices," the more public rhetorical expressions (such as those rhetorical conventions evident at Large and Small Group meetings) fall into the category she describes as "heightened performances," or "stylistically marked expressions of otherness, lifting the level of habitual behaviour and entering alternate, often ritualized or ludic, interpretive frames wherein different rules apply" (Kapchan 1995:479). During such performances, performers are aware (albeit to varying degrees) of the non-habitual and dramatic nature of their actions and words. In addition, explicitly performance-directed rhetoric is clearly evidenced by IVCF students when they address non-Christians about Christianity or spirituality in general. This topic will be discussed more fully in the chapter on witnessing (Chapter Seven)

While it is tempting to emphasize the theological references and subtexts inherent in religious language, in most religious contexts believers rarely speak about or strictly because of theological ideas *per se*. The theological substructure of religious language

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[70] For example, in an effort to problematize the conventional understandings of fundamentalists as simple-minded hillbillies, anthropologist Susan Harding writes that "Fundamentalists create themselves through their own cultural practices, but not exactly as they please. They are also constituted by modern discursive practices, an apparatus of thought that presents itself in the form of popular 'stereotypes,' media 'images,' and academic 'knowledge'" (Harding 1991:373). See Kapchan (1995:482) for a consideration of the ambiguous role of genre in performances. See Hanks (1987) for a study of the way colonial Mayans blended the discursive genres characteristic of Mayan and Spanish cultures. Such a process may be understood as a mixture of two sets of dramatic role expectations and narrative themes, the inclusion of two plays in one.

is an important component of any consideration of religious rhetoric. But religious language consists not simply of speech acts which communicate prior and more important ideas.[71] Rather, religious utterances (including speaking, praying and singing) are themselves unique acts or commitments (Bloch 1989:37; Titon 1988:195; cf. Sutton 1980) which may bear only a slight family resemblance to the beliefs, ideas, or intentions on which such acts are supposedly ultimately "based." In other words, more important (at least in the present study) than the cognitive processes at work behind or prior to these rhetorical expressions (cf. Fernandez 1974) is the cultural context within which such utterances are made and are expected (by the speakers) to make sense.

The rhetorical practices associated with conservative Protestant groups such as the IVCF represent conspicuous manifestations of specialized rhetoric. For example, when one IVCF member said in the context of a Small Group meeting I attended, that "We should let God lead and not try to go off on our own, because if we let God lead, then he'll go ahead of us and prepare the way for us," this student was accomplishing more than simple communication of a religious belief. His assertion expressed a conviction he could be certain was shared by the rest of the group. This performance -- note how the final part of his sentence assumes a biblical tone (Harding 1992) -- distinguishes the student (to himself and his listeners, including myself) as an insider, an obedient "Christian."[72] Throughout my association with the IVCF I kept a list of similar spoken

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[71] Jean Comaroff makes an analogous observation with respect to the "implicit" counter-hegemonic discourses she studied in South Africa (Comaroff 1985:261).

[72] See Fernandez on the "mission of metaphor" to facilitate an individual's movements through what he calls "quality space" (Fernandez 1974:124).

and sung terms, phrases, idioms, and patterns of speech which struck me as either atypical for university students or central to IVCF participants' religious beliefs, moral standards, and relationships with their non-Christian peers.[73] Since numerous elements on this list embody the group's central religious values and organizing principles, a consideration of IVCF students' rhetorical practices should be an effective means of understanding these believers.

Just as there are ways of determining good and bad performances in the theatre, so too are IVCF rhetorical presentations subject to evaluation, often by the performers themselves. As we shall see, IVCF rhetoric caters to both the fortress and bridge strategies. The standards of evaluation do not, therefore, require all performances to be pure representations of either strategy.[74] The criteria for rhetorical authenticity are much more subtle than discursive purity.

One of ethnographer Dennis Tedlock's interlocutors describes a Zuni criterion for a good or true performance. Speaking about a "good" or "true" story, Andrew says "You're right with that story, like you were in it. Some guys, the way they tell it, it seems like they were really in it" (Tedlock 1983:166).[75] Likewise, the main IVCF criterion for a good story or a good witnessing narrative is, similarly, that the teller is

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[73] Evangelical author Paul Little quotes linguist Eugene Nida as describing these terms and practices as "Protestant Latin" (Nida in Little 1982:82).

[74] Kapchan writes that "Indeed, performance genres may be in deliberate and flagrant breach of generic convention, mixing frames and blurring boundaries so that tradition and authority are put into question and redefined" (1995:482).

[75] Tedlock also discusses the criteria of the proper use of gestures, onomatopoeia and the linking of the story to the context of its telling (Tedlock 1983:166).

credibly "in" the story, and that the auditor may be able to place him or herself "in" it as well (cf. Harding 1987). This IVCF criterion might be described as "semiotic sincerity," or perhaps "semiotic plenitude." One must be sincerely "in" one's words; but the words must also come across as being sufficiently authentic to enter the listener's mind. In contrast to this ideal, several students provided me with rhetorical examples illustrating the absence of semiotic plenitude. For example, students use the term "Christianese" to describe a semiotically insincere use of their rhetoric in which the terms are banal or opaque to both outsiders and participants.[76] For example, during a conversation about God's plan for her life, Candace reiterated a motto I had heard several times during interviews. She said: "I'll do my best. God will do the rest," and then stopped abruptly. She continued, "*Oooh,* sorry. That was Christianese. I try not to talk like that, but it's just the way I think sometimes." As soon as Candace recognized that her thoughts were expressed in the form of a rhyming slogan, and thus might be perceived by me as artificial, she became immediately self-critical. She followed her apology with a lengthy elaboration of the intellectual content of the saying.

According to ethnographer Jeff Todd Titon, the language unique to a particular religious group consists not merely of a body of knowledge about God, but a body of lore (Titon 1988:205; cf. Narayan 1989). Through learning lore, one acquires "know-how": one learns not simply about the nature of God, but primarily about *how to get and stay in a relationship* with God. To extend the theatrical imagery above, one acquires

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[76] From this indifferent use of language we derive the common refrain: "Oh, that was just rhetorical," meaning the words uttered are obvious and on some level unnecessary.

rhetoric not simply to know *about* one's fellow performers or the divine playwright, but to know *how* to relate to them. By using the rhetoric of a religious group earnestly and correctly, one by definition "draws closer to God." As Titon suggests, "to know this language is to know God" (Titon 1988:205).

Fernandez (1974) argues that the language used in explicitly religious contexts is not usually designed merely to express ideas and communicate personal experiences. Whether the words in question are used within the group to discuss important issues, or more selectively in the context of a member's conversation with an individual from outside the group, this rhetoric is laden with metaphors and symbols which convey meaning and condition the possible interpretations a participant in the conversation might make. In other words, rhetoric opens up and closes off potential interpretations. For example, when one IVCF participant says to another: "Last year I was saved and it changed my life," this statement transmits specific information within the limitations inherent in this common evangelical statement. The possible meanings of this sentence are limited by the conviction (that the evangelical speaker can assume is shared by most evangelical listeners) that being "saved" cannot refer to an experience one can have without Christ (cf. Bloch 1989:29). People are theoretically free to reject the limitations imposed by their group's language. However, most of us rarely choose to exercise this freedom (Fernandez 1974:132; cf. Sutton 1980). Most of us enter (at birth or later voluntarily) a set of rhetorical practices which have already been established; and by and large we gradually accept these practices even though we might also subtly adapt them to our personal needs (Bloch 1989; Hanks 1987; Kapchan 1995). For example, in

response to the hypothetical statement above, an auditor might choose to interpret the notion of salvation as something available outside of Christianity. He or she could reply: "That's great. A friend of mine experienced the same sort of thing when he became a Muslim." But IVCF rhetoric has evolved to facilitate and condition a particular sort of discussion about faith. As loyal advocates of the beliefs and values reflected and sustained by IVCF rhetoric, in the example provided above, other IVCF members would quickly deploy their rhetorical tools to demonstrate to this nonconformist that the Bible clearly limits salvation to Christ; and normally this person would be brought back into the thought-world in which the definition of salvation is well-established and restricted to Christianity.

Although there is considerable diversity when it comes to the theological and moral beliefs held *abstractly* by IVCF students on religious issues,[77] I observed only minor differences between the ways members *actually* expressed themselves (in the contexts of interviews, prayers, and Small and Large Group events). In his study of a Primitive Baptist church, Brett Sutton observes that while worshippers are encouraged to do whatever the Holy Spirit leads them to do, their subsequent conduct and speech invariably fall squarely within the traditions established within the church for "normal"

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[77] For example, IVCF members differ with respect to their views on speaking in tongues, the role of women in the church and home, the status of other religions, drinking, the date of Christ's return, and the age of the earth. Sometimes these differences create significant tensions within the group. One former member told me that he "just couldn't handle the way they talked about Satan and homosexuals." Another member, Ron, a first year student who is unsure if he wants to remain a part of the group, said: "Sometimes I get really frustrated with IV people. Sometimes I think they're all a bunch of hypocrites -- you know, they say one thing and do another. If I leave it'll be because of that."

behaviour (Sutton 1980:172). Similarly, near the beginning of most large IVCF events, participants are encouraged to express themselves in the manner to which they are accustomed (and to which the Holy Spirit leads them). However, subsequent behaviour at IVCF events also conforms to narrow standards of decorum.[78] As in the Primitive Baptist setting, neither the Holy Spirit nor IVCF participants seem inclined to transgress the implicit expressive conventions of the group.

The following two examples demonstrate the constraining function of IVCF rhetoric. During one of our conversations, Martina, a fourth year Arts and Science student with IVCF Executive Committee experience, warned me that she had a very different understanding of Satan from that of other IVCF members. However, when she began to share this view with me, she used the same expressions, sentences, and illustrations as most other participants. The second example is set in Lithuania, where Jocelyn, a second year Social Work student was reluctant to share her "testimony" (her account of her conversion) with the other team members or the Lithuanians because she believed that her experience of "coming to Christ" was not only different from but also not respected by the majority of IVCF members.[79] Since I had interviewed her at length months before the 1996 mission, I was aware of these differences and understood

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[78] However, there remain some unresolved differences of opinion with respect to worship styles. Some IVCF participants (for example, those influenced by the charismatic movement) raise their hands in the air and close their eyes during worship, while others (especially those from (non-charismatic) fundamentalist churches) have told me they are not comfortable with this practice.

[79] Specifically, she belongs to the minority of IVCF students who cannot recall the moment at which they became Christians.

her hesitation. When she finally shared her testimony with the Lithuanian students and the mission team, however, the structure, style and content of her narrative were identical to the testimonies of the other team members, and bore little resemblance to what she had told me months earlier.[80]

The IVCF's official openness to a variety of forms of evangelical rhetoric is a deliberate attempt not to exacerbate the divisions between and within the denominations represented by its members.[81] The fact that this formal tolerance led neither to deeply idiosyncratic interpretations of religious experience nor to immoderate public outbursts during thirteen months I conducted fieldwork seems to confirm John Stackhouse's assertion that the IVCF participates in the "transdenominational evangelicalism" (Stackhouse 1993:12) rooted in the common ground of Canadian conservative Protestantism.[82] The virtual homogeneity of IVCF rhetoric seems to suggest that the

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[80] See folklorist Elaine Lawless's article for a discussion of the nearly uniform and "formulaic" (1988:13) rhetorical performances of the Pentecostals she studied.

[81] Carla, the official IVCF Staff Worker, said "We want to make sure students are learning about Christianity, not "churchianity."

[82] I have never, for example, witnessed any IVCF member being "slain in the spirit," which often involves falling down, convulsing, laughing, making animal sounds, or speaking in tongues. This behaviour is associated with burgeoning charismatic groups such as the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. In Lithuania I observed tongue-speaking at close range when I was alone with four Lithuanian evangelical students who broke into tongues in the middle of a unison Lithuanian prayer. Frankly, I was terrified until I realized what was happening -- and even then I could not seem to regain my composure or return to my proverbial ethnographic comfort zone.

Contemporary Pentecostalism has its historical roots in California. Presently, this tradition is the largest and most visible exemplar of the charismatic movement. See Cox (1995) for a history of this phenomenon. Cox argues that episodes of speaking in tongues, or glossolalia, represent the failure of ordinary spoken language to express ecstatic experience (Cox 1995:91). Glossolalia expresses the "language of the heart," the language beyond language (Cox 1995:120). Since the rise of the "Toronto Blessing,"

group's rhetorical norms mitigate against inter- and intra-denominational tensions and idiosyncratic religiosity.

Ethnographers must avoid at least two intellectual traps when interpreting the unique *argot* of the group they are studying. The first is a tendency toward strictly textual criticism. Titon argues that "The meaning of language performed orally... is often so context-bound that attempts to work primarily from the transcribed texts are misguided" (Titon 1988:12; cf. Kapchan 1995:480). Titon adds that when dealing with language in the context of music, the narrow application of literary criticism to songs is particularly inappropriate because the meaning of a song may have little to do with its lyrics. For the IVCF, it is primarily during singing that Durkheim's collective "effervescence," (Durkheim 1973:181) the communal enthusiasm which binds a group together and enshrines (and often creates) many of its values, is the most striking.[83] "You cannot argue with a song," Bloch writes (Bloch 1989:37), underscoring the primarily non-logical essence of songs and singing.[84] One may not be able to argue

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the gift of tongues has become a topic of debate for IVCF students. Several members of the IVCF (not all of whom would consider themselves charismatic) have experienced this gift of the Holy Spirit; this gift, however, is not given (or is not accepted) at IVCF events. Although I know that a few of the group leaders regularly pray in tongues, this fact is not widely known in the chapter. Glossolalia would be considered another form of IVCF rhetoric if not for the secrecy which surrounds its (probably limited) practice in the group. Speaking in tongues is still so controversial that it is kept at the margins of IVCF rhetoric.

[83] Turner's *communitas*, an "unstructured... and relatively undifferentiated... community... of equal individuals," (Turner 1969:96) is also most clearly manifested during sung worship.

[84] For example, "Sin Jacket," one of the skits performed by the IVCF in Lithuania, is set to the popular 1980s rap song "Can't Touch This," performed by M.C. Hammer. In the song, Hammer sings: "You can't touch [compare yourself to] this [Hammer]," and

with a song, but this statement does not mean that one must ignore the messages

implicitly and explicitly encoded in the song's lyrics. During this and other chapters, in

order to support the arguments I am making, I discuss the lyrics of songs sung during

IVCF events. I hope, however, to avoid an excessive preoccupation with or reliance on

the literal meaning of the songs.

The second difficulty in interpreting performances is the more traditional

temptation to treat the rhetorical practices of a group of people as simple and secondary

functions of the group's values, structure, or ideological commitments, and worthy of

study only once all the truly important research has been completed. Titon argues that

even the serious considerations of religious language often ignore its crucial performative

elements and focus instead on the way language reflects philosophy, poetry, or theology

(Titon 1988:192). In this chapter I attempt to avoid this problem as I depict the two

major forms of rhetoric apparent in the forms of speaking, praying and singing which are

characteristic of the McMaster IVCF.

In her 1987 text, based on fieldwork among fundamentalist Baptists in the United

States, anthropologist Susan Harding proposes an explanation of evangelical rhetoric

which is both helpful and problematic for a study of the McMaster IVCF. Harding's

main thesis is that fundamentalist rhetoric insinuates itself into the listener's "subliminal

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brags about his greatness. The dramatic use of this song, on the other hand, seeks to
communicate the (transformed) message that we "can't [should not] touch this [sin]," as
well as Christ's sacrifice for our failure to heed God's demands. In fact, only the title
of the song is related to the skit's message. None of the members of the mission team
seemed to be aware of the contradiction between the ego-centric lyrics of the song and
the theo-centric message they were trying to convey in the drama.

mind" in the form of "a biblical rhythm of alternatives, a vibrating template" (Harding 1987:179) which strongly encourages believers to understand their world in sharply dualistic terms: one is either saved or damned, heaven- or hell-bound (Harding 1987:171; cf. Strozier 1994). The more one uses and hears this rhetoric, the more thoroughly it becomes integrated into one's self-understanding, and the more completely it disengages one from one's previous non-Christian lifestyle. This highly specialized rhetoric helps evangelicals construe their experience of the world in a manner which emphasizes the essential antagonism between their values and practices and those of a fallen world.[85] Thus, their language encourages them to embrace the classical Christian entreaty to be in but not of the world.

Two immediate limitations arise in attempting to use Harding's model in the present study. First, her focus is on the rhetoric associated with the attempt to convert or "witness to" non-Christians. Thus, one would expect the rhetoric she studies to reflect the goal-oriented missionary context of its deployment. However, the rhetoric she describes is also evident among post-conversion IVCF participants. The second possible limit to the usefulness of Harding's model for this study is that her work concerns a thoroughly fundamentalist group, whereas the IVCF includes both fundamentalists and evangelicals. However, members of these two wings of the IVCF are sufficiently similar in their religious outlook and use of language that Harding's insights can be applied to the group as a whole.

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[85] As I outlined in Chapter One and Two, IVCF members almost all spoke of their pre-conversion or, as they would say, "non-Christian" lives as categorically different than and overwhelmingly inferior to their present Christian lives.

A study of rhetoric rarely involves the consideration of a single word in isolation. For the most part, what follows is a necessarily selective reflection on conversations or public performances in which I emphasize particular words or manners of speaking. My present task is to provide the reader with a brief account and demonstration of the spectrum of IVCF rhetoric. This account should prepare the reader to interpret other examples of rhetoric as they appear throughout this ethnography.

Fortress Rhetoric

Harding's model describes rhetoric which corresponds with what I described in Chapter One as the "fortress" approach to the non-Christian world. This strategy allows participants to repel what one older IVCF student, Gordon, described as "the onslaught of secularization." In this strategy the perforations in the "selectively permeable membrane" between the secular ethos and that of the evangelical world are fully or almost fully constricted. Rhetoric in this scheme is designed to divide IVCF participants from the secular *milieu*, normally by framing the differences between these two sub-cultures in sharply dualistic terms with the evangelical ethos portrayed as being under seige by the hegemonic ideology of secularism.[86]

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[86] Related to the study of rhetoric is the analysis of the narratives and myths groups use to "tell their stories." Donald Heinz writes that the American "New Christian Right," the de-centralized movement of conservative activist evangelicals and fundamentalists, is engaged in establishing a "counter mythology" to what they see as the prevailing narrative of "secular humanism" (Heinz 1983:133).

An examination of particular instances of fortress rhetoric will elucidate these oral practices and the antagonistic dualism which underlies them. The examples of rhetoric I have selected are arrayed on a continuum, with some terms nearer what I call the "active divisive" end, and others closer to the "passive divisive" end.

On the "passive divisive" side of the continuum are terms and concepts such as: discipling, angels, prayer, visions, trinity, free will, and repentance. Because terms in this category are also employed by some members of other Christian denominations, these words are not deployed in an explicitly defensive manner by the IVCF.[87] Therefore, such examples may not appear to be examples of fortress rhetoric. However, according to IVCF students, the non-Christian use of these terms lacks the crucial legitimating framework of a personal relationship with Christ and a belief in the authority of the Bible. As well, students indicated to me a variety of degrees of awareness and discomfort that the rhetoric used to describe their most cherished beliefs is considered obsolete or quaint by most of their peers. Consequently, when members use these terms on the McMaster campus, it is usually in the safe context of an IVCF event. Moreover, students are well aware that the same room which houses occasional IVCF discussions about Creation Science and submission to God could be at other times the setting for

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[87] These concepts and terms may also be too philosophically dense to be used as regular elements of intra- or extra-IVCF rhetoric. Thus these terms are of little explicit rhetorical "use" to students who are, on the whole, not interested in theology as such. For example, the Friday Lunch meetings feature usually academic speakers who address a variety of theological and moral topics. Of all regular IVCF events, these meetings attract the smallest number of participants.

McMaster-sanctioned classes on evolution or humanistic psychology. This reminds IVCF members that they are not in entirely friendly territory.

In the middle of the continuum I have described are more active terms employed to separate IVCF students and other evangelicals I have met from non-Christians. A great deal can be learned about the McMaster chapter's theology and social structure by the way its members use the common evangelical active-divisive terms "saved" and "salvation." During the sixty interviews I conducted, participants spoke freely about salvation. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, approximately 85% of participants were able to describe (and some to name) either the day or the month of their salvations. Even though over two thirds of these conversions occurred before the participants were thirteen years old (and over half of these between the ages of four and eight), the events are invariably described as crucial turning points in the participants' lives.

In some cases the language used by IVCF members to describe salvation evokes the children they were when they were saved. In other cases, the experience is communicated in more mature terms. As Kirk, a first year Kinesiology student, described it,

> I was saved one night when I was twelve. After I finished playing Nintendo with my friend Doug, he just got out Revelations and read it to me. That scared me like crazy. That night I went home and prayed to God. I said 'Lord, I don't know you now, but my friend Doug does, and I want to be with him in heaven.' And from then on, it slowly affected my whole life.

Brenda, a first year Humanities student, said of her salvation,

> Oh yeah, I remember being saved. A pastor one day in church -- I was six -- told us that our parents' faith would not take us to heaven, that there were no guests allowed, if you know what I mean, and that really hit home. At that

moment, I felt a real weight lifted from me and I felt a peace I had never felt before. That was it.

Frank, a second year Kinesiology student told me that "When I was six I knelt beside my mom and became a Christian because I really knew that Christ died for me and that I didn't want to go to hell." I asked him what that experience meant to him, and he replied, "Well, as much as it can mean to a six year old. I mean, I was just a kid then -- what do you know when you're six? But I believe you can start with something small and build on it."

As Lewis, a third year student, recalls,

> Yeah, I guess I was saved around twenty. This is getting pretty personal, but [pause...] okay, I guess I can tell you. I was having an on-again off-again relationship with this woman. It all escalated until one night we just had this really bad sexual experience. I mean really bad. This sort of made me bottom out spiritually and in other ways. I had no idea what to do at first. Eventually I began to accept Christ and start to re-build myself.[88]

Once redemption is secured -- for most members, years before they entered university -- students understandably speak of this experience among themselves less frequently. Nonetheless, one of the main contexts in which they speak of being saved is when they offer their testimonies to an IVCF group or to a non-Christian (cf. Harding 1987).[89] As well, IVCF students may speak of their salvation in the context of a

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[88] Note the similarities between Lewis's account and those of Gabrielle and Rebecca in Chapter Two. For all three of these students, traumatic sexual experiences played major roles in their becoming Christians.

[89] In many formal IVCF group settings it is common to have at least one occasion in which the members of the group have an opportunity to share their testimonies. I witnessed several of these occasions. See Chapters Two and Seven for other discussions of testimonies.

general admission of their own wickedness and a celebration of God's goodness, as when

Frank included the following confession in a brief testimony he shared with a Large

Group meeting: "I mean, I can't believe it, you know, that God wanted to save a sinner

like me. Isn't that awesome?"

The "saving work of Christ" also constitutes one of the central elements of the

songs which many participants have sung for years at Bible camps, church services, and

IVCF events. Sociologist Nketia Kwabena illustrates the powerful emotional effects of

the "integration of the aural, kinesic, and the visual" in the context of group musical

worship (Kwabena 1989:112). An effective means of generating galvanizing collective

effervescence and celebrating their salvations is provided by IVCF songs such as

"Salvation," which includes the following lyrics:

> Salvation belongs to our God
> Who sits upon the throne
> And we the redeemed shall be strong
> In purpose and unity

More than simple descriptions of the spiritual status of IVCF students, the terms

"saved" and "salvation" function as wedges driven between IVCF participants and the

vast majority of non-Christians. The distinction between IVCF participants as "saved"

and non-Christians as "unsaved" (and thus also "damned") casts the latter in the dim light

of spiritual waywardness, if not futility. One day at the end of an engaging Small Group

discussion, the conversation turned toward the possibility -- supported only by me -- that

salvation of some sort might be available through non-Christian religions. As tensions

increased between myself and the other group members over the course of the discussion,

Oscar, a third year Psychology student tried, somewhat unsuccessfully, to put me at my ease. "Well, I don't think we have to believe that non-Christians are all bad and we are good," he said, smiling sweetly and shrugging his shoulders. "I mean, the only difference between me and you, Paul, is that I'm saved and you aren't. That's it."

Closest to the "active divisive" end of the IVCF's rhetorical continuum is a term which is central to the way IVCF members understand themselves and their relationships with their secular peers. Throughout this and the previous chapters, I have used "non-Christian" in the same ways members of the IVCF (and many other evangelicals) use it -- to denote the vast majority of individuals in our culture who do not have what evangelicals call a "personal relationship with Christ." According to recent survey data, approximately 80% of Canadians describe themselves as Christians of one variety or another (Bibby 1993:128; Rawlyk 1996). From the perspective of IVCF members, however, the numbers of "real" Christians who can be said to have a personal relationship with Christ are much lower. IVCF members are reluctant to make estimates about the number of real Christians in the general population; but when they do, these approximations are usually expressed in terms such as "very few," or "way less than what you'd think," or "I doubt it would be more than about 10%." Interestingly, although none of the members I interviewed indicated an awareness of social scientific studies of religion in Canada, the figure they normally quote is approximately the proportion of Canadians Bibby (1993:34) and Rawlyk (1996:8) estimate can be considered to be evangelicals.

During my fieldwork, only three IVCF members told me they try not to use the term "non-Christian."[90] Martina, a fourth year Arts and Science student echoed the other two women's comments when she said "I think ["non-Christians"] is a really good example of Christianese. I try to avoid using that word. I like what Clark [Pinnock: a professor at McMaster's Divinity College] says -- that non-Christians are really not-yet-Christians." The use of the inherently oppositional label "non-Christian" obviously reveals a great deal about the use of that even more central term, "Christian." Defining who is and is not a Christian is a sensitive issue for and among these students. For example, when I noticed that members of my Small Group commonly used the terms non-Christian and Christian in what seemed to me to be a fairly precise manner, I asked them to elaborate upon whom they would consider to be Christians. Jane, a third year Social Work student, said that she prefers to leave this judgement to God -- a reservation several students expressed when asked to determine if a particular person is a Christian. However, after this comment, Jane offered a definition which used behaviour as a major criterion. Describing her roommate, she said

> You know, this girl is totally into the United Church. She knows all about its history and theology and all of that. She goes to church sometimes, too. But still, she drinks and swears like a sailor and has sex and all of that sort of thing. I mean, is that Christian? But still, I try not to call her a non-Christian to her face.

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[90] The common denominators among this small number of interviewees are that they are women and that they are ideologically liberal. There may be more people who are reluctant to use this term. I did not ask this question in my interviews, but rather waited to hear if the participants would indicate explicitly or implicitly that they were uncomfortable with the word.

Representing a slightly more rigid position, Sean, a third year Kinesiology student, said "Yeah, well, I think my parents, for example, aren't Christians. I mean they go to church and that. But I'm not sure how much it means to them, or if they have a relationship with Christ. We don't talk about it, but I kind of doubt it." During the same Small Group discussion, Cindy, a Kinesiology graduate student from a Brethren background, said

> Well, I tend to take a hard line on this issue. I'll actually call them [non-Christians]. I mean, I don't necessarily call them this to their faces, but, like with my father, for example, even though he'd say he was Christian on a census form, I really don't think he is. I mean, it's not that he's a bad person or anything, but it all comes down to the issue of the relationship with Christ, and I know he doesn't have that, so it seems fine to think of him as a non-Christian. And he knows I think this, which makes things a little tense sometimes. I really worry about him and pray for him a lot.

One day in Lithuania I asked Denise, a first year student team member, whether her definition of Christian would include the elderly woman who sat behind us the previous day on the bus. The woman was evidently a devout Roman Catholic; she spent the two hour trip engrossed in a well worn manually typed devotional book while she held her rosary beads, prayed, smiled, and kissed the pictures of Mary.

"Well, she was a Catholic, right?" Denise asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Then no, I don't think she would be a Christian."

One of the Canadian mission team leaders overheard our conversation and politely (but with a tone of irritation in his voice) disagreed with Denise's assessment of the elderly woman's faith. "But how do you know she doesn't have a relationship

with Christ just because of the way she worships? How can you make this judgement without even talking to her?" he asked. Denise replied that she would consider the team member's opinion, but that she thought that some ways of worshipping, including the practices of the elderly woman, were overwhelming obstacles to a person's relationship with Christ.

Since its inception in Canada, the IVCF has wrestled with the spiritual status of Roman Catholicism.[91] Denise's comment reflects the anti-Catholic tradition (and a common definitional boundary to what the term Christian signifies) inherent in the IVCF and Canadian evangelicalism in general. In the "debriefing" session the day after my conversation with Denise in Lithuania, we addressed the anti-Catholicism inherent in the assumption that Catholics are by definition non-Christians. The group leaders took pains to remind the team that Lithuanian Catholics are not necessarily non-Christians. The group appeared to accept this exhortation without contestation; but throughout the month I continued to hear team members describe a Lithuanian by saying, for example, "Well, no, he's not a Christian. He's a Catholic."

At McMaster, the Small Group I joined was organized as a study group to read Paul Little's popular guide to evangelism, *How to Give Away Your Faith* (1966;

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[91] Stackhouse describes the difficult debates on the issue of whether Roman Catholics could be members of the IVCF, and if so, whether they could serve on the staff (Stackhouse 1993:138-142; cf. Donald 1991). The decisions of the national IVCF Board of Directors "maintained the traditional Protestant evangelical character of IVCF" and made it clear that Catholics were not welcome to serve as staff members (Stackhouse 1993:142). However, because the IVCF has historically always welcomed as student members anyone in agreement with its Basis of Faith and Statement of Purposes (which are not explicitly anti-Catholic), in principle, Catholic students may join the movement and retain their faith.

expanded 1988). Little quotes an old evangelical adage: "Going to church no more makes you a Christian than going into a garage makes you an automobile" (Little 1988:88). At one Small Group meeting, Cindy augmented Little's aphorism by adding another version: "Going to church no more makes you a Christian than going into McDonald's makes you a hamburger," she said.

These sayings were quoted as if they were self-evident truths; the discussion continued without pausing to reflect on them. However, there was something puzzling to me about the second parts of these two adages. After the meeting I asked two of the members to explain why the words "automobile" and "hamburger" concluded these metaphors, rather than, for example, "mechanic" and "cook." Taking a deliberately provocative stance, I argued that it was just as improbable that one would instantly become a mechanic or a cook upon entering either one of these businesses than that one would become an automobile or a hamburger. Cindy replied that the words automobile and hamburger were probably used because cars and food are the things most commonly associated with garages and McDonalds' restaurants. While this explanation is certainly plausible, I think these amusing metaphors also bespeak common evangelical beliefs about what it means to be and become a Christian. For these students, being a Christian is not something one simply "does"; nor is it a matter of adopting a role, as a person does who becomes a mechanic or a cook. Fernandez suggests that metaphors such as those implied in these two sayings are especially well-suited as vehicles for the "transformation or transcendence of [a given] state" (Fernandez 1974:131). The metaphorically-mediated transformation entailed in becoming a Christian represents a

total existential change, just as profound as the metamorphoses that would be required

by a person becoming an automobile in the first aphorism and a hamburger in the second

one. Little's analogy captures the perceived and literally essential difference between

Christians and non-Christians. However, although the chasm between Christians and

non-Christians is wide and deep, it is not untraversable. The unsaved "not-yet-

Christians" have equal access to their own salvations, if they but seek it.

In the epigraph to this chapter Denise expresses her wish for other words to use

when describing her faith. "Christian," she knows, is a word which many people apply

to themselves, in her view, mistakenly. Her alternatives -- born agains, believers -- are

occasionally employed by IVCF members. But "Christian" and "non-Christian" remain

the self- and other-descriptors of choice among IVCF participants. These terms reflect

and more importantly, help create -- the spiritual fissure between IVCF students and their

non-Christian peers.

Bridging Rhetoric

Fortress rhetoric, the form of discourse outlined to this point in my discussion,

subtly or sometimes blatantly estranges IVCF students from their non-Christian peers.

In so doing, it fulfils Harding's thesis that evangelical rhetoric divides believers from

non-believers.[92] However, her model does not explain the second "bridging" form of

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[92] The fortress rhetoric I have described also supports Hammond's and Hunter's (1984) analysis of evangelical students on a secular campus.

rhetoric which I would suggest is central to the survival of evangelicals in officially secular institutions.

Unless evangelicals opt to become fundamentalist separatists (and very few do), they must interact with educational, governmental, and commercial institutions which are usually designed and staffed by non-Christians. How do evangelicals maintain their religious integrity in their associations with institutions and individuals espousing values and beliefs that many evangelicals consider bankrupt? One solution to this dilemma would be simply to maintain an exclusively evangelical frame of reference during all secular occasions, deploying in all interactions the specialized rhetoric used in evangelical churches. However, while most evangelicals believe that after their conversions they are the same redeemed person in all settings, most also consider it to be inappropriate explicitly to force their faith into every social interaction.[93] Evangelicals intuit (probably correctly, as far as I am concerned) that most non-Christians would view such a believer as a zealot.[94]

I would argue that bridging rhetoric complements the fortress language described in the previous section. Both rhetorical strategies enable IVCF participants to guard their religious integrity in a fallen world. There are two major types of bridging rhetoric.

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[93] I asked Steve, a third year Science student, if he thought that IVCF members lived two lives, one in the secular ethos and the other in the evangelical one. He replied "I wouldn't really say it was two lives. I'd say one life in two worlds." This division will be the focus of Chapter Four, on difference.

[94] The necessarily privatized role to which religion is relegated as a result of the evangelical desire to live peacefully among non-Christians is consistent with Bibby's findings (Bibby 1990; 1993).

First, as I have mentioned and as most IVCF participants accept, in their interactions with secular institutions, evangelicals conform to the rhetorical practices of the dominant group. For the most part, this does not present a problem, since IVCF members are not so naive to believe that the solemn and often biblical fortress language characteristic of the evangelical ethos would be appropriate or practical in the majority of secular contexts. However, the need to have a store of evangelically-acceptable language which IVCF members can employ in conversations with non-Christians has led students to adopt what I describe as a strategy of substitution. The best illustration of this strategy involves profanity.

University student life is profane, not simply in the Durkheimian sense of it being un-sacred, but in the commonsensical use of this term: people swear a great deal, about almost everything. This profusion of profanity represents a considerable challenge to IVCF students, almost all of whom consider it immoral to swear for any reason. One Small Group conversation dealt with the awkward social situations in which Christians find themselves in non-Christian settings (Little 1988:72-85). When the conversation turned to the problem of profanity -- or as Little calls it, "filth" (1988:72) -- there was an immediate expression of frustration from all members of the group. I asked them to explain why they perceived swearing to be so problematic. In response, Sean said that one's language "should be pure and oriented towards God." Before he could elaborate on this, Jane added

> I think it's more the attitude behind swearing that bugs me. And also, it says in Matthew, I think, that what comes out of the mouth flows from the heart. So, if you are swearing, it should make you wonder what condition your heart is in.

But really, what I hate the most is when people use Jesus's name as a swear word. That drives me crazy. I could just never do that.

As soon as their non-Christian friends know that IVCF members do not swear, Cindy said they "put us up on a pedestal. I mean, my nickname with my department friends is 'the angel,' just because I don't swear or go to their parties." "Yeah," said Charles, a first year Arts and Science student, "my non-Christian friends are always apologizing to me when they swear. But I don't want them to think I'm condemning them for their lifestyle, because I'm not. That's not my job, and anyway, it's not a very good way to witness to them."

Faced with their peers' often profane rhetoric, many IVCF members feel that abstaining altogether from swearing of any kind would deepen their separation from non-Christians. Consequently, in the form of an array of often homonymical and putatively neutral words, IVCF participants have developed an alternative to swearing. The sound and context of these alternative words are so comparable to the words they are replacing that a "translation" is unnecessary.

A simple list should suffice to depict this form of rhetoric. When students are frustrated, they will often say, "Ah, frig," or "Chuck this." When they are irritated at someone, they sometimes hiss "Frig you," or "Chuck you." Or, when participants are amazed at something -- positively or negatively -- they might exclaim "Holy barf," or

"Holy hernia," or "Holy frig." As a substitute for saying "God," students will say the common "Oh my goodness," or, in amazement, "Oh my hernia."[95]

It might be argued that the presence of these terms among the chapter's rhetorical conventions is a function of the personalities of the group's leaders and not reflective of a "rhetorical strategy," as I have described it. This is a plausible argument, and it surely accounts for the particular words which have made their ways into the group's vernacular (i.e., "hernia" instead of "tumour;" "frig" instead of "frick"). However, the necessity for these terms was not invented by individuals or elites within the group. Ultimately, these usages arise out of a combination of what Fernandez calls the "metaphorical innovation" (Fernandez 1974:132) of certain individuals, the tacit social acceptance of such rhetorical alternatives, and the underlying evangelical aversion to profanity of all varieties.[96]

These unique terms and phrases function in three ways for the chapter: first, members can avoid profanity; second, they have something to say to each other when a

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[95] An indication of the influence of substitutionary rhetoric (and of the IVCF) is the fact that three weeks after arriving in Lithuania, I started to use these alternative profanities as natural components of my own speech. This experience seems to support Harding's (1987) argument that evangelical rhetoric insinuates itself into one's subliminal mind.

[96] While there is virtually unanimous objection to profanity, there is, as one might expect, some diversity of positions on the righteousness of the invented substitutes. Recently I posed the following question to Steve, who uses these alternative words regularly: "It's so obvious what you really mean when you say 'Frig you, man.' Why don't you just say it?" He replied: "I see what you mean, but I don't know... I just know it's different." In response to the same question, Jane, however, was more direct. "Yeah, I know. That's why I even try to avoid using words like 'chuck,' because whenever I hear the word 'chuck,' I can't help but think of that other word."

situation arises which would commonly elicit a swear word (as when a student gets a disappointing mark); and third, participants have some alternative words and phrases at their disposal when they are involved in circumstances in which their non-Christian peers are using profanity. The last two functions in particular decrease the alienation of IVCF students from their non-Christian peers. This aspect of the bridge strategy, in other words, helps to soften the boundaries between IVCF members and non-Christians maintained by the fortress strategy. These in-group terms are sufficiently analogous to the words they are replacing that their public use does not call attention to IVCF students; but these alternatives are sufficiently different as far as IVCF students are concerned to validate their membership in a defined and rhetorically righteous group.

The second major category of IVCF bridging rhetoric represents an attempt to prevent students from being either proud of their salvations or patronizing toward non-Christians. Earlier in this chapter I discussed the way terms such as "saved" and the opposition between "Christian" and "non-Christian" serve as the pillars of a fortress designed to protect IVCF students from an environment sometimes perceived as inimical to Christian faith and morality. However, in addition to fulfilling its defensive role, the fortress also lends to students a strong sense of their chosen status. Almost all of the IVCF participants I met are fairly certain that non-Christians are going to suffer in hell for eternity and that Christians will receive the ultimate heavenly reward for what many members refer to as their "obedience" to God.[97] Moreover, IVCF members are

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[97] At the January 1995 Church at the John, two IVCF members performed a skit in which one student drew parallels between "The Divine Shepherd" Psalm (Psalm 23) and baseball to explain to the other student the ways in which God is like the ultimate

reminded by pastors, youth leaders, scholars (Cox 1995; Rawlyk 1996) and the media

that evangelical congregations and para-church movements are arguably the most robust

forms of Christianity in North America. The students' awareness of their movement's

power is underlined in boisterous songs such as "Rejoice," which includes lyrics such as

> Now is the time for us to march upon the land
> Into our hands He will give the ground we claim
> He rides in majesty to lead us into victory

Occasional feelings of superiority would be predictable for a group of people who

consider their own and their group's spiritual vitality to be categorically superior to those

of the vast majority of their neighbours. And such a sense of superiority would surely

deepen IVCF participants' sense of separation from their peers. However, regular

"levelling" or "humbling" rhetoric tempers any pride that might be generated by

members' certainty of their salvation and the occasional triumphalism of contemporary

conservative Protestantism.

Expressions such as "Fathergod," "children of God," and "kingdom of God" are

examples of this form of rhetoric. The father-child model of the God-believers

relationship is prevalent throughout evangelical rhetoric in general. The song "Children

of Light" includes the following lyrics:

> We are the children of God
> Made in the image of Christ

and the popular "Children of Light" includes:

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baseball manager. Near the conclusion of the skit one of the performers said: "The reward for following the rules of the coach is the Hall of Fame: heaven."

> Father of Light
> You delight in your children.

In most IVCF songs and prayers God is described and experienced as a protective, compassionate, stern, and just father; a transcendent paragon of virtue who resembles an idealized form of the traditional patriarchal father. In fact, terrestrial and celestial paternal roles have practically merged in the word "Fathergod" which begins many students' prayers. Since this familial model of the relationship between humanity and the divine seems to privilege or at least include primarily Christians, it may appear to function as an example of fortress language. Indeed, this paradigm does appear sometimes to affirm the students' uniqueness. However, IVCF participants tell me (as a matter of fact and of witnessing to me) that non-Christians are also members of God's family. Non-Christians have simply either forgotten or rejected this spiritual fact. But non-Christians are always, in a sense, prodigal children who would be welcomed home at any moment by their "Fathergod." Consequently, "Fathergod" helps to remind these evangelicals that regardless of the righteousness of their behaviour, all people are united by being children of the same God.

A closely related bridging strategy is apparent in the phrase "kingdom of God." In the song "We Declare," participants sing:

> We declare that the kingdom of God is here
> Among you, among you

In "King of the Nations," students sing:

> Come let us worship Jesus
> King of Nations, Lord of All
> ...Voice, race, and language blending

All the world amazed
...Bring tributes from the nations
Come in joyful cavalcades
One thunderous acclamation
One banner raised

In IVCF rhetoric, the kingdom of God, like the family of God, includes everyone,

although participants are encouraged regularly to work towards bringing everyone into

the "joyful cavalcade" in a fully conscious sense.[98] Construing all people as inhabiting

the same kingdom or being members of the same family may diminish participants' sense

of separation from and superiority to their secular peers.

Two other illustrations of this form of rhetoric are the use of the term "just" and

the clicking sound worship leaders make with their mouths during public prayers and

scripture interpretations.

When Martina complained about the prevalence of "Christianese" in IVCF

rhetoric, I asked her if she could provide me with an example. She said "Oh yeah: the

way they use the word 'just.' It's really starting to drive me nuts. You know, I think

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[98] However, the concept of the kingdom of God continues to be the source of debates among these evangelicals. During one Large Group meeting, participants were divided into three smaller groups to discuss the references to the kingdom of God in the Bible to determine, in part, whether the kingdom is something that was accomplished by Christ's life or that will come into being in the future. Near the end of this discussion one participant said: "So what's the answer? No, seriously, there are enough of us here and we're smart enough and the Bible can't say two things at the same time. We should be able to come up with an answer to this question tonight." The group was unable to come to a consensus on the issue, but most of the members were willing to accept or at least unwilling to deny the President's suggestion that the kingdom might be both fully transcendent and immanent, and that it might even include non-Christians in some way. There are, however, IVCF members who strongly reject this form of inclusivism and would limit their interpretations of children/kingdom of God to Christians.

it started out being a humility thing. But now I think it's just become filler. It's as though every good prayer now has to include the word 'just.'" In what sense is the use of "just" a "humility thing"? Its most common syntactical location is near the beginning of approximately half of the prayers offered at IVCF events. For example, a customary beginning to IVCF prayers is "Fathergod, we just come before you tonight to...," a variation of which might be "God, we just want to sing your praises tonight because we've just seen all the wonderful things you do in our lives...." This term seems to muffle the students' demands somewhat, underlining their indirect and humble approach to God. Without "just," their prayers would be comparatively bold. For example, they would be reduced to the overly direct alternatives: "We come here tonight to...," and "God, we want to...."

An analogous role is played by the "click" sound worship leaders often make with their mouths.[99] Its location in their rhetoric is similar to and often follows the word just: "God, we just [pause... click] want to thank you for your son and to ask you...," or "Fathergod, we come here tonight to ask if you will [pause... click] help us see how we can share your love...." By implying that the speaker is unable to finish a prayer because he or she is overwhelmed by the opportunity to communicate with God, this sound softens the believer's petition and, again, emphasizes his or her respectful love for God. The word just and the common click sound have no obvious relationship to the secular ethos. However, insofar as they humble those who use them, these rhetorical

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[99] See Tedlock (1983:178-193) for a discussion of Zuni speech patterns which set certain statements apart from others.

expressions reduce the sense of superiority which might otherwise develop as a result of IVCF participants' perceived exceptional spiritual status and the successes of the evangelical movement of which they are a part. Thus, these practices ensure that IVCF students do not isolate themselves unnecessarily by their arrogance.

Conclusion

Susan Harding's model of the conversion rhetoric or "gospel talk" used by fundamentalist Baptists emphasizes the "biblical rhythm of alternatives" (Harding 1987:179) implicit in this language. The IVCF's rhetoric regularly introduces into believers' minds exactly what Harding predicts: a schism between non-Christian and evangelical worldview(s); and a sense of the categorical difference between Christians and their secular surroundings and peers. I have described this form of language as "fortress" rhetoric to evoke the emic (and perhaps also etic) perspective of an embattled minority protecting itself from secularism.

If this fortress rhetoric was the only form of discourse operative in IVCF circles, Harding's thesis would suffice to explain IVCF rhetoric. However, the deployment of a quite different form of speaking and singing is apparent among these students. I have called this form "bridging" rhetoric to suggest its power to maintain and even improve the relations between IVCF and non-Christian students. The terms in this category provide alternatives to profanity and mitigate against the potential arrogance associated with the members' self-understanding as chosen and saved.

I would suggest that the IVCF can accommodate these two forms of seemingly opposed rhetoric for two reasons. First, the group seeks to meet the needs of evangelical and fundamentalist students. Consequently, the language used in its worship settings and heard in interviews combines the compromising rhetorical tendencies of the former group of students and the unyielding expressive inclinations of the latter.

However, IVCF discourse also includes both bridging and fortress-making language because its members have two somewhat contradictory goals. On the one hand, many students feel occasionally that they are in hostile territory. Many of them describe feeling unprepared for the intellectual and moral challenges to their faith that they have to face in the university environment. Consequently, students sometimes seek the shelter provided by fortress rhetoric. On the other hand, they cannot afford, so to speak, simply to strengthen their defences and burn their bridges. They want -- many of them desperately -- to be accepted by their new non-Christian friends. The complementary rhetorical strategies outlined in this chapter help these students both to befriend their secular peers and to reinforce their difference from these others.

Chapter Four

Otherness

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, although they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge (1 Peter 2:11).

[As suburban children] life was charmed but without politics or religion. It was the life of children of the children of the pioneers -- life after God -- a life of earthly salvation on the edge of heaven. Perhaps this is the finest thing to which we may aspire, the life of peace, the blurring between dream life and real life -- and yet I find myself speaking these words with a sense of doubt.... I think there was a trade-off somewhere along the line. I think the price we paid for our golden life was an inability to fully believe in love; instead we gained an irony that scorched everything it touched. And I wonder if this irony is the price we paid for the loss of God.... But then I remind myself we are living creatures -- we have religious impulses -- we *must* -- and yet into what cracks do these flow in a world without religion? It is something I think about every day. Sometimes I think it is the only thing I should be thinking about (Coupland 1992:273).

Throughout the previous three chapters, I have introduced i) the set of questions I am asking in this dissertation, ii) four members of the IVCF, and iii) the ways these believers communicate among themselves and with non-Christians. By now it should be clear that IVCF students often feel separated from their non-Christian peers and professors. Moreover, as I have explained, many IVCF students feel that McMaster privileges the beliefs, values and worldviews associated with liberalism, pluralism,

materialism, and permissivism.[100] This situation marginalizes, alienates or (to make a verb out of an adjective) others evangelical students who generally do not embrace these traditions (or many elements of these traditions). However, although it might appear that IVCF students would suffer an unrelenting and agonizing level of psychological difficulties during their years at McMaster, the majority of IVCF member do not seem to share such an experience. On the contrary, most IVCF participants I met struck me as no less sane, healthy, contented, and well-adjusted than the non-Christian students I have met during the eleven years I have spent in Canadian universities. In fact, I have found that, in general,[101] evangelicals at McMaster seem slightly "happier" than non-Christian students. This obviously unscientific impression is consistent with Frankel and Hewitt's (1994) findings that involvement in religious groups during one's university years is positively correlated with higher levels of physical and psychological "well-being."

This observation raises an obvious question: how do evangelicals retain these relatively high levels of psychological well-being in an institution which not only ignores their values and beliefs, but, according to IVCF students, often promotes "anti-Christian"

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[100] According to Reginald Bibby, this evangelical perception is largely correct. Bibby writes: "Education stands out as an institution that not only has been strongly influenced by individualism and relativism but also has done much to legitimize the two themes. Indeed, the mark of a well-educated Canadian is that he or she places supreme importance on the individual while recognizing that truth is relative. To decry individual fulfilment or to claim to have found the truth would be a dead giveaway that one has not graced the halls of higher learning" (Bibby 1990:71).

[101] See Chapter Six for a discussion of the IVCF women who indicated that they struggle with clinical depression.

principles? The main emic answer to this question is simply that well-being is a natural bi-product of a personal relationship with God (Little 1988:38). A plausible social scientific answer to this question is not quite as uncomplicated. In the course of interviewing evangelicals, travelling with them, and observing their worship and social interactions, I noticed strong evidence of an experience which I call by various names: otherness, difference, alienation and estrangement, all of which refer to the separation of these students from the non-Christian world. Before I proceed, let me explain these terms.

The term estrangement refers literally to the sense of strangeness or unfamiliarity IVCF students sometimes experience when confronting non-Christian individuals or institutions. Difference and otherness have become increasingly significant elements of academic discourse since the rise of post-modernism in the humanities and social sciences in the 1970s.[102] I use these two terms to connote the sense of separation evangelicals tell me is produced when they confront the fissure between non-Christian students, beliefs, and values on the one hand, and evangelical students, beliefs, and values on the other.

The other word I employ to connote otherness is alienation, a term with a rich and convoluted history which would require several volumes to summarize.[103] In

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[102] On the philosophical and social scientific notions of otherness and difference, see Baxter (1982); Clifford and Marcus (1986); Derrida (1978); Geertz (1994); Harding (1991); Levinas (1969); Simpson (1996); Wuthnow (1989).

[103] See Hallen (1983) and Baxter (1982) for a contemporary exploration of alienation and a discussion of the history of the concept from its originally Marxist definition to its current range of meanings.

contemporary academic discourse the term appears most commonly in the context of Marxist analyses of modern societies in which workers are said to be alienated from nature, the means of production, their fellow workers, their products, and finally, themselves (Baum 1975; Baxter 1982; Marx 1956). Although this ethnography is not Marxist in orientation, there is in Marx's concept of alienation the germ of the contemporary non-philosophical use of the term. The way I employ the word alienation lacks the Marxist focus on political economy, and the Hegelian focus on the synthetic overcoming of alienation (Baxter 1982:115), but borrows from Marx the more rudimentary notion of separateness.[104] Although alienation is still laden with Marxist connotations, I will use the term alongside difference and otherness to denote a general sense of separateness. Thus modified, the term captures the essence of many IVCF students' own comments about their experiences of otherness at McMaster.

Although these students recognize their difference and often essential estrangement from their secular peers and professors, with the help of the IVCF, participants have developed creative strategies for managing otherness. Such strategies enable students to

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[104] In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger defines alienation as the "process whereby the dialectical relationship between the individual and his world is lost to consciousness. The individual 'forgets' that his world was and continues to be co-produced by him" (Berger 1967:85). Thus, a person is alienated when some element of his or her surroundings confronts him or her as fundamentally alien, as being an unchangeable feature of reality. This adds a helpful nuance to the concept of alienation. However, the alienation between IVCF students and the secular ethos cannot be overcome by believers through regaining the lost consciousness of the co-produced nature of their interpretation of the differences between themselves and non-Christians. Such a consciousness of their co-construction of their religious "world" would likely destroy or severely damage their faith, based as it often is on what many IVCF members call their strict "obedience" to the moral and theological imperatives clearly articulated in the Bible.

remain loyal to their religious convictions while they participate in McMaster's social and academic life.

The underlying sense of otherness has three major forms. One is shared by most undergraduates and two seem to be unique to evangelical students. Moreover, IVCF students employ several more or less intentional strategies for responding to and, as we shall see, transforming their consciousness of their otherness.

It seems plausible that non-Christian students and professors would be privileged in an institution which officially favours pluralism and unofficially leaves little or no social space in the classroom for non-liberal, non-pluralistic sensibilities (Bibby 1990; Hammond and Hunter 1984:232). But evangelical students are not made others simply by the hegemony of the secular ethos. Thus, I would argue that IVCF students are not defenceless victims of secularism. Rather, evangelicals' sense of difference has emerged partly as a result of their own participation in a broader process of negotiation between selves (and communities of selves) with unequal access to, or at least different types of, power (Harding 1991).[105] Furthermore, as I have suggested, IVCF members should not be seen as being engaged in a grand but futile protest against the decline of their worldview (Bruce 1988; Wilcox 1992). On the contrary, the chapter seems to help students "maintain difference in a positive sense" (Wuthnow 1989:182).

Throughout my fieldwork periods, many students shared with me stories about the profound feelings of estrangement they experienced when they began classes at

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[105] On the postmodern redefinition of power, see Foucault (1990:92).

McMaster. During an interview, I asked Wendy, a second year student in Religious

Studies, what her life at McMaster would be like without the IVCF. She replied:

> Oh, I don't think I could have survived Frosh Week without IV. The whole year before I came to Mac, I lived in a completely Christian world. I went to camp in the summers and to a Bible college for a year. And then, when I moved into residence that first year, it was crazy. Okay, listen to this. I was assigned to live in Brandon Hall. So here I am, an innocent Christian girl. The first day I got there, I took the elevators up to my floor and when the doors opened, I saw this big sign that said "Welcome to Satanic Seventh." I was just *duuhhh*. Now I know that this was the Frosh theme for the floor, since I lived on the seventh floor of the res. But back then, it was overwhelming, and then on top of this, people were drinking all the time. The difference between my Christian world and my new residence world is night and day. I was so glad I knew some of the IV people. I'm not even sure I would have stayed at Mac without IV. I would have tried to find other Christians. But probably, without IV, I would have been more of a recluse and studied all the time.[106]

As I have explained in previous chapters, many evangelicals conceive of their

relationship with explicitly non-evangelical institutions and individuals as essentially

adversarial. However, despite the actual or constructed differences which generate this

relationship, there is at least one important area of similarity between Christians and non-

Christians. Specifically, most evangelical *and* non-evangelical students I have met at

university believe they will face a harsh or unpredictable economic climate once they

complete their degrees. Thus, while evangelical university students must find some way

to cope with being, as Brian, a Humanities student, said, in "hostile territory," both

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[106] Some non-Christian undergraduates also feel diminished in relation to the university, which appears to be a large, seemingly unsympathetic and immutable institution. See Hallen (1983) for a discussion of the alienation derived from the disharmony between the egalitarian rhetoric of education and the authoritarian structures of academic life.

socially and intellectually, they must also contend with the same anxieties experienced by other students.[107] Before I discuss the unique form of alienation many evangelicals feel in officially secular *milieux,* I will consider the form of estrangement shared by many evangelical and non-evangelical students.

General Estrangement

Whereas a university degree was once a virtual guarantee of a secure post-academic life, this is by no means the case for the majority of the current generation of students (Osberg, Wien, Grude 1995:200).[108] Many IVCF students tell the same story I could tell: of their parents, twenty or more years earlier, confident after the completion of their degrees, concerned simply about which job to accept and where they would like to live, rather than whether or not they could find work at all, or work in their field, or province or (for some) country. The post-1980s recession, coupled with the fiscal

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[107] Other interpreters of evangelicalism have commented on this phenomenon. Harvey Cox argues that most scholars of Pentecostalism missed the "double-barrelled disillusionment" that these evangelicals experienced: disenchantment about the failures of science, progress, and modern culture as well as the shortcomings of traditional religion (Cox 1995:104). Karen McCarthy Brown writes that evangelicals are under a "double attack" from the "general stress of our time" and the "direct challenges to their faith" in the form of higher criticism and evolution (McCarthy Brown 1994:179). Finally, in response to the question of why fundamentalism has become so visible and belligerent, Martin Marty suggests that the movement is a response to the mixed offerings of modernity and the values crisis in America (Marty 1987:316), the first of which correlates with what I call "general estrangement," and the second with the main source of evangelicals' criticism of modern culture.

[108] The only consistent expression of occupational optimism comes from IVCF Engineering students, or from students who intend eventually to take over thriving family businesses.

conservatism of federal and provincial governments and major corporations, have greatly decreased the need for many full-time jobs; instead, contract work has replaced these positions. In addition to these changes, the information explosion associated with the internet has increased the level of technical expertise needed in most entry-level positions (Bridges 1994:4; Osberg, Wien, Grude 1995:97). Demographers Foot and Stoffman observe that the larger changes we have witnessed in the realms of technology and political economy are strongly correlated with the steady rise of unemployment rates over the last four consecutive decades (Foot and Stoffman 1996:68).[109] Predictably, these shifts have had significant effects on the prospects faced by many university students. In an interview published in the *McMaster Times* magazine, McMaster alumna and Canadian economist Roslyn Kunin gave the following advice to university graduates:

> You've got to say good-bye to the old world where you went to McMaster and got a degree and got a nice job with a large organization and were set for the rest of your life.... [And] you've got to convince your parents that there is nothing wrong with you (Kunin in Vowles 1996).

The group of students currently in university is often described by the epithet "Generation X." When this term was coined by Douglas Coupland in his 1991 novel *Generation X* it referred to my own generation,[110] those born in the late 1950s and 1960s -- people whose parents were, by and large, already raising families when the

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[109] At the end of 1996, the overall Canadian unemployment rate for youth aged fifteen to twenty-four was 16.1% (Government of Canada 1997). For an alternative account of the changes which Foot and Stoffman describe, see Bridges (1994). For an overview of the larger economic forces behind our tumultuous era, see Galbraith (1992).

[110] In fact the group this term designates is technically a "cohort" and not a complete generation.

counter-culture of the late 1960s and 1970s reached its peak. Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons, the term quickly expanded its frame of reference to include those in university during the 1990s. As a result, this term will be employed occasionally in this chapter.[111]

Almost all of the IVCF students I have interviewed (as well as most non-IVCF students with whom I have discussed this issue) are nervous about their abilities to succeed in the post-university economy. This uneasiness results in their sense of distance from the cultural accretions of middle class adulthood: mortgages, RRSPs, careers, marriage(s), suburban life, pensions, and retirement. Education no longer guarantees anything in the "new world" to which Kunin alludes. What IVCF students tell me about the worries they experience in their lives as university students resonates with my peers' experiences. Although most of my own friends are highly educated, with a few exceptions, only those with computer software training have found secure and rewarding employment in the disciplines for which they were trained. Even though demographic data (Foot and Stoffman 1996:23) suggest that the cohort of students currently in university will fare better than Coupland's original "Generation X," the technological transformations which characterized the culture of North America when these students

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[111] There are significant differences between Coupland's original Generation X and the baby boomers' children in university in the 1990s (Foot and Stoffman 1996:22). Younger members of the current catch-all "Generation X" were warned from an early age that their lives would be difficult, that they would have to "market themselves" and be highly adaptable. Most of the members of Coupland's original Generation X were raised without such encouragements to entrepreneurialism, largely because an education at that point was still perceived as a guarantee of future success. For a fictional profile of the world of the younger siblings of the original Generation X members, see Coupland's *Shampoo Planet* (1993).

(and the original Generation X members) were raised have bequeathed to many of them (us) a sense of anxiety, and in some cases, cynicism about their futures. This pessimism is manifested in the popular culture of their generation: the suicidal despair of the "grunge" rock band Nirvana's Kurt Cobain, the wry, caustic wit of "Seinfeld," the juvenile nihilism of "Beavis and Butthead," the sarcastic bourgeois humour of "The Simpsons," and the conspiracy theorism indicative of the aptly named "The X Files."

A word of caution is in order. One might easily find examples of contemporary students who have no misgivings whatsoever about their futures, and who would not fit comfortably within the category of Generation X. However, although I have met wholly optimistic undergraduates, the serious concerns about the future so well evoked by Kingwell (1996), Coupland (1990), Eddie (1996), and Foot and Stoffman (1996) do seem to be characteristic of this generation. Moreover, it seems to me that determining whether or not contemporary university students are *actually* living in a unique and inauspicious economic climate is not as relevant as the fact that many evangelical and non-evangelical students alike *perceive* themselves to be faced with often limited occupational opportunities. Like their non-Christian peers, IVCF participants may be considered members of Generation X, but in a distinctly evangelical manner.

Since evangelical students understand themselves to have been born again, I had expected them to be immune to the anxieties of their generation. I discovered, however, that their understandings of the relationship between their faith and their futures is far more ambiguous than I had anticipated. During my conversations with IVCF members, I was often surprised when I encountered some measure of the uneasiness and cynicism

typical of the non-Christian students with whom I am personally familiar. Nevertheless, while many IVCF students expressed scepticism about whether they would find suitable or stable employment in their areas of expertise, I noticed that almost none of them seemed to be distraught about their prospects. When I asked IVCF participants why they seemed relatively (relative, that is, to other undergraduates I know) calm about their futures, virtually every student referred to God's "plan" for their lives.

While there is considerable diversity among members on the subject of whether this plan compromises human freedom (i.e., whether it amounts to predetermination or divine foreknowledge),[112] most students seem to agree with Steve, who asserted that God has a "perfect will" for his life which he can choose to obey or not. This perfect will typically encompasses a divinely-sanctioned marriage partner, degree program, career choice, and university acceptance; but because God's plan is by definition unknowable, students are reluctant to claim knowledge of its details or its comprehensiveness. Instead, IVCF members profess that whatever happens to them is necessarily part of God's benevolent plan for their lives.

The best way to illustrate the role of this plan in believers' lives is to consider some of the ways students speak of it. During a Small Group meeting in the living room of a member's residence room, Cindy, for example, observed:

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[112] Students are not very enthusiastic about discussing such abstract theological issues. In a conversation I had with McMaster Divinity College Professor Clark Pinnock at the IVCF's 1996 winter retreat, he observed that the contemporary IVCF is much less doctrinally-oriented than it was when he was involved in it in the 1950s. "[The students'] experience here is really about relationships -- with each other and God. It's not at all about apologetics and theology." On this turn toward the "experiential" and "emotional" elements of faith, see Wade Clark Roof (1996).

> I mean, look at me. I'm finishing my M.Sc. next year. I may not get the job I want right away, but I'm confident that eventually I will, because I know God has a plan for me. I guess I'd say that I feel a sort of peaceful insecurity about the whole thing.

When I asked David, a first year science student, how he felt about his future, he answered:

> I definitely worry about this -- everyone I know does, just because of the insecurity of the future. I have no clue about where I'll be ten years from now. I don't know the future, but I know God has a plan for me. He can take away all of our problems, and I know if I just live according to his will for my life, I won't have to worry.

Nevertheless, IVCF members recognize that some of the choices they make will be contrary to God's plan for their lives. Kelly, a former IVCF member, posited that it "grieves" God that his children do not faithfully seek his plan for their lives (typically through prayer, Bible study, and "fellowshipping" with other Christians); but that God may lead the delinquent back to the path of righteousness. During a conversation one night in Lithuania, Wanda, a fourth year Geography student, likened God's response to human mistakes to the process of braiding hair. "When a strand falls out of order, God can find a way to work it back into the braid," she explained.

Participants frequently refer to the tension between their occupational anxiety and their faith in God's plan; but almost all students seem to experience both feelings. During an interview, Lewis, a Psychology student, commented:

> Oh yeah, I feel [this general form of alienation]. I think it's just irrational not to think of it. It's only human to worry -- like I worry about getting into grad school. But my faith helps a lot, because I believe God has a plan for me. Actually, in Jeremiah it says 'I have a place for you.' In fact, that's the only part of the Bible I've memorized.

Similarly, Frank, a third year Kinesiology student, reported:

> I don't really have a sense of anxiety about my future because I think God is controlling everything and has a plan for me. But sometimes I forget this and get worried. But with what I want to do with ministry or camp work in the North this won't be a big problem. But anyway, God's going to work in his time and his way. I'm sure of this.

Many students attribute what non-Christians might consider to be the result of good luck or diligence to a combination of God's plan and their own righteousness. During a moving, tearful conversation about her family's impending bankruptcy, Heather, a third year English student, said

> I want none of this money thing. I'm interested only in subsistence. God will provide for me. Last summer I knew I had to get a job, like *had* to get a job if you know what I mean. I was really anxious about that, but I prayed and God provided for me. I got a great job teaching a teen-leadership development course. I mean, in these sorts of times I keep remembering something my father said to me: 'I've never seen the righteous forsaken.' God has always provided for us. My mom's not so trusting. But somehow we always get bailed out.

Finally, students are also aware that their beliefs mitigate against their experiences of estrangement. For example, many of them believe (correctly, as far as I can tell) that they suffer less severe forms of anxiety about their futures than their non-Christian peers (cf. Frankel Hewitt 1994). Mary, a first year Social Science student, admitted that "If I didn't have [a belief in God's plan], I'd probably be a wreck. This definitely underlies my carefreeness at school." As well, Paula, a Psychology student, admitted that:

> I'm spending all this time and money working towards a degree, but for what? I have no clue. My faith helps me cope with this a lot. As a Christian, I think I'm probably less stressed about this than the person sitting beside me in class, though.

On the same subject William, a second year Science student, remarked:

Sure I feel worried about my future. Absolutely, one hundred percent. But this all makes me trust in God all the more. My faith helps a lot. I'm sure he led me here and I trust in God; but we are all bombarded by such negative information about our futures. My faith reduces these worries enough that I'm not paranoid or terrified about my future.

Reductionism

Before proceeding, I feel compelled to address the thorny issue of reductionism.[113] As the quotations in the preceding section suggest, many IVCF students seem to suggest that the divine plan allows them to contend better with the uncertainty of their lives. During fieldwork, I heard several variations on the theme that God's plan helps them "to deal with" their economic insecurity. In both IVCF and social scientific terms, God's plan might therefore be interpreted as a "coping strategy" for managing the concerns that IVCF students have about their futures (Ammerman 1987:192).

However, IVCF members would consider such an interpretation only partly correct. They would recognize in it the self-evident truth that their faith in God's plan makes their lives easier. But they would bristle at what they might infer as the implicit suggestion that the idea of God's plan was somehow invented by them (or their leaders or their tradition) simply to fulfil the essentially psychological task of coming to terms with the vicissitudes of life in an uncertain economy. Furthermore, because I focus on the psycho-social elements of this aspect of IVCF discourse, evangelicals and non-

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[113] On the social scientific tendency to reduce others to exotic stereotypes; in short, to ignore the "voice" (Clifford 1986) of the other, see Fabian (1983), Marcus and Fischer (1986), and Said (1978).

Christian social scientists might even infer that my interpretation implies or presupposes either that there is no God, or that God does not have a plan for each of our lives.

Ethnographers are ill-equipped to make claims and ill-advised to make assumptions about the existence of God or a divine plan. The ethnographer's task is both more limited and comprehensive: to understand the life-world of the people they study and to translate it into concepts and categories which can be understood by others (Marcus and Fisher 1986:25; Geertz 1994:463). Although the theological implications of the present study may be of interest to evangelicals,[114] my concern is to propose an interpretation of possible non-theological influences on human behaviour and social life.

It is important to be cautious when advancing theories which make the convictions one's ethnographic others embrace appear to be delusions oriented essentially at achieving ends fundamentally opposed to those intended by believers. George Marsden argues that

> Fundamentalist ideas have long been thought to be 'really' expressions of some other social or class interest.... But to reduce beliefs to their social function is to overemphasize a partial truth and so to underestimate the powers of the belief itself (Marsden 1982:162).

I would defend the theory that belief in God's plan helps IVCF students cope with the complex experience of being, in William's words, "bombarded by such negative information about our futures" in a campus environment which they feel is already directly opposed to their faith. This interpretation seems to be supported both by my

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[114] For believers, my analysis might help answer questions such as: whether God exists, whether the Holy Spirit is responsible for the growth and vitality of the McMaster IVCF, whether students are in fact drawing closer to God as a result of the IVCF, and whether Satan is actually engaged in trying to undermine the group's members' faith.

participation in and observation of IVCF activities as well as by the scholarly commentary to which I refer throughout this chapter. However, I would qualify my argument by suggesting that while belief in God's plan is a coping mechanism, such coping is simply one effect and not necessarily the cause or *raison d'être* of this conviction.

Specific Evangelical Estrangement

In the case of general undergraduate estrangement, students feel alienated from their role in the post-university economy. However, characteristic of what I call specific evangelical estrangement is the perception among believers that secular institutional life is no longer welcoming toward traditional conservative Protestant beliefs and values.

As I explained in Chapter One, many evangelicals feel alienated from central elements or the *mentalité* common in secular institutions. This emic perspective has also been articulated by scholars.[115] For example, George Rawlyk argues that by the nineteenth century there was a broadly evangelical consensus among Canadians (and more or less explicitly present in major institutions) concerning moral and religious matters (Rawlyk 1990; 1992; 1996). However, although quantitative studies indicate that

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[115] Wilcox's study (1992) of the causes of support for the "New Christian Right" (NCR) in the United States represents one exception to this general theme. He argues that alienation is not a source of support for the NCR (and thus, one might extrapolate, for evangelicalism). Unfortunately, Wilcox's data were mostly collected in the 1970s, before the public resurgence of politically active evangelicals (the constituents of the NCR) under the auspices of the Moral Majority. As well, Wilcox claims that there is no evidence that NCR supporters understand the world as a struggle between good and evil. This assertion contradicts not only Ammerman's findings (1987:63), but also my own observations and interviews with IVCF members.

levels of conservative Protestant belief have increased somewhat (cf. Chapter One; Rawlyk 1996) between the last decade of the nineteenth century and the last decade of the twentieth century, the role of evangelical values and beliefs in public institutions and discourse has been either severely diminished or at least problematized (cf. Ammerman 1990:149). Consequently, although their churches and para-church organizations are among the strongest manifestations of Protestantism in Canada, many IVCF students believe that their most firmly held convictions no longer belong at the centre of Canadian life. Evangelicalism continues to thrive in differentiated (Luhmann 1984) if not disempowered pockets within cultural institutions (cf. the IVCF's "club" status at McMaster). However, even though evangelicals may justifiably celebrate the contemporary vitality of their tradition, they are acutely aware that the (arguably prevalent) religious and ethical norms of the surrounding culture either ignore or oppose traditional evangelical values (cf. Balmer 1989:122). In very few contexts in our culture is the hostility or condescension toward conservative religiosity perceived by evangelicals to be more pronounced than at secular universities such as McMaster.[116] According

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[116] During an interview in my basement office, Frank commented, "I mean look at that (Baptist) dedication upstairs about what this university used to be about. Since then we've floundered." The dedication is carved in stone on the main wall of the foyer in University Hall, the building which presently houses the Philosophy and Religious Studies Departments. It reads: "This university, named after its founder and first benefactor, the Honourable William McMaster..., was incorporated... in the year of our Lord, eighteen hundred and eighty-seven. Responsibility for the conduct of the foundation was assumed in the following year by the Convention of the Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec.... The privileges of the university are offered to all without restriction, in order that youth may receive a liberal education in a Christian atmosphere and be duly qualified for the service of God and mankind." Although the privileges of the university were supposedly offered without restriction, readers will remember the Senate's 1909 restrictions (cf. Chapter One) on classroom content. The Senate wrote:

to these believers, it is at such institutions that the ideology of secularism and, in the words of Clark Pinnock, an evangelical professor at McMaster's Divinity College, the "bias against God" are most explicitly promulgated. Commenting on this phenomenon, Jane, a Social Work student, said that "No one [at McMaster] will accept us if we say we're Christians. Oh, they'll accept Buddhists and Muslims, and even Jews are okay. But not Christians -- nooooo way." Moreover, as Brian, a third year Classics student pointed out in an interview,

> Maybe the university is a little more hostile to Christianity than the rest of the world because in university you have people stopping to think and then actually stating their views, whereas in the rest of society people don't usually have to think or talk about their beliefs. In the university I guess you can discuss God, if you want. But it is also an accepted place to discuss unbelief.

In response to the marginalization of evangelical Christianity on Canadian campuses, a minority of the IVCF's fundamentalists adopt a posture that borders on what might be called righteous resignation (cf. Hammond 1985:221). The vast majority of IVCF members, however, do not espouse such a strict position, preferring to negotiate what I describe as metaphorical "contracts" with their secular surroundings. The specific evangelical estrangement which is the context and inspiration of these negotiations assumes both intellectual and social forms. I will discuss the intellectual form first.

The occasionally adversarial relationship between evangelical and non-Christian individuals and institutions often manifests itself in the form of clashes between

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"While complete freedom should be accorded in the investigation and discussion of facts, no theory should be taught which fails to give its proper place to supernatural revelation or which would impair in any way the supreme authority of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rawlyk 1992:287).

evangelical and secular philosophical and scientific principles. These episodes of antagonism typically reflect deeper sources of division between evangelical and non-Christian worldviews (Hammond and Hunter 1984), and serve to estrange IVCF members from their secular peers, most of whom evangelicals believe share the liberal, pluralistic, and materialist intellectual assumptions which have gained hegemony in the secular academy (Bibby 1990:71).

There are several sources of students' intellectually-experienced sense of difference. I have discussed some of these issues in this and previous chapters. The most contentious elements of non-Christian teaching and assumptions are: evolution, relativism, moral permissivism and biblical criticism from feminist and atheist perspectives. As we shall see, however, not all IVCF students are directly affected by these issues.

Common contexts in which students experience this form of difference are lectures and conversations in which evolution is taught or assumed as an unassailable fact. While discussing intellectual alienation in general, Carrie remarked that she often gets confused when she listens to one of her professor's lectures about evolution. She commented:

> Sometimes I just listen and don't understand how the Creator's plan can explain what my prof is saying. But then I remember what John and Paul said: that Christians are called to believe, not to understand, like it says in John 6:69.[117]

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[117] John 6:69 records Peter saying to Jesus, "We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

During a conversation, Simon echoed Carrie's reliance on faith as an answer to the challenges of evolutionary theory. He remarked that

> When [professors and non-Christian students] start talking to me about evolution, I think 'this is ridiculous' and immediately barriers go up. But I believe in God and the Bible, so I don't worry about them proving me wrong because they can't. I totally expect to have problems in university. I mean, university is very humanistic, and that's in direct conflict with Christianity. Christians ask 'What does God want me to do?' whereas non-Christians ask 'What do I want to do?' It's totally different.

Virtually all IVCF students I interviewed describe themselves as creationists. However, many students adopt a conciliatory stance toward students and instructors during conversations about evolution. For example, many students adopt a position similar to the one Lewis takes. "I'm a creationist," he declared in our interview, and then added quickly, "but I don't totally discount evolution. It's a viable theory. But maybe God used evolution to create us." In other words, Lewis reduces evolution to one theory among others, all of which he presupposes must ultimately validate God's creation and sovereignty.

On the other hand, some (a minority of) IVCF members such as Kirk, an Engineering student, are less willing to adopt Lewis's bridging strategy, preferring to construe the contract Lewis and others have negotiated as a betrayal of the faith. In an attempt to guard creationism from the onslaught of scientism, students such as Kirk are opposed to any form of compromise with the theory of evolution. "In a non-Christian world," Kirk observed,

our truth *is not the one truth, so sometimes we're ashamed and feel dominated
by non-Christians. Sometimes Christians are forced to make compromises, like
believing in evolution, just because of the pressure of being dominated.*[118]

Other students perceive threats to their religious commitments as originating in
their academic disciplines. IVCF Social Work students, for example, often have very
strong opinions about what they view as university-sanctioned moral permissivism.
During one conversation, Cathy, a fourth year student, related:

> Yeah, sometimes I feel pretty isolated in Social Work. I don't know how I feel
> about gay rights, for example, even though [Social Work students are] supposed
> to support them. I mean, it upsets me that they don't have the same rights as
> everyone else, but I also know what God thinks about this issue. And abortion -
> - I believe it's murder, but as a social worker, I can't say that.

The liberal moral assumptions inherent in the Social Work program also frustrate
Vanessa, a second year student who asserted that

> Social Work always really emphasizes how the individual can change everything.
> But I believe the ultimate hope is with Jesus. This makes things hard, because
> I have to tell people that they can do everything for themselves, even though I
> don't believe it.

In response to a question about conflicts between her faith and academic pursuits,
Paula, one of only two Religious Studies students in the McMaster IVCF, commented
that "I especially feel this tension in my Religious Studies classes." She continued her
reflection by saying

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[118] As an Engineering student, Kirk may never actually have to face the challenges
of evolutionary theory directly during his academic career.

It's weird. They just don't want to hear about your personal beliefs, which just takes away from the discussion of religious texts or personalities. They totally deny the personal element, or the issue of the relationship with God. I have nothing against learning about the texts, but there are parts of my faith I can't explain, and I don't like not being able to express something that is so important to my life.[119]

One of the most helpful tools employed in negotiating the IVCF members'

metaphorical contracts is what I described earlier as a "semi-permeable membrane." In

the context of a conversation about her occasional uneasiness in classes, Candace, a third

year English student, expressed some of the same sentiments as Vanessa and Paula when

the former referred to the "filter" through which theories and information taught in class

must pass before she can internalize them. Candace remarked:

> Sometimes, when I'm reading literature, I think 'Okay, I shouldn't be reading this; it's totally wrong.' Like when it has to do with sex. As Christians, we have to filter out this sort of thing from what goes into our minds. Also, the philosophies that the university tends to teach -- like being self-sufficient and making people feel the power within themselves. I have to avoid thinking like this by constantly reminding myself that my identity is in Christ. I try to imagine what my life would be like if I was dependent on myself. It scares me. I'm afraid of the thought of being self-sufficient.

Carrie also referred to her intellectual filter during our interview, commenting that

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[119] Just as most atheist students have not read Feuerbach, Freud, Nietzsche or Marx, most evangelical students are not conversant with the theological and philosophical ideas which would help to convey their beliefs or religious experiences credibly to their non-Christian peers and professors. This observation correlates with similar tendencies noted by Ammerman in her ethnography of conservative Protestantism in the United States. She writes that "the notion that everything (painful or not) can be explained by reference to God's will is more important to [the participants] than a logically consistent theory" (Ammerman 1987:65). Similarly, Wade Clark Roof (1996) observes that exuberant and emotional expressions of faith are the predominant characteristics of religion in contemporary America.

It's a continual battle for me in university.... I feel like what I learn in class has to go through a filter of some kind, although the filter is not always that efficient because sometimes there's so much information coming at you. I think there must be two parts of my brain..... Like some of the philosophies they teach us about in class. In one class we learned all about Freud and how all of our motivations come from our libidos. But I think there are other, higher motivations; so I file that information on Freud because I know I need to know it; but I just can't accept it.

There are two ways in which IVCF members respond to the cognitive dissonance they experience at McMaster. The first strategy involves the blending of ideas from seemingly disparate theoretical realms. As sociologist Robert Wuthnow (1989:149) argues, most people have a significant and usually unacknowledged propensity to mix, or as anthropologist Ellen Badone (1989:284; cf. Geertz 1973:119) suggests, to alternate between religious and scientific worldviews. For example, instead of having to choose between a strictly creationist position or a strictly evolutionist position, many IVCF participants mix these theories, as Lewis's earlier comments above reflect. In so doing, students accommodate both the need to remain loyal to their faith and to be seen by their secular peers and professors as treating the theory of evolution with the deference expected when considering generally accepted theories. Such contracts build bridges between Christian and non-Christian students and allow IVCF members to participate in curricular and extra-curricular conversations about evolution. By reducing evolution to a divine tool, as Lewis and others do, students can absorb a pivotal element of a threatening intellectual system into a larger creationist paradigm of natural history.[120]

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[120] Another strategy for dealing with the challenges of evolutionary theory is to postpone deciding about how to fit evolutionary evidence into one's creationist framework. As I explain in Chapter Five, an analogous strategy is employed by IVCF

Another evangelical response to intellectual estrangement is to construe this experience as a consequence of the hegemony of an imperious secular ethos. Such an interpretation was promulgated by the charismatic McMaster intellectual, Clark Pinnock, a well-known and controversial commentator in conservative North American Protestant circles.[121] At the IVCF's winter retreat in January 1996, Pinnock was the guest speaker. Forty-five McMaster students from various disciplines and stages in their programmes attended the retreat, which was held at a Christian camp approximately four hours' drive north of Hamilton. The camp was comfortable and modernized, with separate dining, lounging, and sleeping areas. Although there was plenty of time during the retreat devoted to worship, social and athletic activities, the issues Pinnock discussed clearly formed the intellectual focus of the weekend. Pinnock delivered two animated lectures in the fireplace lounge area of the camp on the second day of the retreat: one in the morning after breakfast, and the other in the evening. At the end of each of his sessions participants broke into small discussion groups. His presentations that weekend confirmed many theories I had been developing about the IVCF's relationship to the secular ethos.[122]

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women dealing with the challenges of the feminist critique of patriarchal traditions such as evangelicalism.

[121] See for example, his contentious recent position on the possible inclusivity of salvation, articulated in *More than One Way?* (1995). Pinnock has been involved with the IVCF since the 1950s, and has been the academic and personal advisor for Carla, McMaster's Staff Worker, since the mid-1980s.

[122] Thanks to Pinnock's interest in my project, I also had the good fortune to be able to discuss the group and my thesis with him extensively at the retreat.

Pinnock lucidly and passionately outlined the nature and causes of evangelical marginalization at a university which directly (evidenced by the pluralism of its dominant ethos) and indirectly (evidenced by many professors' and students' critiques of Christianity) embraces a position he describes as "metaphysical naturalism." Pinnock defined this perspective as the assumption that matter is "the cause and answer of all things."[123] His lectures revolved around the powerful and pervasive "bias against God" in contemporary university life. For many students, Pinnock's sessions represented the first opportunity to place their sometimes amorphous experiences of intellectual alienation within a philosophical framework. For example, during a conversation one week after the retreat, Sean, a Kinesiology student, could not specify ways in which the secular university ethos was opposed to Christianity. However, he did explain that "When Clark spoke I realized that, yeah, we are discriminated against."

Pinnock argued that "The fact is that there is no common ground between Christianity and secularism; but there is a common discussion, and I'm just saying that we have the right and the responsibility to get back into it." The "common discussion" between conservative Protestantism and secularism should in theory be permitted and even encouraged in a secular institution such as McMaster. However, Pinnock asserted that with a few exceptions, such a conversation is not cultivated; and when it is, few

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[123] The following is a brief summary of Pinnock's four arguments against metaphysical naturalism, which the scope of this chapter does not permit me to analyze. First, metaphysical naturalism narrows truth by limiting students' speculation to the empirical realm. Second, it discriminates against non-naturalistic voices and thus forsakes the pluralism on which liberal academic inquiry is supposedly based. Third, it weakens society, since a culture such as ours without transcendence and faith is likely to decline. Finally, metaphysical naturalism is a hindrance to evangelism.

people seem to be interested. In other words, it is paradoxical that although the university extols the open exchange of ideas, some ideas -- especially evangelical Christian ones -- are rarely discussed. The university's trivialization of evangelical convictions, Pinnock argues, alienates IVCF students from an institution to which they have a right to contribute. "We'd better turn this situation around or it will bury us," he counselled ominously near the end of his first lecture.

In his final, lecture Pinnock explored how students might respond to the bias against God at McMaster. He began this lecture by outlining some methods and principles of Christian apologetics[124] so students would be equipped to respond to their peers' and instructors' occasional discrimination. "After you have named and understood the problem, don't stop there. You have the hottest thing going and you can deal with the bias against you. God has given you minds and hearts for you to do this," he reminded them. Then he cautioned students not to feel overwhelmed by the opposition they experience, and not to wallow in "us-versus-them" rhetoric. However, echoing throughout his presentations was a polemical tone which he acknowledged when at the end of his lecture he admitted: "But I realize I may have contributed to [the oppositional rhetoric] by my talks this weekend."

Pinnock encouraged the forty-five participants at the retreat to conceptualize their alienation as a function of a potent, sophisticated, but not irreversible bias against God,

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[124] For example, Pinnock mentioned the following arguments in favour of Christianity and against metaphysical naturalism: that human experience is better explained by Christianity; that religion is basic to all humans; that metaphysical naturalism cannot explain human imagination; the historicity of Jesus' resurrection; and the transformative effect that salvation has on individuals' lives.

themselves, and their worldview. His remedy for this predicament is twofold. First, evangelicals should hone their intellectual skills so they know how to respond articulately to the secular bias (Noll 1994). Second, believers should appeal to the rights all minority groups enjoy in principle in a pluralistic institution. If evangelicals' attempts to introduce their intellectual perspective into broader conversations within the academy fail, they should employ the same forms of protest favoured by other minority groups seeking fair representation.[125]

On the one hand, by exhorting retreat participants to rejoin the "biased" academic discourse through their contributions to the "common discussion in a pluralistic institution," Pinnock intended to evidence and then ultimately to bridge the growing gap which estranges conservative Protestants from the secular university. On the other hand, fortress rhetoric predominated in his presentations, both of which were delivered in a defensive sermonic style. While students should try to enter the "common discussion" permitted by pluralism, they were reminded repeatedly that there is actually "no common ground between Christianity and secularism."

Of course, not every IVCF student faces intellectual opposition in his or her classes. Most Engineering and Commerce students, for example, looked at me blankly when I asked them about the intellectual variety of otherness. Although they are creationists, these students almost never formally confront evolutionary theory in their

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[125] In this regard, Pinnock suggested similar campaign tactics to the picketing, letter writing, boycotts, and petitioning employed by gays and lesbians, ethnic minorities, and the disabled. IVCF students were noticeably surprised by and resistant to his suggestions that they should make public their opposition to the secular biases of the university.

classes. "I don't feel alienated or anything like that when I'm in classes, because they mostly just focus on science, on how to get things done," Sam responded to this issue (cf. Grant 1986:69).[126]

In fact, not all students who are even directly exposed to challenging ideas such as evolution, atheism, homosexual rights, egalitarianism, or perspectivalism necessarily suffer extensive estrangement. Some students simply treat these theories as elements of the false or at most partially true non-Christian teachings they must assimilate at university. These pragmatic students learn and reiterate whatever is required for them to do well in the given course; their intellectual filters thus protect their beliefs from some of the atheistic implications of their learning. In these cases, the negotiation which does occur is minimal. Insofar as these students permit such perceived falsehoods to enter their minds, they have compromised with the non-Christian ethos of the classroom. However, on the whole, this compromise is a temporary means to an end which requires a minor concession on the part of the student.

Although some IVCF members did not report significant levels of intellectual estrangement, virtually all the students I interviewed reported feeling separated from the secular ethos in another way. This brings us to the second and essentially social form

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[126] George Marsden (1982:163) and George Grant (1986:68) observe that evangelicalism and fundamentalism are perfectly suited to the technological impetus so central to North American culture. This strand of our culture does not present evangelicals with significant problems because it does not require individuals engaging in it to explore the presuppositions of a particular operation or object. In Mark Noll's (1994) study of the role of evangelicals in contemporary intellectual life, he demonstrates that evangelical academics often avoid more abstract theoretical work, opting, as Marsden and Berger suggest, for more discrete pragmatic studies.

of what I have called specific evangelical estrangement. This second variety of evangelical undergraduate otherness is by far the most common form experienced by IVCF students. While only some of them must ponder on a regular basis contentious theories such as evolution, Freudianism and Marxism, all students spend a portion of their time at McMaster in the company of non-Christians. Social estrangement refers to the experience of feeling excluded from significant elements of undergraduate socializing, especially those components associated with drinking and sexual activity.

During interviews and casual conversations, all but a small minority of IVCF members revealed strikingly similar experiences of social alienation. Commenting on the differences between herself and her non-Christian peers, Wanda admitted that "Sometimes I feel like a goody-goody here.... I feel like I can't always be part of the conversations going on around me." Similarly, commenting on his feelings of estrangement, Frank said: "With non-Christians it's sometimes kinda awkward. I'm very much aware of the differences between us." In fact, for some students, social alienation does not simply separate them from the occasional secular conversation; it inhibits them from participating in almost all non-Christian social activities. Hope, a nursing student from a Canadian Reformed background, shared with me her sense that

> I feel cut off, you know, different from non-Christians. Sometimes I just feel like a sissy because I'm not doing the big Thing To Do. I guess that's why I have so few non-Christian friends -- because I find it easier to avoid the situation altogether.[127]

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[127] During interviews, I asked participants to estimate the approximate percentage of their McMaster friends associated with the IVCF. Participants were also asked to estimate the percentage of all their (McMaster-related and non-McMaster-related) friends who are Christians. Hope answered "70%" to the first question and "80%" to the

Many IVCF students are apprehensive about appearing to reject two major and often related elements of undergraduate socializing: sex and drinking.

Among IVCF students there is a basic sense of uneasiness with the role of alcohol in the undergraduate culture. For most IVCF students, suspicion about alcohol has been a significant element of their self-understanding since they were children. During interviews, all but two of the sixty participants expressed the view that drunkenness is immoral. While most of them qualify this conviction by adding that moderate consumption of alcohol is acceptable in certain controlled environments, a vocal minority of fundamentalist students in the group believe that all drinking is "un-Christian."

One night during the May 1996 mission to Lithuania (intended to foster evangelical university groups), the McMaster "team" decided to go to Rita's, a relatively expensive restaurant in Vilnius.[128] Attached to this fashionable American-style restaurant is a bar which would be virtually indistinguishable from many trendy "roadhouse" bars in North America. While we were waiting in the bar to be seated at our table, one of the team members and I turned to each other and remarked, almost simultaneously, that we would like to try a Lithuanian beer. A few other members of the team overheard this conversation and very quickly the issue was being discussed in hushed tones among the whole group. After the two team leaders consulted each of the

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second. Another Canadian Reformed participant answered these questions with "80%" and "90%" respectively; a woman with a Brethren background answered "95%" and "95%" respectively. The reluctance to maintain large numbers of non-Christian friendships is typical of students such as these three fundamentalist members of the IVCF.

[128] Full dinners cost approximately six Canadian dollars.

other team members, they gave us permission to order the drinks. Since all of the "team money" supporting the mission trip came from donations from team members' home churches and families (most of whom would not approve of alcohol), the team leaders decided that it would not be appropriate for us to buy beer with the team's money.[129] As a result, four of the ten of us in the group ordered drinks and paid for them with our own money.

Once the beer negotiations were completed, one of the women in the group expressed her amazement to Steve, the team member who had proposed ordering the beer: "Wow, I can't believe you drink. I never would have guessed," she exclaimed. The cognitive dissonance she experienced when she learned that a highly respected fellow team member also consumes alcohol reflects this woman's strict fundamentalist up-bringing. Steve, on the other hand, became a Christian in his teens without the support of his family, and thus has less austere standards with respect to alcohol consumption.[130]

The same tensions over alcohol consumption that led to friction between these two IVCF members during the Lithuania mission also exist within the IVCF chapter at

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[129] The money required for this trip (approximately $3000) was raised individually and then pooled before we left Canada. This system allowed one person in the team to manage all of the expenses for the entire team. My portion of the "team money" was derived from a grant from the McMaster School of Graduate Studies.

[130] Alcohol is, in many evangelical circles, a problematic symbol of dangerous and forbidden pleasures. Near the end of the Lithuania trip a team member from a Brethren background told the team repeatedly that she was going to "break free" from the strict moral code that she had internalized from her childhood. Her first act of liberation was drinking a beer at a trendy restaurant in Vilnius.

McMaster. On several occasions, I have observed participants casting aspersions on the moral rectitude of fellow members who consume alcohol. Nevertheless, although divergent views on the issue of drinking occasionally create strains between members, most participants accept these conflicts as tolerable consequences of the intra-chapter denominational diversity.

However, a significant degree of social alienation is generated by the differences between the relatively permissive non-Christian Canadian attitudes toward alcohol[131] and the abstemious or abstinent policies of IVCF members.

During an interview, Hugh, a graduate student, observed that

Conflicts might arise [between himself and non-Christians] if, for example, someone invites me to go out drinking. One night this happened, and I went out with one guy, but decided not to drink. After a while it became obvious to the guy who invited me that I wasn't going to get drunk that night, so he stopped calling me to go out. That was a little sad, but I guess I understand his position.

Peter, a third year Arts and Science student, was more unequivocal about his position. He said

I won't hang out with my non-Christian friends when they're drinking, and this definitely separates me from them. It's hard to be different sometimes. IV helps because it's a place where I have like-minded friends and where drinking is not such a big deal.

The second major source of social otherness for IVCF students pertains to the differences between their virtually unanimous endorsement of pre-marital sexual

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[131] See Government of Canada (1994); also Carroll (1995).

abstinence and their non-Christian peers' comparable leniency on the issue.[132] During interviews, I asked students to describe their perspectives on pre-marital sexual activity. Every student I met embraced abstinence as the only appropriate Christian policy. Because of the discomfort many participants seemed to experience when we discussed sexuality, I was reluctant to ask them about the extent or details of their sexual experiences. However, occasionally the usually brief conversation on this topic evoked information well beyond the scope of my original and limited questions about their personal standards.

In fact, several students indicated that their relationships are not or have not always been completely chaste. During a conversation with Cindy, a self-defined fundamentalist woman who seemed comfortable discussing the issue of sex, I asked about the limits she set on her physical relations with her partner. "Oh, kissing is okay, but we never do anything horizontal," she replied. Cindy was willing to answer this question, but her tone and posture conveyed clearly that this statement marked the end of that part of our conversation. The other participants who have shared this intimate aspect of their lives with me have adopted some version of Cindy's policy (cf. Wulf, Prentice, Hansum, Ferrar, Spilka, 1984).

A few members of the group chose to tell me about the sexual experiences they had before becoming Christians. When discussing these events or relationships, participants are usually quite frank. These students typically describe their pre-Christian

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[132] See Government of Canada (1990); also Carroll (1995); Salts (1994); Woodruff (1986).

intimacies as instances of debauchery, bewilderment, or peer pressure. Their universally

unfulfilling sexual histories are described as the early and dark chapters within the meta-

narrative of their eventual salvation (cf. Fernandez 1974; Strozier 1994; see life history

of Rebecca in Chapter Two).

Almost all of the members I interviewed have very strong opinions about their

peers' relative promiscuity. A few participants echoed Harriet, a first year Psychology

student, who stated bluntly: "Universities are cesspools of STD's and alcohol." Others

provided more elaborate answers. For example, in response to my question about social

alienation, David, a first year Science student, commented that

> In residence, peoples' goals are so different. All they want to do on the weekend
> is get drunk and get laid. I believe moral standards have really changed to
> whatever is good for the individual.... Sometimes it's hard to get my Christian
> and non-Christian friends to hang out together because my non-Christian friends
> like to go to clubs and that. And I struggle with this whole club thing, too.
> Whenever I go out with them it makes me stumble through lust. I try not to look
> at girls, but it's hard. I mean, you know what I mean. It's a bar, and there's the
> music and all the girls and the way they're dressed. I just try to stay focused.

Simon explained that he experiences social alienation when he's watching movies.

> If I'm with non-Christians watching a movie and a sexual scene comes on I won't
> like it and they will. It's that simple. I mean, I have a fear of God and they
> don't. I can have a fresh start by asking God for forgiveness, but a non-Christian
> can't. So, I just usually look away and try not to think about it until the scene
> is over. But I don't make a big fuss about it or anything.

For many IVCF participants, the anti-Christian lifestyles and moral proclivities

of their secular peers are quintessentially localized in the residences. When I asked Steve

what sort of a person he thought he would be without IVCF, he replied, "Well, I'd

probably be a typical Joe Residence, drinking and having sex all the time." Vanessa also

experiences difficulties in her residence. She attributed her social alienation to her moral

standards, saying

> I think the fact that I have a fairly narrow worldview in terms of moral behaviour
> separates me from some people. This does create some tension. Like when the
> girls on my [residence] floor wanted to go to a strip club, I had to say no, and
> this was a bit awkward at first. But it's not a really negative thing. I actually
> felt they were missing out, not me.

In response to the social form of specific evangelical otherness, the IVCF

represents an alternative social institution with the features which seem to parallel those

of the secular student world. Simon, for example, indicated that because of the IVCF,

his social estrangement was not acute. "I mean, I'm not lonely, because I have IV

friends and I can always talk to God," he commented.[133] Even students who said

during our conversations that they experienced little or no estrangement often spoke of

the steps they took to avoid these feelings as soon as they arrived at McMaster's

residences. For example, Colin, a confident Commerce student, remarked that while he

was still in high school, he

> had heard a lot of stories of how Christians would come from small towns and
> go to university and be just totally overwhelmed by the life here, especially in the

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[133] The tendency for IVCF students to seek "refuge" in the chapter is not, however, without its critics within the group. During an interview, Harriet, one of the few liberal evangelicals in the chapter, commented that "A lot of people use IV as a hide-out from the real world of conflict and challenge and pain." Similarly, Ron, the most politically and theologically liberal member I met during fieldwork, commented that he was irritated because "A lot of people who are conservatives or fundamentalists use IV as a refuge to hide their conservative ideas instead of going out into the world where these ideas can be challenged. That really bugs me."

residences. I didn't want that to happen to me, so I looked for a Christian group to join as soon as I got here.

In December 1995, I attended an IVCF party which took place in the IVCF President's "student house" in Westdale, an affluent Hamilton neighbourhood in which many McMaster students reside. With the following two conspicuous exceptions, the event was indistinguishable from dozens of other undergraduate parties I have attended. First, there was no alcohol at the IVCF party, which meant that as the night wore on, there were no episodes of vomiting or other common alcohol-related mishaps. The absence of alcohol also seemed to subdue the conversations I participated in and observed. Second, although I was surprised to hear almost entirely non-Christian dance and "grunge" music that evening, when the dancing commenced in the living room, dancers did not touch each other. Men and women sometimes danced together, or in the same group, but I observed no conventional scenes of dance floor flirtation.

The IVCF offers its members almost daily opportunities to participate in explicitly evangelical social activities. In addition to their weekly events such as Large Group meetings, Small Group meetings, Friday Lunches, and Friday evening "concerts of prayer,"[134] students can attend special events such as barbecues, dessert fundraisers, progressive dinners, retreat weekends, cost suppers, parties, and semi-formal banquets. By participating in these events, evangelicals who are not comfortable in the established non-Christian contexts for undergraduate socializing (bars or parties) can still feel socially engaged in activities which parallel and yet differ from their secular analogues.

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[134] These prayer meetings are held in a university lounge and include singing, directed Bible reading and prayer exercizes.

By living according to moral principles which represent an implicit critique of prevailing and relatively permissive norms -- in short, by "walking the talk," as evangelicals sometimes say -- many students believe they are exemplifying the inherently superior Christian lifestyle (Hammond and Hunter 1984:232). During a conversation about the growth and vigour of the McMaster IVCF chapter, Harriet commented that McMaster was caught in a "downward moral spiral." She continued:

> When you have a group that's willing to challenge [the 'downward moral spiral'] and to stand against it but not to hide from it or separate from it, this will attract people. The world wants no rules, but like a kid it needs structures. People on my [residence] floor see me as an example and they need support and I think IV is like that as a group.

Nevertheless, very few IVCF students make obvious public displays of their moral rectitude (Ingram 1989). In other words, these students are not agitating to have the university return to its explicitly Baptist origins, discussed in Chapter One. Even the negotiation processes I discuss in this dissertation are not veiled attempts to reverse the effects of campus secularization or differentiation. Although many IVCF members might welcome a re-enchanting reversal in the nature and purposes of university life, most of these students are more concerned with finding ways of being faithful without being conspicuous or unauthentic (Baxter 1982). In other words, they want to remain others to non-Christians, but not to appear to be, so to speak, really other. Moreover, these students' desires simply to be liked by their non-Christian peers should not be overlooked. Not all of their interactions with non-Christians amount to witnessing

efforts.[135] Their attempts to edify non-Christians by example, are, by and large, discreet and polite, probably because IVCF students are aware that overt or self-righteous efforts would be neither welcomed nor successful.

As if he had anticipated the thesis of this chapter, David, a first year Arts and Science student commented that

> IV is an alternative to the social functions and social life of a secular campus. It's a great way to show people that they're missing out on the important things in life by living only for the pleasures of the moment instead of something eternal.

As well, readers will recall that at the end of her description of her social otherness, Vanessa commented: "But it's not a really negative thing. I actually felt they were missing out, not me."

I would argue that IVCF members experience an ambiguous sense of difference from their secular peers. My fieldwork with the IVCF suggests that it is inappropriate to assume that some form of estrangement from a dominant group is necessarily undesirable (Wuthnow 1989:182). In fact, largely because the group (*qua* alternative institution) facilitates the negotiation of contracts, it seems to enable students to transform their other-ed status from a wholly negative to a mainly positive experience. Furthermore, while participants' transformed sense of difference does cultivate personal integrity and corporate solidarity, it does not necessarily permanently estrange IVCF students from their non-Christian peers. On the contrary, because IVCF members

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[135] Because Hammond and Hunter (1984) emphasize the fortress-building function of witnessing (cf. Chapter One), they neglect the majority of non-witnessing social interactions between believers and non-believers.

employ a gentle form of "friendship evangelism," described in Chapter Seven,[136] to spread the gospel, the membrane between the Christian and non-Christian worlds is, as I have suggested, semi-permeable.

Participation in ritualized events provides another means of responding to the common evangelical experience of social difference. In the first few pages of this dissertation I described the IVCF's most well-attended and well-known event, the "Church at the John," an evening of worship and singing held in McMaster's largest bar. On the first Sunday evening of every month during the academic year, approximately five hundred and fifty boisterous students squeeze into the Downstairs John for two and a half hours. Most of the participants are McMaster students, but many are from evangelical youth groups, other universities and theological institutions in southern Ontario. The event includes prayers, skits, an inspirational message from a guest speaker, and the night's main drawing feature: two forty-five minute sets of energetic folk-rock praise music. There is some variation in the nature and ordering of some of these components, but the underlying structure of the evening remains fixed.

Anthropologist Victor Turner argues that during rituals, people move symbolically from one social state to another through a period or condition of "liminality." "Liminal entities," Turner writes, "are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner 1969:95). Although Turner is vague about the potential duration of liminal periods,

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[136] Friendship evangelism refers to the non-confrontational approach to witnessing in which the gospel is shared only in the context of a healthy friendship; but conversion is not the sole purpose of this relationship.

sociologist Bernice Martin (1979) argues plausibly that youths may be considered to be moving through a liminal stage that extends over a period of several years. Extending her argument to the university environment, undergraduates may be considered liminal during their three or four years at university.

Turner's typology of rituals includes those of "status reversal," in which individuals from low strata of society are allowed for a specified period of time to express dramatically[137] their frustrations at the inherent inequalities of a given social structure (Turner 1969:177). During such rituals, socially powerful members of society allow themselves (or are compelled) to assume positions on the social hierarchy much lower than those they occupy before and after the ritual. Turner asserts that "Rituals of status reversal...are thought of as bringing social structure and *communitas* into right mutual relation once again" (Turner 1969:178).[138]

The Church at the John is a ritual of status reversal because it gives the IVCF as a doubly othered group a prescribed space and time within which it can stage a symbolic *coup d'état*. After all, as the primary site for the initiation of sexual and drug and alcohol-related activities (cf. Willsie and Reimer 1980), the campus bar is, next to the residences, the most symbolically non-religious social space in the university. The timing of this ritual (Sunday night) guarantees that the regular occupants of the bar will

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[137] See Grimes (1990) and Turner (1974) for a discussion of the dramatic nature of rituals.

[138] Turner defines *communitas* as an unstructured or loosely structured model for human living in which interaction between individuals is not hierarchically ordered and often leads to some form of egalitarian "communion" (1969:96).

not be present. Consequently, in contrast to the Turnerian model, no individuals representing the dominant campus ethos are actually compelled to assume positions of powerlessness. However, in the smells of smoke and alcohol and in the location and popularity of the bar, the representatives of symbolic domination are metonymically signified. This metonymical presence was manifested clearly at the September 1995 Church at the John, when nearly six hundred participants entered the ritual space through a passageway reeking of an almost overpowering odour of vomit from the previous night's celebrations.

For one evening of every month, the IVCF transforms the Downstairs John into what the chapter's staff worker described as "the church on the world's turf, where nothing is sacred, sort of, but anything can happen." Once the John has been consecrated through prayers at the beginning of the evening,[139] an elaborate ritual of status reversal allows participants to enjoy their temporary ritually-granted hegemony. Such a ritual transformation must be temporary, since as Grimes explains, in Turner's paradigm, a ritual "masks social contradictions and enacts them.... The symbolic unification which ritual provides is, of course, an ideal one which lies, as it were, on top of very real divisions" (Grimes 1982:147). The Downstairs John is indeed "turf," contested space which no ritual can permanently deproblematize. However, achieving some form of evangelical *communitas* in such a secular setting allows evangelical

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[139] Mellonee Burnim refers to the saying of prayers as a means by which one can transform an explicitly secular setting into a "consecrated milieu" (Burnim 1989:58; cf. Kwabena 1989:111).

undergraduates to claim a symbolic victory over the ethos in which they often feel like

"aliens and exiles" (1 Peter 2:11).

Conclusion

While IVCF participants desire the acceptance of their secular peers, such an

aspiration is hardly unequivocal. For example, William lives in one of the McMaster

residences. While discussing what he considers the boorish and dionysian behaviour of

his neighbours, William remarked that "At [my residence] I just sorta feel like I'd like

to belong, but I'd like to belong in my own way." As well, during a conversation about

estrangement, Gillian said

> I know I am separated from other students, but that's because I'm a Christian and
> am holy and called to act differently. But I don't exactly feel alienated because
> I don't feel badly about this separation. It's not lonely. It's a growing thing.
> We are made more holy every day by being separate, but we are in the world and
> can't therefore alienate other students from us. Even by living in the world, we
> are purified.

Frank also commented that "Alienation is not really a terrible thing. It reminds us of

who we are. We're aliens in this world. I mean, really, this world is not our permanent

home." Finally, during a conversation we had following the winter retreat, Lewis

asserted that

> I don't think Christians should complain about being marginalized from the
> world, because in this world we are in self-imposed exile. We have to accept
> what the world will do to us. I don't agree with what Clark [Pinnock] said about
> the protests and rallies, because we should accept that the world will want to
> isolate us.

While most IVCF students I encountered during fieldwork would like to feel more welcome in non-Christian social arenas, they simultaneously cultivate their alienation from non-Christians so they can "belong in [their] own way." Their enhancement of their own otherness is directed at maintaining boundaries, or what might be better understood as a "semi-permeable membrane" between the evangelical and secular worlds. Although the term "boundaries" seems to connote the "fortress" strategy, the IVCF membrane facilitates a variety of types of evangelical interactions with and responses to the non-Christian world. Whether the site of negotiation is the biology classroom, the residence bedroom, or the campus bar, the IVCF empowers each student to determine the extent to which he or she will accommodate or resist the non-Christian ethos. In short, the contracts which emerge out of this process enable members to conceive of their social alienation as an ambiguous but edifying experience (Wuthnow 1989:182).

Among IVCF students, I observed a self-initiated reconstruction of their own otherness. This reinterpretation provides participants with a new and positive way of understanding their difference from their non-Christian peers. Estrangement from their secular peers and professors constitutes proof for the IVCF's fundamentalists that they have not been corrupted by "the world," in effect, proof that the non-Christian world remains alien to them.[140] However, even the relatively liberal evangelicals in the group

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[140] During one Small Group meeting, we discussed non-Christians' opinions of evangelicals. Barbara, a Science student, admitted that she "used to be called 'church girl' in high school. But in the Bible, it says 'Blessed are you who are persecuted in my name.' This makes me feel better, for sure.... And in university I feel different than other people because I try to do what the Bible says -- especially about drinking and sex and bars and all that. This sometimes pulls me away from people. But this [alienation] is okay, because I know I'm going the right way and that in the end I will get a huge

are aware and appreciative of the edifying dimensions of their intellectual and social separation from the secular ethos. Nevertheless, largely because of the bridge approach to the sometimes troubling contexts of the classroom and the residence, the membrane between IVCF members and non-Christians is semi-permeable. Broadly speaking, a balance between fortress and bridge strategies enables students to fulfil three basic needs: to remain loyal to their religious convictions, to protect their sense of difference from non-Christian others, and to participate in McMaster's social and academic life.

In conclusion, IVCF participants are affected by both general and specific forms of otherness. The first form is experienced by evangelical and non-Christian students alike. It stems from the amorphous anxiety many contemporary undergraduates apprehend when they peer over the walls of the university and perceive a society and economy which strike them as unpredictable and unforgiving. In response to this situation, non-Christians and evangelicals sometimes descend into the shapeless anxiety which characterizes Douglas Coupland's Generation X. However, because evangelicals believe that God has a well-organized and loving plan for each of their lives,[141] their worries do not, as William said above, render them "paranoid or terrified" about their prospects.

IVCF participants also describe another major form of alienation which originates in their separation from what they perceive to be the "anti-Christian" foundations of

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reward -- eternal life and the chance to meet God and be with him forever."

[141] Note the difference between this assertion and the suggestion that they maintain this belief in God's plan because it helps them to cope.

contemporary secular culture in general and of McMaster in particular. This specific form of otherness may be further sub-divided into intellectual and social varieties. In response to these two types of estrangement, members of the McMaster IVCF chapter negotiate complex and dynamic contracts. Such a process provides members of this group with a means of maintaining a fortress to protect their religious integrity, as well as a means of constructing bridges to foster meaningful and constructive interactions with their secular peers and professors.

Chapter Five

The Role of Women

I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit (Joel 2:28).

Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach
or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent (1 Timothy 2:11).

There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no
longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

Whenever I describe the IVCF to my own peers, they almost invariably express

their astonishment at the fact that at virtually every IVCF event I attend, approximately

seventy percent of the participants are women. Perhaps this is not unusual in the world

of contemporary Protestantism; after all, in many of the churches IVCF members attend

every Sunday, women outnumber men. However, the proportion of women to men is

not as high in evangelical churches as it is in the IVCF (Bibby 1987:102; Rawlyk

1996:143). As well, womens' roles are usually much more tightly controlled in many

if not most evangelical churches than they are in the IVCF. In fact, IVCF participants

who attend churches in the Fellowship Baptist, Christian Reformed, and Brethren

traditions may never see a woman in the pulpit; or, if women are allowed to speak at the front of the church, they are not usually permitted to become senior pastors or interpret the Bible.[142] Therefore, bearing these students' church affiliations in mind, one might expect that IVCF members would not welcome feminist values in their religious lives.

At the IVCF functions I have attended, however, women are in no way restricted in their abilities to lead worship, deliver sermons, organize events, or perform any of the myriad tasks involved in maintaining the group. In fact, the chapter's paid Staff Worker is a woman; and she tries to ensure that the position of President alternates between a male and a female student every other year. I began to wonder how to make sense of the high level of female participation at every McMaster IVCF event I attended, especially in light of the fact that the scholarly literature on evangelicalism in North America often depicts the tradition as inimical or opposed to the egalitarian or feminist values that are so prevalent at universities (Bibby 1993:216; Byle Bruland 1989; McCarthy Brown 1994; Patterson 1988:62).[143] This depiction was confirmed during my research, as I found that many, but not all, of the evangelical women I met maintain non-egalitarian views on the role of women. For example, Denise, a first year student from a Fellowship Baptist background, commented firmly that she could not accept a woman's preaching or church leadership, and then related this to her own family

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[142] Since many evangelical churches operate with a fair degree of autonomy from their denominational organizations, there may be some exceptions to these generalizations.

[143] See Brinkerhoff and Mackie (1985) for evidence of a correlation between high levels of religiosity and conservative views on gender roles.

structure, saying, "I mean, I really respect that my mom can submit to my dad's decisions, like it says she should in the Bible." Winifred, a first year student with a charismatic (and thus typically more egalitarian) background, distinguished between preaching and leadership. "Okay, I mean, I could accept a woman preacher. I have no problem with that, because the Holy Spirit can show up anywhere, right? But I don't think a woman should be a pastor." Like Denise, Winifred also linked this belief to her future family setting. "When I get married," Winifred explained, "I'll accept my husband's decisions. My husband will be the head of the house, like in the Bible. This'll be really hard, because I'm *so* stubborn; but that's definitely what I'll do."

During a conversation about the high numbers of women in the chapter, Carla, the IVCF Staff Worker, attributed the high level of female attendance to a socialization process which imparts to believers the view that women are naturally inclined or morally obliged to be more publically religious than men. "Their churches socialize them to believe certain things about what men and women are supposed to do," Carla explained.[144] These students' denominational and familial backgrounds clearly influence their opinions about controversial issues such as the general *status of women* in their traditions, including their rights to preach or even simply to speak in their churches. However, while church socialization might explain why high numbers of IVCF women attend and help facilitate the group's events, it does not explain the high level of participation and leadership the IVCF allows, and in some cases, expects, of

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[144] See Bendroth (1993), Byle Bruland (1989), Patterson (1980), Davidman (1991) for interpretations of the voluntary involvement of women in religious traditions which exclude women from official avenues of power.

women. In fact, given that most IVCF women attend churches which restrict their religious and organizational leadership, one might expect these students to play analogous auxiliary roles within the IVCF; but quite the opposite seems to occur and is openly encouraged by the group's Staff Worker and many members of the Executive. So, while socialization must be kept in mind during any consideration of the role of women in the group, it is only one possible component of a larger interpretation.

Some IVCF members suggested to me that many of the evangelical women active in the group are simply looking for suitable evangelical husbands and are unsatisfied with the courting opportunities available through secular social activities. However, this explanation incorrectly presupposes that evangelical women are more interested in finding religiously like-minded partners than are evangelical men. My conversations about this topic with IVCF men and women do not support this hypothesis; both men and women from both groups are, in general, planning to marry Christians. In other words, while the desire for Christian courtship is likely one of the explanations for the disproportionate numbers of women in the IVCF, this incentive alone does not explain why women so significantly outnumber men at IVCF events.

A more likely explanation for the high levels of female participation in the IVCF is that in addition to experiencing the economic and psycho-social forms of otherness I described in Chapter Four, evangelical women experience an additional form of estrangement. Before I describe this third and uniquely female form of alienation and the IVCF's responses to it, a brief detour into the role of women in evangelicalism will illuminate this community's major concerns.

Although it is difficult to generalize about a tradition which encompasses such theological and social diversity, it is nonetheless possible to highlight some common themes in conventional evangelical constructions of female gender. While there are surely exceptions to this norm,[145] until the latter stages of the current century, most evangelical women have followed the pattern one might expect from women in other male dominated religious and cultural institutions. That is, women have generally understood themselves primarily as mothers and wives and only exceptionally as independent career women. As Bendroth observes, historically, "The doctrine of submission, with its heavy emphasis on marriage, assumed that the proper sphere of the Christian woman was the home; outside activities were clearly secondary" (Bendroth 1993:96).

Byle Bruland (1989) and Bendroth (1993) argue that until the 1970s, evangelicalism in North America was not significantly affected by the feminist metamorphoses in definitions of womanhood which began to occur in earnest in the 1960s.[146] Bendroth writes that evangelical history had "provided no strong, public feminine voice or rhetoric of sexual equality. As a result, feminist ideals penetrated [the evangelical] leadership slowly" (Bendroth 1993:120).

With emphases on universal human rights, autonomy, and freedom from structural oppression, the various forms of feminism are quintessentially modern, or perhaps post-

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[145] See Cox's (1995:125) discussion of Aimee Semple McPherson, a Pentecostal preacher who represents one such exception.

[146] As Epstein (1981) and Hardesty (1984) observe, the changes in North American Protestantism and the surrounding culture are not confined to the present century.

modern social movements.[147] As feminist Byle Bruland argues, for many evangelicals, feminism represents a strong variety of secularizing modernism (Byle Bruland 1989:144; Barron 1990; Ehrenreich, Hess, Jacobs 1986; Kersten 1994; Spretnak 1982). Since evangelicalism (and fundamentalism, its less conciliatory sibling) arose at least partly as a form of religious resistance to aspects of modernity (Marty 1987; Rawlyk 1990; Stackhouse 1993), it is not surprising that many evangelicals, including many of those in the IVCF, have been reluctant to embrace the ideal of gender equality espoused by the various forms of feminism.

On the basis of his ethnographic work among contemporary American evangelicals, anthropologist Randall Balmer argues that for these Christians, the changing status of women in North American culture is a harbinger, or "bellwether" of our culture's moral decline (Balmer 1994:59). He writes: "Perhaps nothing has contributed so greatly to fundamentalists' feelings of cultural dislocation than the changing views of women in recent decades" (Balmer 1994:54). Feminist scholar Karen McCarthy Brown argues that in response to what they perceive as the increasing secularity of our culture and the specific challenges posed by feminism, evangelicals struggle to maintain their faith as the "Archimedean point" in a chaotic world (McCarthy Brown 1994:180).

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[147] See Finson (1995) for an historical account of the development of feminist liberation theology. See Backhouse and Flaherty (1992) for a history of the women's movement in Canada and the United States. For an account of the challenges women face in the academic world, see Caplan (1993).

It is not uncommon for academic commentators to depict the evangelical tradition as a monolith of anti-feminism if not misogyny.[148] However, there are both liberal and conservative movements within evangelicalism as there are within other traditions such as Islam and Roman Catholicism. Some evangelical liberals are quite comfortable with the equality of women in the church. IVCF members who belong to the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, for example, attend churches which may accept the ordination and leadership of women.[149]

Moreover, the exclusion of women from full involvement in evangelical religious life is often problematized directly by IVCF students and their mentors. For example, during one Friday Lunch meeting, Joyce Bellous, a self-defined evangelical feminist[150] professor at the McMaster Divinity College, discussed Galatians 3:28 and 1 Timothy

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[148] McCarthy Brown argues that the marginalization of women within evangelicalism is an extreme manifestation of a continuous pattern of male dominance evidenced in all other Christian denominations (McCarthy Brown 1994:175). According to McCarthy Brown, in order to defend one of the last and crumbling bastions of traditional culture, evangelicals attempt to exert control over women. See Balmer (1994:49) and Byle Bruland (1989:140-44) for discussions of the transformation of the depiction of women within Protestantism (and elsewhere): from temptresses before the eighteenth century to delicate personifications of virtue by the nineteenth century.

[149] I distinguish between the ordination and leadership of women because while the former is beginning to be accepted by certain congregations and denominations, acceptance of the latter does not necessarily follow. For example, Convention Baptist congregations may choose to exclude women from senior leadership positions, even though their governing body permits female leadership (Anderson and Clarke 1990:94). As well, Bibby observes that while Canadian Pentecostals also permit the ordination of women, potential female pastors have difficulty finding employment (Bibby 1993:217; cf. Anderson and Clarke 1990:95).

[150] Martina, an Arts and Science student, was the only participant to describe herself as a feminist. "Yeah, and I'm a Christian feminist. Most IVers think this is an oxymoron. I've had some very *serious* conversations with IV people about this whole issue. I feel tolerated by them, even though some of them do try to prove I'm wrong."

2:11, two of the epigrams of this chapter (cf. Barron 1990).[151] While commenting on

these texts, she argued that

> some Christians will use Timothy to say that women are different but equal; but really, that whole idea is a farce. Normally it is used by people who really see women as inferior, or who want to make sure women don't get to share in all of the work of the church.[152]

During the meeting, I asked Professor Bellous what she thinks about women who accept

the "different but equal" notion. She replied,

> Well, I would say that there's no reason women should participate in their own oppression. And during my experiences with groups like this and in churches, I've noticed that women are usually the best enforcers of this idea, even though it is not in their best interests.

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[151] Bellous, a respected member of the evangelical intellectual community, is also the mother of one of the most influential members of the chapter. During the meeting in question, Bellous argued that there is an apparent contradiction in the Bible between the universality implied in the Galatians passage and the strict hierarchy implied in the excerpt from Timothy. Fundamentalist IVCF participants tend to favour the latter text, while more liberal evangelicals embrace the former. According to Bellous, the Galatians text is applicable to modern life because it appears to be a radical principle aimed at undoing the structure of First Century society (and would be thus typical of Jesus' radicalism on other issues). The Timothy passage, on the other hand, Bellous argued, is aimed at a specific problem within a specific church and is thus not applicable to modern Christians.

[152] One male participant at this meeting contended that since woman was derived from Adam's rib, Paul's comments in Timothy should be obeyed. When Professor Bellous followed her alternative interpretation of the creation story with an almost cursory observation that the questioner was obviously predisposed toward his interpretation because he is a man, and she toward hers because she is a woman, the man seemed stunned. "That's a cultural interpretation of the Bible," he said. "I've never thought of that before. Wow."

Although my conversations with IVCF participants indicate that Bellous's perspective is not representative of the views of the majority of members, her approach does signify emerging issues within the group. While the "different but equal" status of women is still a major element of the contracts IVCF students and other evangelicals negotiate between their faith and feminism, the problematic marginalization of women within conservative Protestantism is gradually becoming a significant component of IVCF discourse.

Sociologists Stacey and Gerard observe that contemporary

> [e]vangelical theology and institutions are serving as remarkably flexible resources for renegotiating gender and family relationships, and not exclusively in reactionary or masculinist directions (Stacey and Gerard 1990:99).

Thus, many evangelical groups function as bridges between evangelicalism, which is traditionally anti-feminist, and feminism, which is traditionally anti-evangelical. As we shall see, groups such as the IVCF are able to mitigate some elements of the feminist critique of the patriarchal nature of conservative faith. Specifically, these groups permit a more neutral version of the egalitarian values of feminism to be incorporated into evangelical worldviews. Stacey and Gerard (1990) argue that as a result of bridging groups such as the IVCF, feminism has had a considerable influence on evangelicalism.[153]

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[153] See Stacey and Gerard (1990) for an account of the interpenetration of evangelicalism and feminism. See Fowler (1986) and Bendroth (1993) for discussions of the role of feminism and women within evangelicalism and fundamentalism.

Nevertheless, although the story of women in evangelicalism is not one of simple or unrelenting marginalization, of the sixty IVCF members I interviewed during my fieldwork, only ten of them attend churches where women are granted full equality. So, regardless of the influence feminism is supposed to have had or has actually had on their tradition, over eighty percent of the believers in my study attend churches which prohibit women from full involvement.

Evangelical university women affirm those aspects of feminism that grant them equal access to education and employment; however, because feminism is often harshly critical of conservative Christianity, the inclusion of feminist ideals in evangelicalism has resulted in ambiguous and problematic religious worldviews.

Now let us turn our attention to the third and uniquely female form of otherness to which I alluded earlier. In Chapter Four, I described two sorts of estrangement: one which affects both evangelicals and non-evangelicals and is fostered by unpredictable economic conditions; the other which is characterized by IVCF participants' feelings of dislocation from the sometimes antagonistic or "anti-Christian" ethos of McMaster as a secular university. IVCF women, however, must contend with an additional sort of difference, which for the sake of parallelism, I call "specifically female" alienation.

I would argue that this additional variety of estrangement is partly shared by many undergraduate women and partly unique to evangelical women. Earlier I discussed the role of feminism within evangelicalism, a tradition which strikes many as hostile toward women. However, feminists have argued that the contemporary university is the site of an analogous incongruity; namely, between its formal institutional espousal of

egalitarianism and its informal support of masculine hegemony. Specifically, like non-Christian female students, IVCF women must find ways to cope with what some feminists consider the inherent male dominance manifested by educational institutions in which male professors still significantly outnumber female professors. However, the apparent maleness of the North American university system transcends the mere inequality of the male to female ratio among instructors and the conspicuous absence of women authors from course reading lists. A more intractable obstacle to egalitarianism, some critics argue, is the maleness of the styles of thinking and interaction expected at universities.

Many feminists (Code 1991; Gilligan 1982; Hubbard 1988; Keller 1985; Spanier 1984) have argued that the modern university relies on what Canadian philosopher Lorraine Code calls an "objectivist" view of the world which emphasizes "abstract" and uncontextualized facts and theories. In addition, feminists such as Janice Moulton suggest that the interaction in contemporary university classrooms manifests what she calls "adversarialism," a communication style based on the confrontation between two aggressive intellectual parties (Moulton 1983). Underlying feminist critiques of the dominant styles of learning at most universities is the controversial theory that women in our culture are socialized to value relationality and social context rather than autonomy and isolated facts.[154] Psychologists Boverie, Huffman, Meier, and Philbin (1995), as

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[154] I advance this hypothesis cautiously, since this speculation is based on contestable theories about the differences between women and men and needs to be tested more thoroughly than I have been able to date. The most obvious criticism one might make of this hypothesis is that it is based on an "essentialist" interpretation of women and men.

well as Hedges and Nowell (1995), argue that there is considerable congruence between mens' culturally conditioned learning styles and university education, because both are abstract and competitive; whereas womens' comparatively experiential and cooperative styles of learning are not as easily accommodated by the educational institutions most of them attend. Thus both evangelical and non-Christian women may feel alienated by an objectivist and adversarial academic framework (Gilligan 1982), which privileges a culturally defined male mode of thinking about our worlds.

I should note that IVCF women do not complain explicitly to me about their estrangement from the "objectivist" paradigm which feminists argue undergirds the modern university. However, this paradigm is a relatively recent feminist hypothesis (cf. Code 1991), advanced in philosophical language and publications and primarily in the past fifteen years. While Steel, Warner, and Strieber (1992) report that most North American university students are aware and appreciative of the basic tenets of feminism, the specific insight of the philosophical maleness of the contemporary academy may not have filtered down significantly to the average female student. Therefore, I think it is plausible to speculate that evangelical women may, as I have just suggested, *experience* this form of marginalization from their universities without being fully *aware* of it.

Of course, the prevailing ethos of university life is not characterized solely by objectivism and adversarialism. In many ways, the moral permissivism and feminism which are integral components of this institution, also disparage the conservative gender

roles embraced by most female evangelical students.[155] Many IVCF women experience gender-specific alienation as a function of the disjuncture between their faith, which models conservative gender roles for women, and the university, which encourages so-called "progressive roles."

In Womens' Studies classes, for example, evangelical women have to endure their non-Christian classmates's allegations that evangelicalism, or, for that matter Christianity itself, is oppressive to women. Helen, for example, said:

> My Womens' Studies classes are so violently anti-Christian it's not even funny. In the other classes I'm taking in Nursing, people aren't nearly as outspoken. But in Womens' Studies, I really realize my beliefs are different than most peoples'. I don't say much when people are talking [critically about Christianity] because I know from experience that I'll get jumped on. One woman asked me how I could even be a Christian at all. She asked how I could experience the love of a God who oppresses women. I just couldn't think of any answers.

Helen attends a Canadian Reformed church, where women are prohibited not only from preaching but also from voting on issues of church policy and administration; so she is well acquainted with the disempowerment to which her classmate was alluding. Helen's silence in the face of her peer's criticism implies neither agreement nor disagreement with the opinions stated nor with the historical record. In other words, caught between the world of her traditional faith and her secular education, Helen has decided not to choose either one -- *yet*. Opting exclusively for the former is no longer plausible after she has learned about Christianity's complicity in women's inequality.

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[155] Evangelical men, on the other hand, are not as affected by these components because these elements of the modern university presuppose mens' rights and moral autonomy, beliefs already entrenched in male evangelical gender roles.

However, limiting herself to a secular worldview is also untenable since it would require

her to betray her deepest commitments. Commenting on the capacity of contemporary

evangelicalism to respond to this predicament, Stacey and Gerard write:

> Women's turn to evangelicalism represents a search not just for spirituality, but
> for stability and security in turbulent times; but it is a strategy that refuses to
> forfeit, and even builds upon, the feminist critique of men and the 'traditional'
> family. Acute 'pro-family' and spiritual longings in this period commingle with
> an uncompleted but far from repudiated feminist revolution. Part of the genius
> of the postfeminist evangelical strategy is its ability to straddle both sides of this
> ambivalent divide (Stacey and Gerard 1990:111).

The explicit conflict Helen experienced in her Womens' Studies class is not

common among IVCF women, most of whom do not take courses in this department.

However, all of the women I interviewed experienced at least some form of the third

type of alienation I have introduced in this chapter. As we shall see shortly, in the face

of the clash between their faith and the insights and evidence of secular thought, many

IVCF women opt for ambiguous solutions like the one Helen has adopted.

There are at least three ways in which IVCF women and the group as a whole

seem to address the third specifically female form of otherness I have addressed in this

chapter.

The first response to this alienation is to construe Jesus as a lover. During

interviews, female IVCF participants almost unanimously affirmed pre-marital celibacy

as the appropriate Christian stance on sexual activity (cf. Chapter Four). In fact, many

of them proudly volunteered the information that they are virgins. Remaining chaste in

a social *milieu* which celebrates sexual activity requires women to take an unpopular

stand among their sexually active peers,[156] a stance which produces alienation among these students.

In the perfect, righteous persona of Jesus, however, IVCF women are provided with an acceptable focus for affections which might otherwise be expressed toward men. Psychologist Charles Strozier writes that there is "among [evangelical] women a sexualization of their relationship with God; one [woman] spoke of her need to make love to Jesus" (Strozier 1994: 127). As far as I am concerned, Strozier overstates his case. In contrast, I would describe IVCF affections for Jesus as quasi-erotic, because while IVCF women do not seem to me to be explicitly sexually attracted to Jesus, the passion with which female participants express their love for him strikes me as very reminiscent of the way other women in their age group speak of long distance human lovers.

The portrait of Jesus as lover is painted in a variety of ways. One of the female guest speakers at the Church at the John used the following image to explain God's loyalty to his followers. She said:

> God does not rape our hearts. God is the consummate lover. No, really. I know that sounds strange, but it's true.... Do any of you have thoughts in your mind you know you shouldn't have? I know I do, especially for my age. The thing to remember is that amid all this, Jesus is the perfect lover. He's the one who won't let you down.

Participants' quasi-erotic love for Jesus is also expressed in many of the repetitive, yearning songs sung at IVCF events. In "How I Love You," participants sing

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[156] See Government of Canada (1990); Carroll (1995); Salts (1994); Woodruff (1986).

> How I love you,
> you are the one,
> you are the one
> how I love you,
> you are the one,
> God's risen Son,
> you are the one for me

As well, the song "As the Deer Panteth," based on the 42nd Psalm, includes the following lyrics:

> As the deer panteth for the water
> So my soul longs after you.
> You alone are my heart's desire,
> And I long to worship you.
> I want you more than gold or silver
> You alone are the real joy-giver
> And apple of my eye.

Although men also participate in the above songs, when IVCF men actually speak of Jesus, they refer to him as judge, father, teacher, mentor, and least frequently, friend. On the other hand, the vision of Jesus as the kind, sensitive recipient and unconditional requiter of love, is most appealing to evangelical women, perhaps because they are socialized to value intimate relationships.

The IVCF offers women spoken and sung opportunities to channel their quasi-erotic energies into the persona of Jesus. In so doing, the group diminishes some of the alienation evangelical women might experience as a function of their commitment to celibacy in a social context characterized by sexual permissiveness. By encouraging women to view Jesus (rather than the men who surround them) as the "consummate

lover," and one's "heart's desire," the IVCF offers women an analogous and de-alienating alternative to pre-marital sexual activity.

The second response of IVCF women to their unique form of alienation is what I would call gentle subversion. As I described earlier, most of the women in the IVCF were raised in or presently attend churches which do not embrace egalitarian gender roles. How then can one make sense of the high levels of female leadership in the IVCF when these same women attend churches in which their full participation is not welcome?

Evangelical women enter university with widely divergent opinions about their churches' treatment of women: some support it fully, while others harbour misgivings. However, once these women arrive at university, they enter an institution which at least officially disparages traditional evangelical gender roles. For women with some misgivings about their role in the evangelical tradition, arrival at McMaster almost inevitably exacerbates the existing tensions between themselves and their churches. However, those women who are content with their role in their churches may experience the clash between evangelicalism and feminism differently. For example, the shock of being accused by non-Christians of belonging to an oppressive tradition may inspire these women to reject the new secular social context they have just entered and thereby to deepen their alienation from their more fully egalitarian peers and the university as a whole. Several of the women I interviewed seemed to have experienced both of these strains at different periods in their educational careers at McMaster.

Although the research is diverse and substantial, many scholars contend that while conservative Protestantism is highly androcentric (focused on men), women can and do

find ways within their tradition to worship meaningfully, to resist the hegemony or domination of their churches' patriarchs, and to participate quietly in real changes within their tradition (Patterson 1988; Stacey and Gerard 1990; Shapiro Davie 1995; cf.Davidman 1989). Ethnographer Beverly Patterson argues that "where formal structures are restrictive [an evangelical woman] sees and uses informal ones to exert her influence and thus avoids a sense of powerlessness" (Patterson 1988:77).

If many conservative Protestant women experience some degree of frustration when faced with the limited opportunities their churches offer them; and if these women are aware (to varying degrees) that their secular peers do not support traditional evangelical constructions of gender, then involvement in the IVCF may address many of the contradictions experienced by evangelical women students. Specifically, the IVCF offers many women the only opportunities they may ever have to interpret the Bible publically, lead worship, and participate in religious and organizational leadership. In so doing, the IVCF may resolve evangelical womens' rarely expressed and perhaps only latent dissatisfactions with their arguably subordinate positions in their churches. The involvement of women in the chapter may also be interpreted as a symbolic defence against the assumption common among some of their non-Christian peers and professors that evangelicalism is uniformly oppressive toward women. Finally, a small number of IVCF women told me that they hoped their prominent role in the chapter might quietly promote more egalitarian gender roles within the larger evangelical tradition.

If women are attracted to the IVCF partly as a means of struggling for social power within a patriarchal tradition, it is difficult to understand why the men of the

IVCF do not protest what is evidently a challenge to their hegemony. During interviews and more casual conversations, IVCF men often openly defend male dominance within their churches as a consequence of their clear reading of scripture and Christian history. However, regardless of the strength of their convictions about the inappropriateness of female leadership in their churches, not a single IVCF man complained to me about the high profile of women in the chapter. Initially, I surmised that the religious leadership of women in the group might not be resisted by men as a function of their fear of the anticipated response of Carla, the Staff Worker. However, while Carla is a feminist and is highly respected by the Executive Committee and many other members of the chapter, her opinions do not exert determinative or intimidating power over the general membership.[157]

A few days after I reached an impasse on this question, I asked a past IVCF President how he would explain mens' (especially fundamentalist mens') apparent openness to female leadership in the group. This issue was obviously one he had considered before, since he did not pause to reflect before rolling his eyes and saying,

> Oh, I think those guys don't think this is really church. Sure, it's okay for women to do everything at IV, but not at their own churches. This is weird to me, but then that's because I think of what happens at IV as church.[158]

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[157] Since the interviews I conducted were completely confidential; and since students often told me quite intimate stories, I have no reason to believe that men would have withheld this motivation from me.

[158] Two closely related minor controversies which arose during the academic year when I conducted fieldwork revolved around whether or not communion should be performed at IVCF events (as it was at the winter retreat and the final Large Group meeting), and whether it should be performed by a woman (as it was, in both cases, by Carla, an ordained Baptist clergy member). The IVCF fundamentalists were opposed

There are a few men in the IVCF who support religious egalitarianism and who attend churches which uphold this ideal. However, if the past President is correct, the chapter's majority of fundamentalist men do not protest the involvement and leadership of women because they perceive prominent IVCF women to be, so to speak, only "playing church." In other words, since these IVCF women do not represent a serious threat to male power within the more formal "church," men do not offer these women any resistance.

The third way in which the IVCF seems to respond to the triple alienation women experience is by allowing ambiguity. During an interview, Mary, a second year fundamentalist student and I discussed her views on the role of women in the church. During her first year at university, Mary took a course in McMaster's Peace Studies program that dealt with liberation theology. "The course made me think that Christianity was totally oppressive. For a while there I was pretty confused." I asked her how she resolved these doubts. She responded:

> Well, I went back and listened to peoples' testimonials. I guess I got away from what [Carla, the Staff Worker] calls 'Churchianity' and back to the personal aspect of God. Right now I'm kinda struggling with the whole issue of women in the Christian family. I want to know if I should be submissive to my husband like Paul seems to suggest. But I'm a little unsure of all of this. I mean I know what the texts say, so I guess that should be enough; but still, I'm not sure if there are other ways to look at those texts [which seem to support women's subordination]. I'd be happy to find out that I'm deluded, because I really don't want to be submissive to my husband. But I want to know whether I need to take

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both to communion outside of a formal church setting and to a woman presiding over the ritual, but nevertheless participated in both communions.

these passages literally. This will tell me what sort of woman I will need to become.[159]

Kelly, another fundamentalist woman, echoed Mary. Kelly said that

> [the role of women is] a hard topic for me, and I pray about it a lot. I mean, I think I might have some skills in that area [of ministry], but I'm not sure if that necessarily means I should become a pastor. I think I need to study the issue a lot more -- to pray about it and to read my Bible and to talk to other Christians about the whole issue. I'm struggling to be faithful to scripture, because I think that's super important. But I also want to be faithful to the gifts God has given me. And I don't think these things have to be [necessarily] opposed. It's hard, Paul.

The IVCF provides evangelical women with a safe place to reflect on the issues raised by challenging academic or social experiences at university. IVCF women from across the theological and ideological spectrum echo Mary's and Kelly's concerns, declaring in a variety of ways that they are unable fully to accept either the traditional roles bequeathed to them by their churches and families, or the newer egalitarian feminist roles suggested and embodied by professors and peers at McMaster.

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[159] I presented a version of this chapter during a public lecture at the University of Winnipeg, over 2000 kilometres from McMaster. Just moments before I began speaking, Mary unexpectedly entered the room and sat in a desk in the middle of the audience of twenty-five people. I was stunned and more than a little worried about how she might react when she heard her own words read in public. At the beginning of the question period, she raised her hand. With some trepidation I invited her to speak. "Hi. I'm Mary in his lecture," she said, addressing the audience. "And I've left the group because of some of the things he talked about." During our conversation after the question period was over, I learned that Mary had not only left the IVCF, but McMaster and Ontario as well. She told me she had transferred to the University of Winnipeg. I asked her if she had joined the IVCF group at her new university, and she replied that she had not. Since her comments during the question period suggested she had experienced a crisis of faith as a function of her own theological liberalization, I asked her if she had considered joining the university's liberal Student Christian Movement chapter (cf. Chapter One). Mary shrugged her shoulders and replied "No, that doesn't work for me either. I've either got to be totally in or totally out, you know?"

Instead, many IVCF women told me they are "still searching for" or "uncertain about" how they might reconcile their faiths and feminism. By ensuring that the group's leadership, Small Group offerings, and selection of speakers reflect a diversity of opinion on the role of women in Christianity, the Staff Worker and Executive Committee provide questioning women with a secure situation in which to entertain confusing thoughts and feelings about their religious traditions and their secular education.[160] The IVCF thus allows women the liberty of indecision, a four year period of ambiguity during which the chapter facilitates the "stretching" process inspired by the clashes between feminism and evangelical faith. The undergraduate years are the ideal, and for many perhaps the final period of their lives in which such free reflection will be encouraged. The facilitation of ambiguity may explain some of the IVCF's appeal for McMaster's evangelical women.

Conclusion

IVCF women seem to experience a unique and complex form of estrangement at McMaster. On the one hand, they may feel othered by the university as a masculine institution, with its predominantly male professors, reading lists, and objectivist and adversarial modes of operation. This form of alienation may, of course, be shared by evangelical and non-evangelical women alike. On the other hand, IVCF women also

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[160] For a discussion of a "vernacular community" in which women can consider complex and ambiguous experiences in a safe (yet controlled) setting, see Shapiro Davie's (1995) ethnography on a women's discussion group in a suburban Presbyterian community.

describe feeling alienated from the comparatively egalitarian gender roles and permissive sexual norms espoused or assumed by their secular peers and professors.

The negotiation of the metaphorical contracts I have described in previous chapters is an on-going process which occurs so students can resolve or at least diminish the conflicts which arise when they confront their secular peers' views on a range of social and intellectual issues. Crucial to understanding the disproportionate participation of women in the McMaster IVCF is an appreciation of the contract-facilitating functions of the three responses I have outlined above. I have argued that the IVCF responds in at least three ways to the unique form of estrangement experienced by female members. Moreover, each of these responses has distinct benefits for believers. First, by construing Jesus as a lover, believers can feel that they do not lack an object of their deepest quasi-erotic affections. Second, by allowing women to participate in religious leadership, the IVCF both facilitates its members' otherwise unfulfilled ambitions and problematizes the non-Christian generalization that evangelicalism subjugates women. And third, by providing a social space in which evangelical women can discuss the implications of the form of egalitarianism they often find at a secular university, the IVCF may reduce the urgency and anxiety associated with some of their uncertainties. This may enable evangelical women to negotiate the contracts between their faith and feminism more gradually. The allowance of doubt into IVCF discourse on the role of women may also improve the relationships between IVCF members and non-Christians, who might be reassured that their evangelical peers are "not sure about" the role of

women in the evangelical tradition. Such a reassurance may mollify non-Christian critics

of religion by convincing them that their IVCF friends are not obdurate.

By reducing the estrangement IVCF women experience, the three IVCF responses

I have described in this chapter contribute positively to this negotiation process. These

responses represent manifestations of the "bridge" strategy in that each response seems

to decrease the sense of negative otherness evangelical women sometimes experience with

respect to their non-Christian peers and professors; but the otherness itself never

disappears as a result of these three responses. Rather, it is transformed from a negative

experience into a largely positive one. In short, with the help of the IVCF, these women

have developed complex, innovative and empowering strategies which allow them to

remain loyal to evangelicalism and to be nourished and, in their words, "stretched" by

the liberal educational institutions that more and more of them are deciding to attend

(Stacey and Gerard 1990:112).[161]

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[161] The general paradox of women voluntarily involved in non- or anti-egalitarian traditions is not only characteristic of Conservative Protestantism: Lynn Davidman (1995) noticed this phenomenon in an Orthodox Jewish setting, and Ruth Behar (1993) has observed it in a Roman Catholic context.

Chapter Six

Satan and the Spiritual Realm

For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of this present darkness (Ephesians 6:12).

Our enemies are not flesh and blood, not our professors who give us bad grades because we're Christians, but beings which are unseen. God, we pray that you and your angels will protect us from these enemies (Frank, from fieldnotes).

Like, when you know something isn't right, but you find yourself rationalizing it anyway -- for sure this is Satan. Especially with lust -- that's a good example. Also, with doubt. Satan feeds on the doubt that I might have that this isn't real spirituality (Wanda, from fieldnotes).

Although the prominence of women in the McMaster IVCF challenged my presuppositions about several elements of evangelicalism, the role of Satan in this group's discourse simply bewildered me. Whenever this topic arose during conversations with IVCF students, I became somewhat disoriented. For the first several interviews I was incredulous, and found myself rephrasing the open-ended questions I had posed, seeking more and more details in the answers that were offered to me. I had encountered references to Satan, demons and angels in most of the scholarly and popular texts I had read before I started fieldwork. However, there is a significant and sometimes categorical difference between what one reads about in the comfort of one's home and

what one experiences in the field. In other words, although I was intellectually prepared

to encounter Satan, demons and angels in evangelical discourse, on a deeper level, I was

unable to accept that contemporary Canadian university students would believe in the

existence of such entities in quite the way that IVCF students actually do.[162]

Eventually, I was able to understand more clearly and without bewilderment what

IVCF members mean when they speak of the spiritual realm. In fact, by the end of my

fieldwork, I found myself interpreting several unsettling experiences in my own life

according to the IVCF's relatively "enchanted" worldview.[163]

Initially, I began investigating this issue by asking students questions about the

role of Satan in their lives at McMaster. However, my respondents rarely referred solely

to Satan, but rather to a much more elaborate array of non-human entities working for

and against Satan. In referring to these entities, I use the phrase "spiritual realm" in

addition to God, Satan, demons, and angels, partly for the sake of brevity, but also

because I seek to connote by this phrase an entire extra-human dimension which includes

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[162] See Snow and Machalek (1982) for a discussion of the possible social scientific fallacies underlying the sort of experience I had when discussing Satan and his demons. Specifically, Snow and Machalek suggest that scholars are surprised by some of the beliefs they encounter because they presuppose not only that doubt is natural whereas belief is unnatural, but also that the maintenance of certain supposedly unconventional beliefs requires more cognitive effort than the maintenance of conventional beliefs or disbelief. On the contrary, Snow and Machalek argue, "in daily existence, however, it is doubt, not belief that is typically suspended" (1982:24).

[163] See ethnographer Renato Rosaldo's account of his initial difficulties understanding the headhunting practices of the Ilongot tribesmen. Only when he experienced rage after the sudden death of his wife was Rosaldo able to empathize with the headhunters (Rosaldo 1989). For a discussion of similar issues, see E. E. Evans-Pritchard's account of his experiences among the Azande (1937:65).

all these figures. Because students talk about the demonic elements of the spiritual realm much more frequently than the angelic elements, this chapter focuses on the former.

The evangelical discourse on the spiritual realm is rooted both in ancient Christianity and recent popular fiction. Biblical scholar Elaine Pagels notes that while the role of Satan was not very pronounced in ancient Judaism (Pagels 1991:105; cf. Russell 1988:51), the war against Satan and his demon underlings occupies a more central part of the cosmologies of Islam and Christianity (Pagels 1991:128). In *The Origin of Satan* (1995), Pagels outlines the historical, social, and textual background for the concepts of Satan and demons in early Christian thought. She argues that the figure of Satan reflected ancient Christian perceptions of their social and religious "others" (Pagels 1995:xviii). The persona of Satan as the usurper of God's sovereignty developed out of apocalyptic Jewish sources and Hebrew Bible texts (Pagels 1995:179; Forsyth 1987:107), and was gradually transformed by generations of Christians into the personal and ubiquitous religious figure encountered in the discourse of evangelical groups such as the IVCF. Moreover, for centuries, Christians have tended, Pagels argues, to assume that their human enemies are by definition evil servants of Satan (Pagels 1995:180; 2 Cor. 11:15).[164]

It is difficult to determine with confidence why contemporary evangelicals embrace the discourse of the spiritual realm more enthusiastically than their mainline co-religionists. Historian Jeffrey Burton Russell observes that the emphasis on the

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[164] For an historical and philosophical account of Satan and his demons throughout western history, see Nugent (1983). For a discussion of the pre-Christian era and the first several centuries of the Christian period, see Forsyth (1987).

individual which is typical of Protestantism increased the prominence of Satan. In

medieval Europe, one could huddle together with one's community against Satan; but

after Luther, one had to fight the Devil alone (Russell 1988:168). This shift from

corporate to individual spiritual warfare[165] against Satan may explain why early

Protestants seemed to be more preoccupied with their personal religious safety than

medieval Catholics.

However, it is more difficult to discern the most plausible explanation for the

prominence of Satan in contemporary conservative Protestant discourse. The first and

most obvious explanation is simply that evangelicals place a much greater emphasis than

non-evangelicals on a putatively literal interpretation of the Bible. Since there *are* angels

and demons in the Bible (Mk 1:34; 1 Cor 10:20; Rev 9:20; Mt 4:11; Mk 1:13; Rev 7:1),

evangelicals steadfastly refuse to turn these ancient entities into sophisticated or vapid

modern metaphors for abstract forces of good or evil.

The second source of the evangelical emphasis on the spiritual realm can be traced

to two novels. The first is *The Screwtape Letters*, written in 1945 by the renowned

Christian intellectual, C.S. Lewis. The novel assumes the form of a collection of letters

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[165] This term is used to denote both the war between angels and demons for influence over humans, as well as the human contribution to this ongoing battle. According to evangelical novelist Frank Peretti, whose major novel I discuss in this chapter, one of the main human contributions to this ongoing war is prayer. In *This Present Darkness*, the final confrontation between angels and demons cannot commence until humans, or praying "saints" (Peretti 1986:328) and "the Remnant" (Peretti 1986:349) provide sufficient "prayer cover" (Peretti 1986:328; cf. Guelich 1991:56). For a scholarly evangelical account of the relationship between "spiritual warfare" and the New Testament, see Guelich (1991). For a popular evangelical discussion of this phenomenon, see Robb (1993).

from an uncle and senior demon named Screwtape to his nephew, a junior demon named Wormwood. Although Wormwood occasionally makes some progress in gently leading his human "patient" into perversion and away from God, he is never fully or finally successful, which provokes the ominous wrath of Screwtape, who eventually devours the junior demon. Despite the wide ranging influence of Lewis's novel, only a small minority of IVCF students made explicit references to *The Screwtape Letters* during our conversations. Moreover, very few IVCF members seemed to be aware of the subtle ways in which Lewis depicts either the junior demon attempting to delude the man for whose damnation he is responsible, or the symbolic nature of the demon's labours.[166]

Very early in my interviews and observations, it became clear to me that the most common influence on or reflection of IVCF members' perspectives on the spiritual realm are Frank E. Peretti's novels, especially *This Present Darkness* (1986), which takes its title from the Ephesians verse quoted at the beginning of this chapter. In *This Present Darkness* Peretti tells the story of the fictitious American community of Ashton, where Marshall Hogan, an intrepid newspaper owner and Hank Busche, a stalwart fundamentalist preacher stumble onto and eventually foil an elaborate Satanic New Age plot to take control of the town.[167] Throughout the novel, the two principle

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[166] Harvey Cox admits that while reading contemporary evangelical books on Satan, he had the "sinking feeling" that evangelicals are turning Lewis's subtle metaphor into a stiff metaphysic, and that "a story had been turned into an ideology" (Cox 1995:285). For a discussion of (and incitement to) spiritual warfare which closely resembles what Lewis seems to have had in mind when he described the spiritual realm, see Andrew Walker (1987).

[167] Social scientifically, the New Age movement may be defined as "a broad cultural ideology, a development of the countercultural sixties, which privileges holistic medicine,

investigators unravel a scheme to eliminate pious and virtuous citizens, and to buy most of Ashton's real estate, including its pivotal institution, a university. The aim of this conspiracy is to secure a fortress (interestingly, a secular university) for "the Strongman," a demonically-possessed multi-billionaire businessman and charismatic New Age leader. Conflicts between the human protagonists are only a part of the story, however, since it is obvious that legions of angels and demons are actually impelling the characters and plot.[168]

Almost a third of the students I interviewed mentioned Peretti without being prompted. For example, David echoed many IVCF members' comments when he said:

> We all have personal angels, like bodyguards, looking out for us. And we all have demons that attack us spiritually. Especially after reading Peretti's books, I totally believe in angels and demons and the whole spiritual realm.

Approximately another third of IVCF participants did not spontaneously mention Peretti; but when asked about him, were all aware of him and quite familiar with the cosmology he depicts. Some of these participants commented that although they had not read Peretti's novels, they feel, or have been told by other IVCF members, that they should read these books. However, it is significant that even those who have neither read nor

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'intuitive sciences' like astrology and tarot, ecological and anti-nuclear political issues, and alternative therapies, medicines and philosophers" (Luhrmann 1989:30). Anthrpopologist Loring Danforth comments that "the ultimate goal of New Age healing is self-realization" (Danforth 1989:255). According to many of the evangelicals I met, New Age movements are inspired or even directly controlled by Satan.

[168] Harvey Cox argues that *This Present Darkness* is not propelled by its plot. Rather, the novel is "about cosmology; it is a gazetteer of the angelic and demonic domains" (Cox 1995:283).

heard of *This Present Darkness* (or Peretti's 1989 sequel *Piercing the Darkness*) still

illustrate their descriptions of the spiritual realm with terms and metaphors strongly

reminiscent of his novels.

When discussing the spiritual realm, IVCF students are more likely to cite Peretti

than the Bible. In fact, as New Testament scholar Robert Guelich observes,

> this particular story, though clearly fictitious on the historical level, has been
> taken as 'true' or 'real' on a theological level in many circles in the Church
> today.... The novel accurately depicts the nature and means of spiritual warfare
> as perceived by a number of Christians today. This is so much the case, that the
> book has frequently come to be known as the 'bible' of spiritual warfare (Guelich
> 1991:57).[169]

Part of the reason for the success of *This Present Darkness* is that it provides readers

with a more focused narrative depiction of the spiritual realm than they can get through

biblical texts (Guelich 1991:37). Moreover, Peretti's novels are set in contemporary

North America, a context which may facilitate the integration of new ideas more easily

than the world of ancient Israel depicted in the Bible. The terms and imagery IVCF

participants use to refer to the spiritual realm may ultimately originate in the Bible, but

the most recent manifestation of these ancient resources is found in Peretti's novels.

Commenting on the prevalence of spiritual warfare in evangelical discourse, Guelich

writes that

> What began as a metaphor for the Christian life has become a movement whose
> expression is found above all in Frank Peretti's novel, *This Present Darkness*....

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[169] Peretti's novels are often ridiculed by evangelical intellectuals. During a recent
discussion about *This Present Darkness*, an evangelical colleague rolled his eyes and said
"Man, sometimes I think that book is more popular than the Bible. I'm not kidding. It's
bizarre."

In many ways, though a novel, this book captures the popular understanding of the character of contemporary spiritual warfare (Guelich 1991:34).

For example, Howard, a Commerce student, said "Peretti really got people thinking about these sorts of issues. Now, all of a sudden you have people praying against Satan and getting into spiritual warfare and all that." Peretti seems to have gathered together and presented in an easily accessible fictional format pre-existing strands of Christian discourse on the spiritual realm. As a result, the spiritual realm has gained an unprecedented prominence in evangelical popular culture since the mid-1980s.[170]

Nevertheless, it is important not to overstate Peretti's significance. As I have suggested, the roots of the contemporary evangelical interest in the spiritual realm are in ancient Jewish sources and the Bible and have been a fixture of Protestant thought for centuries (Guelich 1991; Pagels 1995). The role of Satan in the Bible and Christian history obviously forms part of the unspoken subtext of IVCF students' beliefs about the spiritual realm. For example, in response to my question about the reality of the spiritual realm, Simon, one of the four IVCF members profiled in Chapter Two, commented that "I've never really had any real experience with the supernatural, so I can't say what a demon is like, but they're in the Bible, so I know they are out there." Nevertheless, as I have suggested, very few students refer explicitly to the Bible in

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[170] Popular culture scholar Jay Howard observes that *This Present Darkness* inaugurated the beginning of a massive shift in the Christian retailing industry. In 1980, not a single novel ranked in the top ten titles listed by the Christian Booksellers Association's trade magazine. By 1990, however, half the titles on this list were popular novels, largely as a result of the success of Peretti's books and other novels portraying a similar cosmology (Howard 1994:193).

discussions about the spiritual realm, except perhaps to make allusions to the famous

passage in Ephesians.[171]

In this chapter I explore the fairly narrow range of beliefs shared by almost all

IVCF students regarding the ways non-human spiritual entities interact with and influence

all people, but specifically IVCF members. Then I discuss three of the most common

ways in which Satan is perceived to attack these undergraduates. Finally, I consider four

possible interpretations of the IVCF understanding of the spiritual realm. In order to

contextualize the ethnographic material I present, I refer to the cosmology undergirding

This Present Darkness throughout this chapter.

Before I interpret the role of the spiritual realm among IVCF members, a brief

discussion of Peretti's conception of the spiritual realm is in order. Peretti typically

depicts angelic warriors as tall, well-built, handsome males who have been summoned

from all of the earth's eras and regions, and who bear romantic ancient names such as

Triskal, Guilo, Armoth, Tal, Nathan, and Chimon. Peretti's portraits of angels rely on

common stereotypes. Armoth is "the big African whose war cry and fierce countenance

had often been enough to send the enemy fleeing before he even assailed them;" Chimon

is described as "the meek European with the golden hair;" and Nathan is portrayed as

"the towering Arabian figure who fought fiercely and spoke little" (Peretti 1986:45).

The angels are all armed with swords which glow with a bright white light when drawn

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[171] Frank's prayer, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, is a good illustration of the centrality of this passage in evangelical discourse.

for battle. Their wings are "silken, shimmering, nearly transparent membranes" (Peretti 1986:13) and visible almost only when they take flight.

In contrast, demons are usually depicted as snivelling, black, warty, hideous and typically diminutive quasi-reptilian creatures with sharp talons and bulging yellow eyes; although some of the senior demons may be much larger and more powerful. However, they may change their appearance in order to deceive or torment a human being. All of the demons are stealthy, sulphur-exhaling manipulators who bear the names of the evils they promote: Complacency, Deception, Rape, Lust, Jealousy.

On the angelic side of the spiritual realm, there is a strict and unquestioned chain of command descending from God through several senior angels to Tal the battle chief, to the front-line warriors. On the demonic side of the battle a similar hierarchy exists: from Satan through a variety of senior demons to Rafar, the demonic battle leader to a teeming army of demon warriors. A crucial difference between the two spiritual hierarchies is that while all members of the "Heavenly Host" are unflinchingly loyal to their superiors, the demon Lucius, one of Rafar's immediate inferiors, seeks to undo Rafar's plans in order to discredit him. Eventually Lucius's betrayal helps to bring about the triumphant victory of the angelic Host of Heaven.

During interviews and before I read Peretti's novel, I often felt frustrated that participants were unable to specify precisely how beings from the spiritual realm affected human beings. In most cases, students would get flustered when I asked them to clarify this aspect of their cosmologies; and occasionally they would contradict themselves. Sometimes IVCF members would speak of demons or angels as directly implanting

thoughts in human minds; at other times the same people would speak of demons simply "offering" us a variety of sinful thoughts which we are free to select or reject. Sometimes angels and demons seem quasi-human in their shape and behaviour; at other times they are depicted as more ethereal "forces." Sometimes beings from the spiritual realm appear to intercede physically in or torment the lives of Christians; in other contexts, IVCF participants claim it is impossible to see demons and angels or for them to have a significant impact on the physical realm except through human agency.

Initially I attributed the contradictions and intellectual reticence I encountered among IVCF students to the nature of the spiritual realm itself. Since the spiritual realm is, by definition, not fully transparent to humans, I assumed I should not expect students to maintain clear or definitive views on issues pertaining to this realm. Moreover, I supposed, these students are neither trained theologians nor philosophers; so perhaps they are not able to articulate whatever convictions they hold.

I had hoped to find in *This Present Darkness* a well-defined model which would describe the sort of influence entities from the spiritual realm can bring to bear on humans. What I found instead was much more interesting and ambiguous. In fact, according to Peretti, angels and demons seem to interact with the human realm in *all* of the physical and non-physical ways I have described above.[172] Moreover, there is a

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[172] Demons of complacency and despair cling to human legs and clasp human organs, making the person feel weighed down or anxiety-stricken (Peretti 1986:42); angels reach over and physically touch a human conspirator, causing him to drop hidden ballots (1986:103); a demon of sickness slashes at an artery in an old woman's brain to cause a stroke (1986:104); an angel suggests that a person look behind a particular building (1986:10); demons speak "sweet words of comfort to [the] mind" of a misguided woman (1986:119); and cover the ears of a man, preventing him from hearing the preacher

high degree of correspondence between Peretti's portrait of the spiritual realm and IVCF students' depictions. IVCF students envisage demons both as barely invisible creatures *and* as ethereal forces of evil. Moreover, according to Peretti and IVCF participants, although angels and demons can have actual effects on material objects, their most common means of influencing humans is by suggesting thoughts and feelings to humans in ways both subtle and shrewd. IVCF participants speak of this mode of compulsion most frequently, telling me stories about how Satan or his demons "made me think" a particular thought, or how an angel "told me that was a lie." When I asked participants if Satan (as in the first case) forced a thought into their minds, or an angel (as in the second case) literally spoke into their ear, they usually pause and answer that members of the spiritual realm offer or suggest a thought and the individual him or herself must decide whether or not to accept it. However, other students responded that angels or demons could also force a thought into a believer's mind and make it so attractive that the person would be virtually powerless to reject it.

Satan and demons are said to afflict these undergraduates in at least three ways, each of which could easily justify another ethnographic study. In the present and more limited context, however, a brief illustration of these modes will be offered. The first and most common way in which Satan or his demons are thought to assail IVCF students is by "tempting" them. In her response to my question about Satan's tools, Maya, an

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(1986:231); demons take possession of and speak through humans (1986:319) and stall car engines by piercing the hoods with their swords (1986:139); and perhaps most insidiously, demons gently coax and manipulate humans to embrace ideas and values which would broaden Satan's dominion in the world.

Occupational Therapy student, replied "I want to know more about [demons]. Carla says the devil will get you when you're at your lowest. And for sure, temptation is one of the main ways he tries to get at you."

During conversations with participants, I noticed that women tended to refer to Satanic temptation less frequently than men and that women spoke about it in a general sense; whereas men tended to enumerate instances in which they had been tempted. Moreover, when men provided illustrations of temptation, their narratives almost inevitably concerned specific and contextualized "lustful" thoughts about women. For example, Frank commented that

> Sometimes I'll be just sitting in church and Satan suddenly presents me with lustful thoughts, really clear images out of nowhere. I just have to be strong and I have to rebuke him. You just have to pray and to say no. Yeah, Satan can make me think lustful thoughts -- but we have to choose. But the biggest challenge a Christian faces is.... Well, let me put it this way: Satan can make something look so good it's almost impossible to say no to it, but you have to say no.

Hugh, a student at McMaster's Divinity College, provided another illustration of Satan's temptations.

> Okay, for example, let's say I'm standing on a street. I see a woman and I have a lustful thought about her. So then I turn away from her and there's another woman right there in front of me. Satan probably put her there to tempt me.

I asked Hugh whether Satan forced the second woman to walk past him in order to continue Satan's temptation. "Yeah, sure," he replied, "maybe Satan or one of his demons persuaded her to cross to the other side of the street." I suggested that the woman in question probably believes that she voluntarily chose to cross the street. Hugh

answered: "Sure, maybe that's true on one level; but it could also be that Satan or a

demon could have whispered something in her ear which she mistakes for her own

thoughts."

Later in the conversation I asked Hugh, to describe spiritual warfare. He replied:

> Angels and demons are constantly fighting all around me. When something good
> happens, like when I turn my head away from these two women and avoid the
> lust, it is almost always with the help of an angel. But I have to exercise my
> freedom. I could totally ignore or fight the angel.

Norman, a student from a strict fundamentalist background, answered the same question

by commenting that

> There are all kinds of temptations Satan brings to me. Like there are a lot of
> beautiful girls on this campus if you know what I mean. And it's hard to keep
> my mind pure. Like, if a woman walks by wearing tights or a short skirt, my
> head will turn, of course. That's from Satan. [People in my denomination]
> believe there are three ways to be tempted: by Satan, your own sin, and other
> people. But Satan is the author of all that is evil, although it is a toss-up as to
> whether it's Satan or ourselves that really causes sin.... Peretti's books have
> been really helpful for understanding this sort of thing.

The second way in which Satan and his underlings plague IVCF participants is

by causing them to be depressed. During interviews and intimate informal conversations,

five of the thirty-four IVCF women I interviewed revealed that they suffer from periods

of clinical depression which often prevented them from attending classes and leaving their

beds or apartments.[173] This figure does not exceed the statistically normal percentage

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[173] By clinical depression, I mean to denote more than the short periods of lethargy
commonly associated with the term depression. The symptoms of clinical depression
(fatigue, insomnia, loss of appetite, loss of interest in pleasure, agitation, guilt, low self-
esteem) are similar to those of common depression; but in the former condition, the

(10-25%) of affected individuals. However, since I did not explicitly ask any of the women I interviewed if they have ever suffered from affective disorders, it seems reasonable to conclude that I am aware of only a portion of the true numbers of depressed IVCF women. Gail Frankel and W.E. Hewitt (1994) argue that many Canadian undergraduates suffer from depression, and that involvement in religious groups during the undergraduate years is positively correlated with physical and psychological well-being. It is difficult to determine if the depressed women in the IVCF contradict Frankel's and Hewitt's findings, or if, to follow their reasoning, the proportion of IVCF women who suffer from depression suggests that an even greater proportion of non-Christian students actually suffer from this condition than the statistics portray.[174] Normally, IVCF women disclosed their condition in the context of talking generally about what they describe as their "spiritual walk," the current state of their relationship with God. For some IVCF women, being depressed simply complicated this "walk"

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symptoms often do not abate when one's life conditions improve. For the sake of brevity, the term "depression" will be employed here instead of "clinical depression." The authors of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* report that studies indicate that between ten and twenty-five percent of the population suffer from depression (American Psychiatric Association:341; cf. Hagarty 1995). According to the authors of the *Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*, "The higher vulnerability of women to depression is customarily traced to their presumed greater affiliative nature, passive-dependence, and helplessness in controlling their destiny in male-oriented societies. However, biological vulnerabilities are at least as relevant.... [O]nce depressed, women would have a greater difficulty recovering from their episodes" (Beers, Berkow, and Fletcher 1992:1596-1597).

[174] It is even more difficult to determine the significance of the fact that none of the IVCF men I interviewed described themselves as depressed.

because it meant they did not spend enough time "doing devotions," the disciplines of reading the Bible or praying.

Four of the five women interpreted their depression as being the result of demonic aggression. One of the clearest manifestations of this attribution came in the form of the Church at the John presentation in January 1996. During her thirty minute address, Kelly, an international missionary and former member of the McMaster IVCF referred to Satan at least a dozen times. She also spoke at length of the personal challenges she had encountered during her mission work in Lithuania (cf. Chapter Seven). One of her main examples was her depression, which she described as an "attack of Satan." In an attempt to illustrate how we can "rebuke Satan in Jesus's name, expose his lies, and break their power," Kelly described the following incident:

> Sometimes the devil uses depression to paralyze me and to keep me from feeling like working and praying. I remember during one such period of time I was on my knees begging for help from God. And I got very angry. Out loud I rebuked the devil in Jesus's name and forbade the spirit of depression from having a hold on me. Within minutes I knew that the depression had lifted and I was free from the oppression (Church at the John presentation, January 1996).[175]

Feeling alone in another country and uninterested in the world and her own life, Kelly concluded that her condition was the result of Satan's efforts to destroy her ministry with new and potential Christians in the former Soviet Union. Her prayer reflects not only the classic rhetoric of spiritual warfare (as found in the Bible and Peretti's novels), but

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[175] Similarly, when I asked Gabrielle whether she believed in angels and demons, she replied "You sure don't ask easy questions. Yeah, I definitely do. And Peretti helped me to see how they work. I just fall on my knees and ask God for help and say I can't do this alone and then -- I know this sounds cheesy -- angels come to my aid. Both Satan and God have their angels. Satan is like the general who says to his demons, you go here, you go there."

also evangelical notions of demons as invisible but affecting creatures that are almost

literally "on" a person. Almost immediately after her prayer she felt a weight lifted from

her soul, at which point she knew Satan was gone and she was free to minister to the

student members of her group.

During a conversation we had at McMaster, Winifred, a nineteen year old Science

student, paused thoughtfully and said that

> Satan tries to discourage me. Like, I've had to fight a lot of depression recently.
> In November I hardly ever got out of bed before noon and I totally stopped
> singing. Living in a basement apartment didn't help either. Satan disillusioned
> me... I mean, the depression was an attack of Satan, for sure. When I doubt
> myself, when I think I'm no good, I know it's a lie from Satan. That's what my
> mom tells me. She's my hero. She shows me how in the Bible it says all these
> wonderful things about me. But I know that when my guard isn't up, that's when
> Satan can get to me.

Gabrielle, one of the IVCF members whose life history I discussed in Chapter Two,

echoed Winifred's response to my questions.

> Well, you may have guessed this already, but I'm depressed and I have insomnia,
> too. And a temper. Last term I stopped reading the Bible and attending Small
> Group, and I would snap at people for no good reason. Satan is saying 'Yeah,
> keep feeling like this... don't bother getting up or going to school today.' I
> mean, I don't hear voices or anything. But I know these thoughts don't come
> from God and they are beyond me. But still, it can be me, I guess, like when I
> skip classes. But if it's a prolonged state, like when I'm not studying at all
> [because of depression], it's beyond me and that's when Satan is motivating
> me.[176]

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[176] Anxiety is another affective state which IVCF members sometimes (though less
commonly) perceive to be an "attack of Satan." This sort of demonic effort has the
opposite effects of spiritual attacks resulting in depression. In the case of anxiety attacks,
students become frantic and are driven to study and work more than they normally
would, without their usual focus, and without taking any breaks. As well, sometimes

The third weapon in Satan's arsenal is deception (Robb 1993:173). In *This Present Darkness,* one of the novel's heroic characters, apparently representing Peretti's views (Maudlin 1989:56), explains that demons appear in many different disguises depending on the person they are intending to destroy. This character observes that:

> To the atheistic scientists [demons] might appear as extraterrestrials...; to evolutionists they might appear as highly evolved beings; to the lonely they might appear as long lost relatives speaking from the other side of the grave; Jungian psychologists consider them 'archetypal images' dredged from the collective unconscious of the human race.... whatever description fits, whatever shape, whatever form it takes to win a person's confidence and appeal to his vanity, that's the form they take....
>
> It's all a con game: Eastern meditation, witchcraft, divination, Science of Mind, psychic healing, holistic education -- oh, the list goes on and on -- it's all the same thing, nothing but a ruse to take over people's minds and spirits, even their bodies.... Bernice, we are dealing with a conspiracy of spirit entities (Peretti 1986:314).

As I have suggested in previous chapters, through their non-Christian peers and courses at McMaster, IVCF students often come into contact with ideas and faith communities which threaten many basic evangelical assumptions about the truth of their faith. For many students, encountering challenging secular ideas either introduces doubt into their lives or capitalizes on the doubt that is already there. As Wanda said, "Satan

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this anxiety lacks a specific academic theme. For example, in response to my question about the ways Satan affects his life, Howard commented that "Like sometimes, for example, I'll wake up in the middle of the night, sweating, and worried, overcome by anxiety. When this happens, I just pray that Satan will leave me alone and then almost immediately the fear vanishes and I can get back to sleep. I know that might sound strange to you, but it happens that quickly." A few minutes later, Howard noted that "A lot of my ideas on this come from Peretti."

feeds on the doubt that I might have that [evangelical Christianity] isn't real spirituality."
Like Wanda, many IVCF students consider Satan to be the ultimate author of all their
questioning and of the challenging alternatives to evangelical Christianity.

Through his army of demons, Satan is said to trick people into believing all
manner of insidious untruths. Although most of the secular ideas by which IVCF
students are threatened are derived from pluralism, relativism, inclusivity, and popular
culture, the lies about which Peretti is most concerned are those associated with the New
Age movement, or what Peretti calls "occultism and Eastern mysticism" (Peretti
1986:130). During a long bus ride to the annual IVCF winter retreat, I spoke with
Carrie about the growing involvement of one of my relatives with the New Age
movement. When I said that I had some serious misgivings about the movements called
"New Age," but thought there was some validity in certain elements of the tradition,
Carrie stiffened somewhat and stated unequivocally that she disagreed with me. In her
view, my relative had been duped by Satan. "The New Age movement is the work of
Satan because it tells you there is no God and that you can accomplish everything
yourself," Carrie claimed.[177]

During a Small Group conversation about whether non-Christians might also go
to heaven, I asked Oliver, a Psychology student, the following question: "If God is all-
powerful and all-loving, isn't it possible that he is at work in other religions and in the

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[177] In an apparent (and successful) attempt to heal any rift that might have developed
between us during this conversation, Carrie added: "But there are lots of good people
who are New Agers. I don't think we have to hold them totally responsible for their
actions, since there is so much more going on there."

lives of non-Christians?"   Oliver replied immediately: "But God is also a just God, and he gives us a choice to make. The only choice is between God and Satan." Assuming Oliver would agree with the following rhetorical question, I asked: "But, surely all of Judaism or Buddhism is not the work of Satan?" Oliver shrugged his shoulders and responded flippantly, "Why not?"

After a brief, tense pause, Cindy, a friend of Oliver's added, "Yeah, I mean, Satan is called the Great Deceiver, after all" (Rev 12:9; cf. Russell 1988:44; Robb 1993:177). "Right," affirmed Oliver,

> He can make so many different religions that are so much like Christianity, but lacking in the aspect of Christ. These other religions are so attractive and so close to the truth that they draw people away from God. I'd call this deception, wouldn't you? And if Satan is the Great Deceiver, well, what does that make those other religions?[178]

After a long pause and a tacit agreement between Oliver, Cindy and myself, we changed the subject.

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[178] After this interchange, I felt completely deflated. The issue of the possible inclusivity of God is an issue of considerable personal as well as academic interest to me; and at that moment I believed Oliver and I stood on opposite sides of an untraversable chasm. Moreover, I felt -- and deeply resented -- the weight of his and Cindy's harsh judgement upon my own faith and that of Jews, Buddhists, and liberal Christians. Throughout my fieldwork with the IVCF, I felt as if I was attached to one end of an elastic band and the group to the other. At times, I would feel very strongly affiliated with and protective of the group; at other times after conversations such as the one I have just described, I could feel myself hurtling out from the group's core at a ninety degree angle.

IVCF prayers during spiritual warfare also challenge the deception of demons (Robb 1993). During one "concert of prayer," held in a McMaster lounge on a cold night in the winter of 1996, I heard the following prayer:

> Fathergod, there is so much deception on this campus. We pray that you will show people that you are the Truth; that the Truth is not in Buddhism or atheism or agnosticism, or in Judaism, or anything else but you, God. And I pray against the lies we are taught in school, like the lie that we come from the apes.

As this prayer was spoken, whispered affirmations of "Yes God," and "Praise Jesus" arose from the group of bowed and seated participants.

Satan also tries to deceive Christians or potential Christians about the strength and support of their religious communities. During a morning meeting near the end of the IVCF mission to Lithuania, Wanda remarked:

> Sometimes I feel sort of alienated from the rest of the team, but when I feel this way, I just know it's Satan trying to deceive me, and not that the group actually doesn't want me to be a part of it. But it's hard, and I have to remind myself that it is Satan who causes this feeling.

In response, other team members affirmed Wanda's interpretation by saying "No way," and "That's not true" when she first confessed her feeling of alienation and then "For sure," and "Definitely" when she attributed this feeling to Satan's deception.[179]

While Satan's attacks on one's self-esteem often lead to depression, severe attacks can lead to suicidal despair. In the context of counselling a suicidal adolescent girl at an

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[179] In fact, by this time in the mission, two members of the team had told me that they were irritated by certain aspects of Wanda's personality and leadership style.

evangelical drop-in centre, Harriet, a Biology student, informed the girl that Satan was

deceiving her about her personal worthiness. The suicidal teenager

> kept telling me she heard voices telling her to kill herself. I told her it was Satan
> trying to trick and oppress her. Satan put those voices into her head, no
> question. I just can't think of how they'd get there otherwise. Can you?

Harriet reminded the girl that she was a child of God and therefore unconditionally loved

by her heavenly father, regardless of what might be happening to her on earth. Harriet

wrote several encouraging sentences on a piece of paper which she instructed the girl to

read to herself whenever she started to hear Satan's voice.

Interpretations

One does not have to pay close attention to IVCF discourse to hear direct and

indirect references to the spiritual realm, and especially to Satan and his demons.

Members frequently speak about these entities and engage in spiritual warfare against

them not only because IVCF members believe that demons and Satan exist (a conviction

that Rawlyk (1996:112) reports non-evangelical Christians might share). These students

also maintain that these denizens of the spiritual realm are actively and almost constantly

trying to destroy the faith and bodies of IVCF students as well as those of their friends

and families (convictions which would not be common among "non-Christians," to use

IVCF rhetoric). There are at least four possible interpretations of IVCF perceptions of

the role of Satan and his demons.

The first and most obvious, of course, is that Satan and demons actually exist.

It would not only be reductive but also arrogant to presuppose the non-existence of some

variety of spiritual realm. The sheer invisibility and, even according to Peretti, unpredictability of the spiritual realm means simply that such an alternative sphere of existence cannot be unequivocally verified on empirical grounds. Because angels and demons are intangible and inconstant does not necessarily mean that they do not actually exist; nor that these entities do not exist in precisely the way described by Peretti and IVCF students.[180] When I asked IVCF participants to tell me about the role of Satan in their lives, none of them appeared to respond to me "as if" such beings existed. On the contrary, they answered my questions as though I had asked them to describe the role of a shadowy, enigmatic uncle in their family. Consequently, one of the ways of interpreting the predominance of Satan and demons in IVCF discourse is simply to argue that these believers have a firm grasp of reality.

Demons may in fact rouse IVCF members in the middle of the night to afflict them with anxiety attacks, and compel women to walk down streets to tempt IVCF men. However, since the present text is a work of social science, it is necessary to consider other and perhaps complementary explanations for the significance of the spiritual realm to IVCF students.

The second and etic alternative to the above emic account is to interpret the spiritual realm as an element of IVCF theodicies, or explanations of suffering. As Max Weber (1948:275-282) has observed, a central characteristic of religious systems is the

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[180] Certainly this problem of verifiability does not inhibit evangelicals such as Simon, for whom the presence of angels and demons in the Bible is sufficient to confirm their authenticity.

provision and legitimation of theodicies.[181] But a theodicy is only one component of an individual's or a community's "sacred canopy" (Berger 1967), an over-arching, socially constructed understanding of reality which explains why all things -- welcome and unwelcome -- happen. What role might negative elements in the spiritual realm play in IVCF participants' sacred canopy and theodicy?

As noted in Chapter Three, all but one of the IVCF members I interviewed believe that God has a comprehensive plan for their lives (cf. Chapter Three). According to this perspective, everything that happens to these students must somehow be related to God's plan or to Satan's attempts to foil it. In *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (1987), ethnographer Nancy Ammerman discusses the way negatively evaluated experiences are assessed by the Baptists she studied: "When they have no other explanation for their pain, it must be Satan who is persecuting them. Therefore, they do not have to attribute their pain to God" (Ammerman 1987:65). Consequently, believers' lives and worldviews are protected from the vicissitudes of everyday life. Applied to the IVCF, Ammerman's insight seems to explain the plausibility-maintaining function of the spiritual realm.[182]

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[181] Peter Berger writes: "The sacred cosmos, which transcends and includes man in its ordering of reality, thus provides man's ultimate shield against the terror of anomy. To be in a 'right' relationship with the sacred cosmos is to be protected against the nightmare threats of chaos" (1967:26; cf. 1967:32).

[182] Among several IVCF students, I found a more complex form of the attitude Ammerman describes. After attributing self-doubt and lust to Satan, Wanda, for example, admitted that "Not every bad thing that happens in life is from Satan, though. Like cancer and falling off my bike -- that's just life." Wanda's comments were typical of several of the minority of more liberal IVCF students I interviewed. These liberal participants distinguish between three sorts of events: 1) good occurrences that happen

For example, as Gabrielle said earlier in this chapter, some negative thoughts are "beyond me"; similarly, Harriet also commented that she cannot "think of how [some thoughts] would get there otherwise [than through Satanic influence]"; and Maya explained that "All temptations would be from Satan, obviously, since God is all good." Historian Jeffrey Burton Russell argues that such a radical opposition between an entirely good God and a completely evil Satan is rooted in the ancient apocalyptic Judaism which contributed significantly to the culture and worldview out of which Christianity emerged. Apocalyptic Jews believed that extreme degrees or quantities of evil were more than God would ordain and therefore must be caused by some other spiritual force, a force associated with the figure of Satan found in pre-existing biblical texts (Russell 1988:32). Gabrielle's, Harriet's, and Maya's modern versions of the ancient apocalyptic tendency may also exemplify what Freud called "splitting," the protection of the goodness of a deity (or object or person) by transferring any evil associated with it to another object, in this case, a lesser supernatural force (Russell 1988:245).

The major difficulty an IVCF student might encounter when trying to interpret all events he or she experiences in the context of the basic antagonism between God (and

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because of God, angels, or humans acting in harmony with God's plan; 2) negative phenomena which happen because of Satan, demons, or humans ignoring God's plan; and 3) negative or neutral experiences which happen as a result of accidents or human weaknesses. In other words, some IVCF students recognize a category of day-to-day experience for which non-human actors are not significantly responsible. Nevertheless, even events in this third category are the ultimate consequences of the original sin committed by Adam and Eve. Simon's comment reflects this more fundamental involvement of Satan in human life. He said: "The world is Satan's domain, so therefore, the things we see around us are often from him. All thoughts are either from God or Satan. Even the so-called natural lustful thoughts are from the Devil. There is no luke warm between the Devil and God."

God's will) and Satan is that the transcendent actors in this drama are fairly abstract.

I would argue that although IVCF participants believe God has a specific benevolent plan

for their lives, this plan and the ways God manifests it are remote and often opaque.

Ideally, IVCF members maintain intimate relationships with God; but according to

believers, God is still the creator of and most potent force in the universe, a role

inspiring awe which no degree of intimacy can entirely mitigate. God has a plan for

each of us and somehow seeks our cooperation to realize it fully. But this "somehow"

may be too ambiguous for evangelicals who understandably seek clearer, more immediate

and yet meta-human explanations for the condition of their lives.[183]

Similarly, from a very young age, evangelicals are told by pastors and peers that

Satan opposes God's specific plan for their lives and God's general plan for the universe.

However, Satan may also seem too immense and general an enemy for evangelicals, who

may see themselves as the victims of forces either smaller or at least more personal than

the ancient and nearly ubiquitous Satan. Just as angels are God's mediators, demons

mediate between Satan's (relatively general) efforts to undo God's plans and the specific

vulnerabilities of each individual.

Ammerman observes that the conviction that the entire range of human

experiences can be reconciled with God's will is more important for the fundamentalists

she studied than a "logically consistent theory about evil" (Ammerman 1987:66; cf.

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[183] Angels thus act as more comprehensible mediators between God's plan for an individual and the individual him- or herself. For example, Hugh explains that the angel who helped him turn away from Satan's lust-provoking woman on the street was simply helping to enact God's will (cf. Kingwell 1996:301).

Strozier 1994:43).[184]   IVCF students similarly place little value on maintaining

seamless explanations of evil.   Invoking members of the spiritual realm to explain

puzzling, painful, or miraculous situations may result in inconsistent interpretations by

secular standards.   However, for most of the people I interviewed, angels and demons

are non-metaphorical actors in everyday life, so IVCF students have little difficulty

integrating the spiritual realm into their understandings of causality.   Angels and demons

help to make abstract theological explanations about God's will and Satan's opposition

more accessible, comprehensible, and in the most literal sense, imaginable for IVCF

students.   The dichotomy between the heavenly realm's will for individuals and the

demonic sphere's less powerful but undeniable ability to interfere with this plan appears

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[184] During a conversation about demons, Winifred told me the following story: "When I was fifteen, I found a lump in my breast. There is a long history of breast cancer in my family. When I found this lump I felt a lot of anger and fear, and I think because I dwelt on these feelings for so long, I opened myself up to demonic influences from Fear and Anger. Then I went to a conference and asked my mother and another woman to pray over me and they said they felt themselves going up against the spirits of Fear and Anger. Then I went to the washroom and checked myself and just like that the lump was gone. I was so happy I went on stage at the conference and gave a testimonial right there and then. And then the next morning I woke up and discovered that the lump had returned. But that was okay because I knew that God loved me and that he had a plan for me, so I had a real sense of peace about the lump." Later in the conversation, Winifred observed that "I had found out that the tumour was benign before mom and the other lady prayed over me, but obviously I had a lot of anger and fear I had not dealt with by the then." In Winifred's recounting of her story, perhaps to underscore God's potency, she does not mention the benign status of the lump until she has told her story of how God appeared to have removed the lump altogether. Even when she rediscovered the benign lump the next day, she still believed that the prayers against the demonic spirits of Fear and Anger were effective because she "had a real sense of peace about the lump." She also said that "On the day I had the benign lump removed, I remember being terrified. But then I remembered that my mom had told me I that whenever I am scared I should just pray for God's help. So, as I was going into surgery, I just asked Jesus for help and immediately, the fear was gone."

to diminish causative mystery and to leave God's sovereign will for individuals intact. In short, the references to barely metaphysical enemies help to explain and contextualize a wide range of theodicical issues.

The third way of understanding the function of Satan in IVCF discourse is to interpret the contemporary persona of the anti-Christ as part of a broader evangelical response to the secularization of North American culture and the contemporary university. As I outlined in previous chapters, some theorists (Bibby 1993; Finke 1992; Rawlyk 1996; Wuthnow 1988) maintain that this process has not profoundly decreased personal levels of religiosity, at least as these are measured in terms of theological commitments in Canada, or church attendance and theological commitments in the United States. However, in both countries, religion has steadily retreated, or been eliminated, from major institutions such as education, health care, and the government (Roof 1996:154; Swatos 1983). These recently secularized institutions have been either hostile or indifferent to organized religion, and especially, evangelicals tell me, to conservative Christianity.[185] This exclusion of religion from mainstream social institutions is part of the more general process that Max Weber terms "disenchantment."[186]

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[185] See Chapter One for a discussion of "differentiation" as an alternative to this secularization argument. I argue that even though religion continues to exist in "clubs" at McMaster, it exists on the merely tolerated periphery of the university system as a whole.

[186] Describing the "disenchantment of the world," Weber writes: "Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations" (Weber 1948:155). According to Weber, the "prophetic *pneuma*, which in

As I have mentioned in previous chapters, since the late 1970s, conservative Protestantism has returned to the public stage in North America. Some scholars (Ammerman 1990; Cox 1995; Hammond 1983; Wilcox 1992) argue that part of the reason for the resurgence of evangelicalism is that these believers are responding (creatively, in great numbers, and with considerable success) to the disenchanting marginalization of explicitly religious concerns from public discourse (Stout 1988) and to what they consider to be an unprecedented values crisis in North America (Marty 1987).[187] Furthermore, the ascendency of the re-enchanting experientialism represented by significant elements of contemporary evangelicalism (Cox 1995; cf. Roof 1996:152) is partly a response to the disenchantment or ossification many evangelicals believe is evident within conventional Protestantism itself. In other words, the changes we are witnessing in contemporary Christianity may be generated by a combination of external (secularizing) and internal (rigidifying) forces.[188]

For the purposes of the present study, the causes of the rise of conservative Protestantism and of the separation between religion and North American institutions are

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former times swept through the great communities like a firebrand," is evident only "in personal human situations, in *pianissimo*" (Weber 1948:155).

[187] The scholars cited in this paragraph study religion in the United States. However, although the relationship between evangelicalism and Canadian culture has generally been less antagonistic than that between evangelicalism and American culture (Gauvreau 1991; Stackhouse 1993), the evangelicals with whom I have spoken about "contemporary culture" often describe it in polemical terms.

[188] See Luhrmann (1989:38) for a discussion of contemporary English magic as a complex response to an increasingly secular world. See also Danforth (1989:256) for a consideration of the New Age movement (and firewalking in particular) as a response to the rationalization and bureaucratization of North America.

less relevant than are evangelical responses to secularization. One of the best contexts in which to observe these responses and Satan's perceived role in them is the contemporary university. As previous chapters have illustrated, IVCF members are acutely aware of the secular and disenchanted character of McMaster University. Turning to Peretti's novel, it is no coincidence that in *This Present Darkness*, the central aim of the demonic forces is to take complete control of Whitmore College, a secular university on which Ashton's economy and culture depend. Writing about Peretti, popular culture scholar Jay Howard observes that

> The foremost battleground for the New Christian Right is the public education system. The stakes are high. To lose this confrontation is to lose the ability to impact children through educational socialization.... According to Peretti, the enemy views this battle as part of the ongoing effort to remove the influence of Christians on future generations, a necessary step in the battle to control and mold every segment of society (Howard 1994:196).

The acquisition of Whitmore is a cornerstone of the "Strongman's" grander scheme to take over the world. Professors at the university are depicted as some of the main conspirators in this plot, promulgating New Age and inclusivist ideas by using "that funny conglomeration of sixty-four dollar words which impress people with your academic prowess but can't get you a paying job" (Peretti 1986:37). Bearing in mind my discussion of evangelical attitudes towards feminism (cf. Chapter Five), it should come as no surprise that the most dangerous professor in the novel is Juleen Langstrat, a woman professor of psychology who specializes in humanism, para-normal phenomena, and the occult.

In *This Present Darkness,* Sandy Hogan, a student at the university and the daughter of one of the protagonists, angrily repudiates her father's attempts to protect her from Langstrat's teachings. Sandy proclaims:

> I'm a human being, Daddy, and every human entity -- I don't care what or who he or she is -- is ultimately subject to a universal scheme and not to the will of any specific individual.... And as for me, and what I am learning, and what I am becoming, and where I am going, and what I wish, I say you have no right to infringe on my universe unless I personally grant you that right (Peretti 1986:41).

Immediately after Sandy's above *credo*, Peretti writes:

> Marshall's eyesight was getting blurred by visions of Sandy turned over his knee. Enraged, he had to lash out at somebody, but now he was trying to steer his attacks away from Sandy. He pointed back to [the university] and demanded, 'Did -- did [*Langstrat*] teach you that?' (Peretti 1986:41).

I would argue that Marshall Hogan's defensive reaction is a paradigmatic evangelical (and especially fundamentalist) response to the dark spiritual forces which are believed to use non-Christian institutions to advance narcissistic, permissive, seditious, and demonic New Age ideas. In other words, Sandy may be a symbol of the secular university or of the secular world in general. As Hogan bellows his final question, we are reminded that universities such as Whitmore and McMaster represent significant threats to fundamentalists.[189] Many believers (at McMaster and in Peretti's novels) might occasionally like to see the secular university, as it were, turned over the metaphorical knee of Christian faith. Moreover, since many fundamentalists perceive

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[189] Of course, the secular university is, as I have discussed in Chapter Four, less problematic for more liberal evangelicals.

non-Christians as misguided adolescents who either stubbornly refuse to accept the truth or are duped by Satanically-supported secular worldviews or other religions,[190] Sandy may represent non-Christian individuals as well as institutions.

In general, the emphasis on angels and demons as invisible or well concealed actors in the human realm challenges the prevalent materialist conception of causality according to which all events in the physical world occur as the consequences of prior perceptible physical causes. The spiritual realm also threatens the western value of autonomy. Commenting on Peretti's novel, Harvey Cox observes that

> What intrigued me most was the way these supernatural personages, both benevolent and diabolic, make use of human beings to get their respective jobs done. Indeed human beings appeared to have little to do with it. Sometimes the good ones could open themselves to the angelic beings through prayer, but they were also likely to be thwarted by the bad ones conniving with the minions of darkness (Cox 1995:283; cf. Guelich 1991:53).

If demons and angels might be responsible for thoughts and behaviour; if in fact (as Cox argues that Peretti presupposes), humans are sometimes ignorant foot soldiers in the real battle between God and Satan, then the predicability of the material universe and the autonomy of human actors are severely compromised.

According to Jeffrey Burton Russell, mainstream liberal Christianity of the present century has

> tended to deny or at least ignore the Devil. Many argued that the concept, if it were to be kept at all, should be retained merely as a metaphor for human evil, and the view that Satan exists only as realized in human sin gradually became a liberal dogma (Russell 1988:241).

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[190] Arguably, at the point when Hogan wants to spank his daughter, Sandy represents both types of non-Christians.

As liberal Protestantism diminished the Devil's role in Christian life, the major modern critics of traditional religion (Marx, Freud, Nietzsche) also problematized the popular belief in radical evil (Russell 1988:241). The re-entry of the spiritual realm into the human sphere of action during a considerably disenchanted period in history (Swatos 1983) represents and effects a re-enchantment of the world. By increasing the permeability of the membrane between this world and the other world, Peretti has brought demons and angels into the everyday lives and thinking of IVCF members.[191]

The final interpretation of the role of the spiritual realm in IVCF discourse is related directly to the fortress and bridge strategies I have discussed in previous chapters. The fortress approach protects the chapter's members from threatening features of modern life, whereas the bridge strategy seeks to transform or diminish the sense of otherness IVCF students experience in secular institutions.

IVCF spiritual warfare against Satan, his demons, and the institutions, individuals, and traditions believed to be under the Evil One's domination, is a clear manifestation of the fortress strategy. Usually set in the context of group prayers and songs, warfare discourse simply makes public what many individual participants already feel: that they are members of what Peretti called the "Remnant" of loyal "saints," righteous servants of Christ in the midst of "this present darkness." One of the most common contexts in

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[191] See Caplan (1987) for a discussion of the increasing enchantment of Protestant fundamentalism in India.

which this strategy is expressed is in the songs sung at IVCF events. For example, in

"Above All Else," participants sing:

> You are a mighty warrior
> Dressed in an armour of light
> Crushing the deeds of darkness,
> Lead us on in the fight;
> Through the blood of Jesus,
> Victorious we stand.

As well, "The Battle Belongs to the Lord" includes the following lyrics:

> In heavenly armour we'll enter the land
> The battle belongs to the Lord.
> No Weapon that's fashioned against us will stand,
> The battle belongs to the Lord....
> When the Enemy presses in hard, do not fear
> The Battle Belongs to the Lord.[192]

The sense of living among if not being besieged by often demonically-cozened

infidels[193] contributes to what Marty has described as a form of "tribalism" (Marty

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[192] See Martin Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God," quoted in Russell
(1988:172):
> A mighty fortress is our God,
> A good weapon and defense;
> He helps us in every need
> That we encounter....
> The Prince of this world,
> However fierce he claims to be,
> Can do us no harm;
> His power is under judgement;
> One little word can fell him.

[193] There is a range of IVCF opinions about the role of the demonic realm in the
lives of non-Christians. Some would consider that demons of complacency, atheism and
pride have directly encouraged students to be non-Christians; while others would argue
that demons have more generally contributed to a culture which leads individuals to be
non-Christians. Most students do not have a precise opinion on this issue, but tend to

1987:316) which unites the group. Because spiritual warfare discourse is based on a sharp dualism between the saved and the unsaved, it accentuates the fundamental otherness of non-Christians.

However, the fortress function of spiritual realm discourse is balanced by a bridging function. This second role of the spiritual realm is reflected in the paradox that IVCF students typically believe that humans have an inviolable responsibility to choose (and will be damned if they do not choose) to enter into a relationship with God; but in the spiritual framework Peretti has helped to build, humans do not seem to be absolutely responsible for the status of their spiritual, not to mention physical, lives. This paradox is evident in Frank's comment: "Yeah, Satan can *make me think* lustful thoughts -- but we have to *choose*.... Satan can make something look so good it's almost impossible to say no to it, but you have to say no" (emphasis added).

From a human if not a divine perspective, a person who chooses to reject or ignore Christ as the exclusive means of salvation or the guarantor of the good life *but* is also being tormented every day by sulphur-exuding warty-skinned demons seems to be less culpable for his or her decision than a person who makes the same decision without demonic interference. In other words, a non-Christian may become an unsaved other to evangelicals partly because of powerful unseen forces. This person is therefore deserving of special prayers,[194] an extra portion of tolerance and personal attention.

occupy a middle-ground between these two positions.

[194] IVCF participants call these "intercessory prayers," in which one person prays to defend a second person from Satan's attacks.

I would argue that spiritual realm discourse is a bridging strategy because it depicts all people (including non-evangelicals) as more or less innocent victims[195] of Satan's shadowy army. Since the lamentable spiritual situations (e.g., being non-Christians, substance abusers, or adulterers) in which non-Christians find themselves are often in significant respects beyond their control; and since evangelicals (thanks to Peretti and a particular reading of the Bible) are so well acquainted with Satan's agenda and methods, IVCF participants feel they have a duty to wage spiritual warfare for the souls of their non-Christian peers at McMaster. This duty entails not simply praying for unbelievers' liberation from Satan and his demons, but befriending and sharing the good news with non-Christians.

The role of the spiritual realm in IVCF discourse facilitates two contradictory processes. First, by promulgating the dichotomy between the redeemed (a category in which only angelic members of the spiritual realm and a small fraction of self-proclaimed Christians properly belong) and the unredeemed (a category in which Satan and the rest of an obdurate humanity belong), IVCF students seem intentionally to exacerbate their alienation from non-Christians. However, Satan's second role in evangelical discourse is to inspire Christians to recruit non-Christians to join them in a single army of believers united by common experiences of demonic affliction.

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[195] Again, salvation is always available to people, even those who are being demonically tormented. Peretti describes several cases of this divine accessibility (In *This Present Darkness,* Marshall Hogan, Bobby Corsi, and Carmen Fraser are all demonically afflicted and then saved).

Conclusion

The day after I finished reading *This Present Darkness,* I had a speaking engagement at a local church. Although I have spoken at dozens of these kinds of events, as I stepped into the pulpit and began reading my presentation, I felt an almost overwhelming wave of anxiety wash over me. I was almost certain I could hear voices shouting to me: "You can't do this!" "Your voice won't hold out!" "You're about to lose your place!" "Just sit down and shut up!" Somehow I defied these voices, finished reading my text and sat down.

As soon as I was seated, I began to reflect upon this strange and unsettling experience. With Peretti's literary voice and the voices of IVCF participants still echoing in my ears, I probably came as close as a Unitarian can come to believing (as evangelicals might) that I was being "attacked" by demons. This empathy for IVCF members' fears of demons became predictably less convincing later that day when my mind returned to its habitual rhythms. But even though I imagine that my experience is probably a consequence of what Harding (1987; see also my argument in Chapter Three) describes as the power of fundamentalist rhetoric to draw nonbelievers gradually over the threshold of biblical faith, I remain somewhat reluctant to step once more into a pulpit.[196]

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[196] I found myself interpreting other aspects of my experience according to this dimension of the evangelical worldview. For example, I normally experience one migraine approximately every three months. However, during the five weeks I spent writing the present chapter, I suffered six migraines. When I told an evangelical friend about this increase, he raised his eyebrows, smiled, and said: "Maybe it's not a coincidence, Paul."

It would be simplistic and incorrect to argue that the relatively enchanted spiritual framework shared by IVCF students is derived exclusively from Peretti's novels. As Guelich (1991) observes, the spiritual realm and spiritual warfare have long and complex histories within the Judeo-Christian tradition.[197] However, without *This Present Darkness,* it seems unlikely that this realm would have achieved the sort of notoriety and ignominy it presently has in IVCF discourse. Furthermore, when IVCF students from over a dozen different denominations talk about and "pray against" elements of the spiritual realm, their spoken and gestural performances are nearly identical and include direct or indirect references to Peretti. Consequently, it is illuminating to consider Peretti's work emblematic of the views of the overwhelming majority of these evangelicals on Satan and his demons. Using Peretti's novel as a lens through which to view the prominent role of the spiritual realm in IVCF life helps to contextualize some of the most foreign elements of IVCF and evangelical discourse.

In this chapter I have explored the major ways in which IVCF members perceive and experience the spiritual realm. I have also suggested four possible explanations for the current prominence of the discourse of the spiritual realm in the larger IVCF discursive system. First, one might affirm the emic experience of the non-metaphorical reality of the spiritual realm. Second, one might explain the centrality of this discourse as a crucial component of the theodicies of these students. Third, one might posit that

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[197] In fact, Guelich argues that Peretti's version of spiritual warfare "risks turning the 'Prince of Peace' into the 'Commander-in-Chief,' a role that fits the messianic expectation of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology more than the Christology of the Gospels and the Pauline corpus" (Guelich 1991:63).

the spiritual realm helps IVCF members to re-enchant academic and social settings which, as Clark Pinnock maintains, betray a marked "bias against God." Fourth, IVCF students may employ the spiritual realm discourse to differentiate themselves from and simultaneously to ally themselves with their non-Christian peers and professors.

Chapter Seven

Witnessing at McMaster and Abroad

> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mt 28:19).

> I just think we have a responsibility to share what we have with other people. I mean, we have something pretty special: we have eternal life. That's so great. Wouldn't it be selfish if we didn't share it (Rebecca from fieldnotes)?

> We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him (Acts 10:39).

At a Friday Lunch meeting in October 1996, a local fundamentalist pastor spoke passionately to a group of eight IVCF students. The meeting was held, as usual, in the corner of a large multi-purpose room in the basement of the Divinity College. Several of the students seemed uncomfortable with the young preacher's zealous approach, somewhat out of place in the mid-afternoon of the week before mid-term exams. The preacher exhorted:

> Are you excited about your faith? You and you and you. I mean, are you really excited that Jesus voluntarily came down to earth and died for each one of your sins? *Your* sins. That's pretty exciting if you ask me. I don't think I deserved it, do you? And now, in this place, how are you sharing your faith? Are you

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doing all you can to spread your faith in our Lord to the world? Are you sharing your faith with your professors through your papers and with your friends in class? Or do you not believe that the power of God is great enough to protect you? Mac is the most challenging mission field because what is at the forefront of the teaching today will be at the forefront of thinking tomorrow. And some people will tell you that this university is a non-Christian place. But I tell you that this is true, but not completely true. Actually, this university is a pagan place. So, again, what did Paul do? He went to the world of the lost people and did not expect them to come to him. Are you doing this? Are you going to the world of the lost people all around you or are you waiting for them to come to you? ....And don't forget: you are disciples of Jesus Christ cleverly disguised as students who have to go to the world of the lost people and not expect them to come to you. It's like people here don't know they're lost. It's like convincing a sick person they're sick. But we have to do it.

The pastor quoted above leads a small Fellowship Baptist church in downtown Hamilton and has several contacts with members of the IVCF. Although his form of quasi-revivalist fundamentalism is not representative of mainstream evangelicalism or the McMaster IVCF, his message does reflect some basic evangelical approaches to the non-Christian "others" with whom IVCF participants live during their years at university. In various ways these cleverly concealed disciples of Christ are exhorted to make the McMaster campus their "mission field" in which to witness to spiritually "lost" and "sick" unbelievers.

In this chapter I describe and discuss the practice of witnessing in two different and largely non-Christian contexts: university students both at McMaster University and in Lithuania, where the IVCF sent teams of student missionaries each spring until 1996. After I provide an outline of these two mission fields, I describe various witnessing strategies. Finally, I explore the following major witnessing issues, which are represented in a variety of ways in Lithuania and at McMaster: the emphasis on the

emotional component of faith; IVCF witnesses' understandings of themselves during witnessing; and their faith in the comprehensive nature of God's will.

This chapter is neither a detailed ethnographic account of the group's mission to Lithuania nor the Lithuanian students' reception of the mission team. Rather, the IVCF's Lithuania and McMaster witnessing endeavors represent case studies in basic witnessing strategies and problems. Throughout this chapter I tend to emphasize Lithuanian examples for two reasons. First, my fieldwork at McMaster did not allow me to observe many witnessing encounters because most of these occur in the context of IVCF participants' daily interactions with non-Christians. Second, throughout the previous chapters I have discussed issues related to IVCF students in the McMaster setting and have not explored the Lithuanian witnessing context in great detail.

The word "witnessing" refers to the process of sharing the salvific good news of Christ's life, death and resurrection with non-Christians. When one "witnesses," one is claiming to have had an experience of the personal and divine reality of Christ. Although Christ's sacred status can be partly discerned through studying the Bible, this truth is apprehended most clearly through one's personal relationship with Christ, a crucial prerequisite for evangelical faith. Consequently, the goal of witnessing is to facilitate the non-believer's entry into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (Burridge 1991:4; cf. Rawlyk 1996:118).

The Christian attempt to convert the masses of exotic natives has been widely disparaged by commentators who believe that missionary endeavours have compelled or encouraged natives to adopt lifeways which are inconsistent with their physical or social

surroundings.[198] Nevertheless, just as early and relatively objectifying ethnography (cf.

Malinowski 1961) has been replaced by contemporary or post-modern ethnography (cf.

Clifford 1986; Crapanzano 1980; Marcus and Fischer 1986), the imperious and

unabashedly ethnocentric Protestant missionary style of the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries has also, for the most part, been slowly supplanted by an approach to one's

"mission field" which is more respectful of the lifeways of the non-Christian "other."[199]

Perhaps the ability of evangelism to adapt itself to a changing cultural climate explains

the fact that there are more missionaries in the 1990s than at any other time in history

(Burridge 1991:x).[200] Nevertheless, as we shall see, even the most sensitive evangelist

must, in the end, believe and proclaim that he or she knows something of vital interest

to the relatively unenlightened non-Christian listener.

Although Protestant evangelistic or missionary work is often situated in third

world countries, it has a long and noteworthy history in North America. In fact,

evangelism has played a major role in the establishment of Christianity in Canada

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[198] For a description of the impact of foreign missions on social change, see Miller (1993). For a discussion of some of the common stereotypes of Christian missionaries, see Burridge (1991:25). In defence of these foreign witnesses, anthropologist and missionary A.R. Tippett writes that "Missiology has come through a devastating period of criticism. Missiologists have been brutally maligned. Dedicated people who believed they were responding to a divine call have been pictured as egotistical morons by novelists and other critics who never did or could stand in their shoes. And in response to these attacks, missionaries have been made to feel so guilty that they have often responded with self-flagellation far beyond what has been called for" (Tippett 1983:127).

[199] For a discussion of the ambiguous relationship between anthropologists and missionaries, see Luzbetak (1983) and Sutlive (1983).

[200] However, the high numbers of contemporary missionaries might also reflect evangelicalism's refusal to compromise with cultural relativism and pluralism.

specifically (Rawlyk 1988; Stackhouse 1993), as well as in North America generally (Marsden 1991; Noll 1992; Rawlyk, Bebbington, Noll 1994). Moreover, historian Michael Gauvreau writes that in nineteenth century Canada, the influence of Protestant evangelism was not limited to the religious culture of the country; it made a significant impression on non-religious institutions as well (Gauvreau 1990:58). Eighteenth and nineteenth century evangelists were sufficiently successful at establishing churches, encouraging conversions and influencing the societies in which they witnessed that by the end of the nineteenth century evangelical Protestantism had become embedded in Canadian and North American life (Gauvreau 1994:220). Until the early part of the present century, therefore, evangelicals felt relatively at home in North America, a continent characterized by what George Rawlyk (1992:298; cf. Noll 1992:547) described as a broadly evangelical consensus on morality, the divinity of Jesus, and the reliability of the Bible.

However, within the first half of the twentieth century, the evangelical "consensus" to which Rawlyk refers had deteriorated.[201] This led evangelicals to perceive North America as, in one IVCF member's words, "hostile territory" (cf. Rawlyk 1988:xi). As such, this increasingly secular domain became slightly repositioned in evangelical discourse as a site in need of more concentrated evangelistic efforts. Thus, when IVCF participants and other evangelicals I have met talk about "mission

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[201] Rawlyk attributes this disintegration to contemporary consumerism, "the insidious antithesis to essential Christianity.... Consumerism, in a profound sense, cut the essential heart out of the evangelical consensus and out of revivalism" (Rawlyk 1988:136).

fields," they are as likely to refer to McMaster University and North America in general as they are to Africa or Asia. As I have outlined, domestic witnessing is not a twentieth century invention. But since the major institutions in North America are arguably more disenchanted in the last part of the twentieth century than ever before (Swatos 1983), the culture as a whole is perceived by many of the believers I have interviewed as fundamentally and stubbornly inimical to evangelical beliefs and values (Rawlyk 1996:12). This antagonism, of course, sets the stage for evangelists.

While the IVCF's annual mission to Lithuania is in many ways a traditional missionary project, the group's day-to-day witnessing to their non-Christian peers at McMaster seems not to be categorically different from the group's work in Lithuania. Both witnessing and missionary work emphasize interactions with non-Christians, in the hope that these others are converted.[202] Evangelical witnesses, regardless of their geographical locations, seek in some way to obey Jesus's Great Commission (Mt 28:19).[203] Consequently, in this chapter I often use the concepts of witnessing and mission work interchangeably.

The McMaster mission field comprises nearly 14,000 undergraduate students[204] in a southwestern Ontario city of 317,000 people. All students and faculty are, in a manner of speaking, witnessing "targets." A small minority of IVCF students tell me

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[202] See Hefner (1993:6) for a discussion of the origin of this impulse in nineteenth century enlightenment sensibilities.

[203] For a discussion of the biblical basis for witnessing, see Adams (1993).

[204] The composition of the IVCF itself includes only a few graduate students.

they witness to their professors and teaching assistants directly by discussing evangelical issues in their assignments or classroom contexts. However, most IVCF participants are content to witness to their educators by quietly exemplifying Christian virtues such as kindness or honesty.

In September 1995, I enroled in one of the thirteen IVCF Small Groups organized for the 1995-96 academic year.[205] Small Groups meet usually once a week throughout the academic year to discuss a variety of issues.[206] Since I was interested in learning about witnessing, I registered for the Small Group planning to study Paul Little's *How to Give Away Your Faith* (1988), a popular text replete with practical advice to help evangelicals witness to non-Christians.[207]

The other context in which I observed witnessing is Lithuania. Lithuania (approximate population: 3.7 million) is bordered by Poland, Latvia and Byelorussia. Its capital city is Vilnius (approximate population: 590,000) and its annual per capita

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[205] For the 1996-1997 academic year, there are sixteen Small Groups.

[206] Four of the thirteen Small Groups studied popular evangelical books on topics such as witnessing, prayer during busy periods of life, elements of Christian belief, and miracles. The other nine Small Groups had the following titles: Conflicts, Priorities, and Fine Lines; Sex and the Christian Relationship; Difficult Christian Issues; Young Life -- meeting teens where they're at; The Book of Romans; What did HE say?; Understanding our Position in Christ ("just for girls"); Running the RACE in real life; and A Study of John 15:5.

[207] On the cover of the book is a quotation from Billy Graham: "A tremendous help in witnessing." At the beginning of our first Small Group, one of the members said "Well, I don't know about you, but if Billy Graham likes it, it must be good enough for us." At the top right hand corner of the book is a graphical insert which reads: "One million copies in print!"

income is roughly $3000 (US). For a variety of reasons, it was one of the last European

countries to be Christianized by the Roman Catholic church.[208]   Christianity was

officially adopted as the Baltic state's religion in 1384, but was not accepted at a popular

level for several centuries. The worship of pagan deities continued for centuries and was

gradually replaced by or incorporated syncretically into Catholicism, still the largest

religious movement in contemporary Lithuania.[209]

Presently, Lithuania is struggling to westernize its economy and government, both

of which were decimated by the withdrawal of Soviet financial aid (following the

country's 1991 liberation) and the reluctance of westerners[210] to invest in the country

after it achieved independence. Although the Lithuanians I met are often sceptical about

the information they receive about western countries,[211] they still have a passion for

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[208] See Musteikas (1988) and Gerutis (1969) for a history of this and the following Reformation periods. See Senn (1959) for an account of the more recent history. All information on Lithuania in this chapter is derived from these texts, the country's official internet website (www.fe.doe.gov/int/lithuan/html) and my own experience.   Also invaluable was an unpublished essay about the history of Christianity in Lithuania written for a class in McMaster's Divinity College by Reverend Steve Cox, a former IVCF missionary in Lithuania.

[209] One of the reasons Roman Catholicism is so popular is that the Church resisted the Soviet Union's dominance.

[210] Specifically, I spoke with several resentful Lithuanians who believe the Americans betrayed them by failing to support the post-Soviet Lithuanian economy.

[211] According to Shawn, a Canadian missionary, because Lithuanians now have access to numerous sources of information about western ideas and ideologies, their previously wholesale embrace of the west has waned somewhat since the country's independence. This Canadian missionary commented that, "It used to be that I could walk into a university, set up a [Christian information] table and wave a few Canadian flags, and I'd have fifty people crowded all around me, wanting to hear all about North America. Now I'm lucky if I talk to ten people in a whole afternoon. By now they've seen it all already, or at least they think they have, and they aren't as interested."

western, especially American, commodities. The nearly ubiquitous western-style advertizing along the elegant main streets of Vilnius now eclipses the vestiges of Soviet-style marketing. Perhaps symbolic of the economic model which is rapidly gaining ascendancy in Lithuania, the country's first two McDonald's restaurants were scheduled to open a week after the mission team left the country at the end of May 1996. Shaking his head, Shawn, a long term International Fellowship of Evangelical Students missionary, pointed to a bag of potato chips in the hands of a Lithuanian man and said to me, "Look at that. You put an American flag on something, even if it's made in China or Lithuania and it'll sell out like that. I hate it."

Several commentators have suggested plausibly that the rise of conservative Protestantism (and especially fundamentalism) in North America is a response to the sense these Christians express of being opposed to significant elements of the contemporary life (Ammerman 1987 and 1990; Balmer 1989; Marty 1987). Lithuania has just entered the world characterized by advanced technology, consumerism, democracy, pluralism and economic globalism. Many Lithuanians told me and other team members that they feel uneasy about their role in the western world, and especially in the market economy which typifies this world.[212] In fact, since Lithuanians have not

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[212] One night while the team waited at the bus stop after a Lithuanian folk music and dancing evening, we were approached by a group of about ten very inebriated Lithuanian men in their late twenties. When they noticed us (which did not require great perspicacity since three of the ten of us are not white), one of them stumbled around us menacingly, alternately leering at the women in the group, singing and making comic faces. Suddenly his countenance was transformed as he began to address the team. "Why are you come here?" he asked. "To get to know Lithuanians," Steve replied, trying to avert what looked as though it might become a violent situation. "But why here? Why don't you go to Germany or Italy or Greece? Lithuania is shit now. Look

entered the modern world gradually, as North Americans have, Lithuanians' sense of dislocation from the economic, social and moral conventions of the modern world system may be more severe than that of western evangelicals.[213]

Since evangelicalism presents its adherents with a coherent and meaningful worldview, it is possible that the incipient attraction of some Lithuanians to evangelicalism reflects their quest for a western-style "sacred canopy" (Berger 1967) with which to protect themselves from the uncertainties associated with their movement toward a western-style economy. However, the form of Christianity conveyed by IVCF students may offer Lithuanians more than just a protective metanarrative. This form of faith may also offer them a worldview which does not encourage a critique of the underlying principles of democracy and capitalism (Fields 1991). Such a critique (more common, for example, in Liberation Theology (Berryman 1987)) might undermine Lithuanian Christians' emerging worldviews. In short, these believers' ambiguous desires to embrace the western world may ideally predispose them toward the apolitical, personalistic, and experiential form of Christianity that IVCF witnesses impart.

In 1991, a friend of Carla, the IVCF staff worker, suggested that the McMaster group send a contingent of students to witness to Lithuanian students. Although Carla was reluctant at first, she prayed about this possibility and eventually became convinced

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around -- we haven't money or jobs or anything," he said as he motioned toward the main city square, picturesque by North American standards. He continued, "We are on our knees now after the Russians leave. Why don't you come back in ten or twenty years once we are better country? Now there is nothing here to see."

[213] For a discussion of the resilience of minority groups in the allegedly totalizing hegemonic discourse of western capitalist culture, see Simpson (1996).

that "this is what God wanted me to do." Carla committed the McMaster chapter to sending teams of student missionaries to Lithuania for one month annually for five years, beginning in May 1992. The McMaster team went to Lithuania under the auspices of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), the international umbrella organization to which Canada's IVCF belongs.

Carla knew the 1996 group of seven students and myself would be relatively small compared to the previous four missions, which had attracted between nine and twenty-four students. Therefore, she was understandably cautious about the effects an outsider's presence might have on the team and on Lithuanians. However, since Carla and I had developed a very positive rapport since I began conducting my fieldwork in 1994, and since I had already interviewed all of the team members, she agreed to let me accompany the team, provided the two long term missionaries living in Lithuania agreed. After I had exchanged several letters over electronic mail with the two missionaries, approval for my participation in the final mission to Lithuania was secured.

The IVCF team's mission was to help cultivate the nascent evangelical groups which have arisen on Lithuanian campuses since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Western European and North American (but mainly American) evangelical and fundamentalist mission organizations have devoted a tremendous amount of energy and money to evangelize the people of the former Soviet Union. Some of the missionaries have demonstrated what many Lithuanians interpret as a condescending attitude toward residents of the former Soviet Union (Finley 1991; Thorogood 1993). In contrast, throughout the orientation sessions for the mission, Carla emphasized that team members

should be cognizant of the tendency of western Christians to patronize Lithuanians, to misrepresent Christianity and, likely, to frustrate the goal of drawing people into the evangelical fold. The IVCF witnesses were advised to operate in a "learner" or "servant" mode and to maintain an "open mind" during their missionary efforts.

IVCF members often refer to their form of witnessing as "friendship evangelism," the practice of sharing the gospel in the context of sincere friendships. This form of witnessing is also based on the assumption that the non-Christian's conversion should not be a condition of the friendship. The IVCF's form of friendship evangelism is an evangelical adaptation of what Jongeneel and Van Engelen (1995) describe as "dialogue theology."[214] Broadly speaking, this approach advocates a mode of witnessing which emphasizes the conversation (rather than the consequences of the interaction) between the witness and the non-Christian.[215]

Although IVCF missionaries formed relationships with Lithuanian students in the hope that the latter would "come to Christ," IVCF team members did not seem to consider their Lithuanian conversational partners to be passive auditors. In fact, Canadian participants remarked frequently that they felt they were learning more about

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[214] Jongeneel and Van Engelen write: "This theology has become one of the most significant missiological currents, one that has found a firm place of acceptance not only in the [The World Council of Churches -- a relatively liberal ecumenical assembly of Christian churches] (which established, along with a Division for World Mission and Evangelism, a Division for Dialogue), but also in the Roman Catholic Church" (Jongeneel and Van Engelen 1995:453).

[215] However, Jongeneel and Van Engelen comment that "In the evangelical movement, protests have been registered against the theology of 'dialogue' just as against the theology of 'presence.' There is no objection to these words as such. The problem is, rather, that they often serve as replacements for key words of Scripture" (1995:454).

what it means to be a Christian from recently-converted Lithuanians than they felt they were able to teach these new believers. IVCF members' interactions with Lithuanians were intended to initiate a context for evangelization and therefore had to convey the message of the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ. Ultimately, of course, witnesses must also begin to convince the non-believer of his or her essential spiritual deficiency. Nevertheless, these conversations also challenged, edified, and, according to IVCF rhetoric, "stretched" the missionaries themselves.[216]

The *Lietuvos Krikščioniu Studentu Bendrija* (LKSB), or Lithuanian Christian Student Fellowship, is the Lithuanian analogue of the IVCF. The LKSB has chapters in Vilnius, Klaipeda, Kaunus, and Panavegys. Its active membership is approximately eighty students. Previous McMaster team leaders have chosen to spend their time differently; but the 1996 leaders decided to send the team to Panavegys (approximate population: 100,000) for the first week and Vilnius for the next two weeks. During the last ten days, the team facilitated a Bible Camp, enjoyed a four day vacation in St. Petersburg and returned to Vilnius and Panavegys to throw farewell parties for the students they had met during the month.

The group from McMaster consisted of seven students and myself. All of the team members have appeared once or more during the previous chapters, and three of them were featured at length in Chapter Two. Wanda, a former IVCF Executive member and recent McMaster graduate in Geography, was the team leader. Steve,

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[216] See Hunter (1985) for a discussion of the ways evangelicalism has been made more palatable to non-Christians.

another former Executive member and a recent Science graduate controlled the team's finances. The other members were: Simon, a geography student, Oliver, a Psychology student (and member of the 1996-1997 Executive) Denise, a first year student, Jocelyn, a Social Work student, and Gabrielle, a second year English student. The team was organized according to a strict hierarchy. Before the team left Canada, all members had to accept Wanda's leadership, agreeing to follow her orders even if we did not like them or they seemed irrational. As is the case whenever an IVCF consensus is of great significance to the group, our formal acceptance of Wanda's authority was signified at an orientation meeting with a group prayer to bless her leadership. Steve, the next oldest member of the team, supported Wanda's decisions and made executive decisions when she was absent. Although the team structure was a hierarchy, the leaders were never domineering. Attempts were made to achieve consensus on most decisions; but when this was not possible, Wanda's or Steve's decision was considered final.

Two long-term (two to three years) IFES missionaries (Shawn and Kelly), also former McMaster students, joined the core group of seven team members, meaning the team almost always consisted of ten Canadians including myself. Kelly served as Wanda's co-leader, a logical designation since Kelly speaks fluent Lithuanian. Shawn, also bilingual and a resident of Vilnius, occasionally helped to plan events and prevent the team from getting lost.

My participation in and observation of the mission team's efforts inaugurated a new phase in my fieldwork with the IVCF. Previously, my contact with the chapter's members had been intimate and challenging; but I still returned to my own home every

night. Living with nine group members in the sometimes trying social and physical surroundings of a very poor country provided me with a new perspective on the way IVCF students live, worship and communicate with each other and non-Christian others. Stripping participants of the familiar luxuries of North American life permitted (and perhaps forced) them to express their commitments and personalities in a lucid and an occasionally stark manner.

In Panavegys and Vilnius we were housed in spartan and poorly maintained university residences. In Vilnius we had no hot water for the two weeks we were there, and did our laundry, dishes, and daily ablutions in the same sink.[217] In both cities my room adjoined or was adjacent to the "boys' room," where Steve, Simon, and Oliver slept. This proximate yet separated arrangement was ideal, since it allowed me to spend the majority of my time with the team and yet to have a private place to write my fieldnotes.

Although there was some variation, a typical day in Lithuania was organized in the following manner. After breakfast the team would spend approximately forty-five minutes doing "devotions" (Bible study[218] and singing). Then we would take a bus or walk to one of the university campuses, where I was responsible for guarding team members' belongings as the team split into groups of two or three to "do prayer

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[217] Fortunately, we were able to take the occasional shower at Shawn's apartment.

[218] The team went through the Book of Luke.

walks,"[219] which lasted approximately forty-five minutes. After the prayer walks the team would reconvene and wait until the area they had chosen[220] began to fill with people.

The team would then perform two or more of the five dramas they had learned before they left Canada.[221] Set to American music, these dramas were pantomimes which depicted human vanity in the face of God's love and power, our dependence on God's forgiveness, and human sinfulness. Since most of the audience members were probably unable to understand the words in the songs, after the dramas, either Kelly or one of the Lithuanian evangelicals would explain the drama's plot and the purpose of the team's presence in Lithuania. After this explanation, one of the Canadian team members would stand beside a translator and share his or her "testimony," the story of how he or she became a Christian (cf. Ingram 1986). Then team members would walk into the audience and talk to the Lithuanian students, with more or less difficulty depending on whether the Lithuanian students in question spoke English and whether a translator was available. The team members handed out "tracts" in Lithuanian and English which

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[219] During a "prayer walk," students walk in groups around the campus, praying for the contacts they will make that day and, as they told me, "binding Satan" so he cannot interfere with their witnessing efforts. In so doing prayer walkers "claim the campus for Christ." Thus for many students prayer walks amount to ambulatory "spiritual warfare," while for others they are times to prepare themselves psycho-spiritually for the day's events. I was only invited to participate in one of these walks, with Oliver and Denise, whose prayers were hopeful and not explicitly oriented towards spiritual warfare.

[220] They scheduled their activities to coincide with the class change times and the locations of highest traffic.

[221] I was also assigned to set up the sound system the team used to amplify the music which accompanied these dramas. Specifically, I started, stopped, cued up the music, and adjusted the volume.

included brief testimonies, a brief statement about God's love, phone numbers of the evangelical student leaders in their city, a schedule of the IVCF team's activities that week and an open invitation to the Bible camp (cf. Ingram 1989:23). Kelly usually stood behind the "book table" on which Lithuanian Bibles and Lithuanian and (translated) English evangelical texts were displayed.

After these performances and conversations were completed, the team would go for lunch, frequently inviting and paying for Lithuanian students to join them. Then a brief period of free time followed lunch; but most often the team would return to the residence and begin planning for the evening's or the next day's events. After a modest and hurried dinner (almost invariably bread, cheese and pickles), the group would host an evening event: a Bible study, a worship event, a "Canadian culture night," a "question night," or sometimes a social event. After the evening activities, the team returned to the residence for a "debriefing" session (which lasted between half an hour and two hours)[222] in which members discussed their impressions of and concerns about the day's events. Debriefing was followed by a prayer session.[223] The day's official events usually ended around midnight, after which people would often stay awake for an hour or more talking casually.

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[222] "The boys" and I eventually began calling these "delonging" sessions.

[223] As well, all meals and witnessing events were preceded by, and all morning devotions were concluded with prayer sessions.

Witnessing may be understood as an attempt to encourage a person to abandon his or her "frame" or paradigm of personal meaning and to adopt the evangelical frame instead (Goffman 1974; Ingram 1989). It is also a rhetorical art form analogous in some ways to political or didactic rhetoric. As in the contexts of politics or teaching, there are no simple procedures friendship evangelists can follow to contribute to or effect a another person's salvation, and in the end, the potential convert must make the final decision. However, as in all rhetorical domains, there are conventions of interaction which, when observed, make the missionary and his or her message more acceptable.

Two IVCF texts provide insights into the conventions adopted by or at least suggested to IVCF witnesses. One of these texts is *How to Give Away Your Faith* by Paul Little. This book was employed by an IVCF Small Group devoted to witnessing. The other text is a duo-tang of photocopied materials on witnessing which was compiled by a former IVCF Lithuania missionary leader Steve Cox from various sources and distributed to the Lithuania mission team a few weeks before we left Canada. Witnessing strategies fall into two basic categories: those pertaining to body language and those related to interpersonal interactions. Most of these practices are fairly obvious and also apply to successful non-witnessing interactions. What follows is a brief list and description of witnessing strategies.

The body language most helpful for sharing the gospel with non-Christians includes: displaying good listening skills, making eye contact, maintaining an open posture, and waiting for the other person to finish speaking before one begins.

The interpersonal skills specific to the context of witnessing are: being informed; being enthusiastic; contacting others socially; establishing common ground; arousing interest; taking initiative; not giving the person more information that he or she can absorb; not condemning; emphasizing the central message of Christ's incarnation and resurrection; confronting the person directly; using the casual touch; having a good joke ready; praying in public; avoiding "in" vocabulary; expressing love; following up; discussing sin experientially;[224] being relaxed; being verbal; being polite; being confident; being positive; being bold; being led by the spirit.[225]

The above witnessing strategies and the ways they might be applied in Lithuania were discussed at length during the orientation sessions held in the months before the

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[224] The previous habits are enumerated in Chapters Three, Four, and Five of *How to Give Away Your Faith*. These suggestions are mostly self-explanatory, but some elaboration might be in order in some cases. A witness ought to be informed about the world and the Christian faith so that neither the individual nor the faith appears simplistic. Carla tells IVCF members to witness "with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other." Witnesses should try not to suggest that the non-Christian's life has been futile or baneful even though the witness believes non-Christians are bound for hell. Missionaries should refrain from using evangelical rhetoric which will not be comprehensible to non-Christians. Finally, Little (1988:91) encourages people to discuss the issue of sin experientially rather than propositionally because people are more likely to understand accounts of actual sins rather than the abstract idea of original sin.

[225] These last seven recommendations are derived from a text compiled in 1996 by former Lithuania missionary, Reverend Steve Cox. Being "led by the spirit" is elaborated by Cox in the following way: "Learn to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. He will guide you. Learn to be looking for what God is already doing in people's lives.... The Spirit can give insight, direction and special sensitivity for the moment. The Holy Spirit can inspire you in what you say -- He knows the heart of the one you are speaking to. The Spirit *is* speaking and guiding all the time -- learn to listen -- you're not on your own!" Cox provides the following two scriptural references: "Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Mt 10:19-20). Also: "The Spirit guides us into all truth" (Jn 14:26).

mission. As well, they are occasionally mentioned at Large Group meetings in the context of presentations and prayers about witnessing on campus. However, most of these suggestions are already IVCF evangelistic conventions. Ironically, one of the clearest indications of the existence of implicit guidelines for acceptable witnessing came during the chapter's 1996 Winter Retreat where I encountered a woman whose approach to me was completely unlike that of the other members I had met.

One evening as I sipped hot chocolate in front of the fireplace in the lounge building at the Ontario resort where the retreat was being held, I was approached by a first year student named Sandy who had heard about my study. Initially, she came across as gentle and timid. After asking me a few questions about my dissertation, she asked me about my own faith and whether my research had challenged any of my beliefs. I explained Unitarianism to her briefly and offered her some examples of ways my own faith had been "stretched" by my interactions with the IVCF. Then she began to criticize my religious tradition, asking sweetly, "Yeah, you talk about love, but how can someone love fully, or even live fully without Christ? I just think that's impossible." After a few more questions about my faith, she said flatly: "Well, it says in the Bible that only Christians will go to heaven. What do you say to that?" I was stunned by her approach, mainly because it was diametrically opposed to the dozens of previous firm but courteous efforts IVCF members had made to save my soul. In an attempt not to spoil what had so far been a fruitful and relaxing retreat, I had to suppress my academic and personal defensive instincts during this conversation. After approximately fifteen minutes of this conversation, I gently changed the subject and left the room.

By the time I completed my fieldwork in May 1996, I had been engaged in a hundred or more conversations in which an IVCF member (and sometimes several at once) witnessed to me. The above anecdote relates the only time in the three years I have been associated with the group that someone has adopted an aggressive, patronizing, and condemnatory tone during these conversations. The day after this incident, I learned that Sandy had been involved with the group for only two weeks. Clearly her approach struck me as incongruous in that setting because she had not been enculturated in IVCF witnessing conventions. Ingram describes a equally inconsistent episode of "spiritual bullying" by a member of the Campus Crusade for Christ, concluding that "such behaviour was rare in the Crusade and always came from a novice or staff trainee" (Ingram 1989:22).

The McMaster IVCF neither explicitly teaches the strategies outlined in the Little and Cox texts; nor does it require that all participants employ them. Obviously many students arrive at university with their own styles of relating to non-Christians already entrenched in their personalities. However, through Small and Large Group meetings which deal with witnessing, and most commonly through casual IVCF conversations, newer chapter members quickly learn that they are expected to utilize a non-confrontational and dialogical style of witnessing.

The following discussion of three aspects of the witnessing I observed should provide readers with a contextualized sense of this practice. The first issue to explore is the auxiliary role played in IVCF witnessing by the intellectual component of

Christianity. At the Winter Retreat, Clark Pinnock, a professor at McMaster's Divinity

College, emphasized the need to "find a reason for our hope." He was paraphrasing 1

Peter 3:15: "Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you

an accounting for the hope that is in you." In Chapter Four I discussed the Winter

Retreat as a site for the philosophical clarification and crystallization of many students'

vague senses of alienation from McMaster's secular ethos. But in addition to bringing

the "bias against God" into an extremely sharp focus, Pinnock also explored in great

detail the logical basis of basic Christian theology as well as its intellectual superiority

to all other (but especially secularist, or in his words, "metaphysical naturalist")

worldviews.

Although Pinnock and Carla emphasize a balance between the personal and the

intellectual components of witnessing, IVCF students opt overwhelmingly to stress the

former element.[226] For example, one afternoon the team decided to take the train with

a group of approximately fifteen Lithuanian (mostly LKSB) students to visit the medieval

castle of Trakkai, once the seat of power in Lithuania. On the train I sat across from

Oliver, who was speaking with an articulate Lithuanian non-Christian woman who was

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[226] During a conversation we had at the Winter Retreat, Pinnock compared the contemporary IVCF to the IVCF of his own formative years in the 1950s and 1960s. "Back in the 50s and 60s, it was really a fundamentalist and doctrinally-driven group. This group is not really like that, though. It's a more charismatic style of worship here. I mean, not as charismatic a style as the Vineyard, but it seems to me that the worship here is not emphasizing the doctrines of fundamentalism, but the emotional worship of God.... Their experience here is about relationships -- with God and each other. It's not about apologetics."

interested in the LKSB and Christianity in general.[227] During their conversation, this

woman asked Oliver the following question:

> I have a friend who believes that all religions have the same ultimate purpose. You know, they are here to help us with the same things. I think I believe that, too. I mean, there are so many cultures in the world. How can there be only one religion that is right for all of them? That doesn't make sense to me.

Oliver, a compassionate and sensitive man, replied softly, "I believe there is only one

right way. But I haven't really studied any of the other religions. I guess maybe I

should." As far as I know, Oliver has not embarked on a study of other religions since

he returned to Canada. But, as we shall see, that is beside the point: he does not feel

that such an investigation *could* detract from the truth or cogency of his faith. Another

anecdote should illustrate this conviction.

A few days after the trip to Trakkai, the team held a meeting to discuss the

"Question Evening" which was scheduled for the next night. The purpose of this evening

was to provide a forum for potential Christians to ask more established IVCF and LKSB

members questions about issues such as the existence of suffering, creationism, and the

truth claims of other religions. When the issue of discussing other world religions arose

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[227] I was beset at this moment by what might be called "ethnographic overload." Across the aisle from the seats in which Oliver and I and two Lithuanians were sitting sat Denise and two Lithuanian women. Denise was drawing a popular evangelical depiction of the human separation from God: two cliffs facing each other with a deep divide between them. "You see, on this side of the cliff is man, us. And over here is God," she said, writing "God" and "man" over their respective cliffs. "And what separates us from God is sin," she explained, writing "sin" vertically in the chasm. "The only way we can get over this separation is through Jesus Christ. See what I mean?" At this point, she drew the cross horizontally, spanning the two cliffs.

during the planning session, almost everyone admitted their ignorance. Kelly suggested that if a team member was asked a question about other religions, he or she could answer that the essential difference between non-Christian faiths and Christianity is that "other faiths emphasized what you can do to be a good person or to win God's favour, while Christianity emphasizes God's grace entirely." As she finished this sentence, she turned to me, as an "expert" in religious studies, and remarked, "That's probably an exaggeration, I know. But it's true, isn't it?" After I replied that I thought this view misrepresented non-Christian religions, we discussed the analogues for God's grace in other religions.

We had only two and a half hours to plan this event, and I observed immediately after we commenced that most of the team members were nervous. "What am I going to say if someone asks me about fossils or Hinduism?" Gabrielle asked, adding: "What do I know about that stuff?" Jocelyn agreed and offered an alternative to the evening's agenda.

> Look, I just don't feel comfortable trying to answer all those questions. That's not really my thing, you know? Why don't we just talk about God's grace in the world instead? Then maybe we could sing or pray, sort of like a Large Group meeting. I'd feel better about that.

Although two other team members supported Jocelyn's suggestions, the team leaders said they felt committed to the original plan for the evening. Eventually Wanda assigned a topic to each member of the team and told them to spend some time praying and thinking about how they would deal with questions that might arise.

The next evening only twelve Lithuanians (most of them LKSB members) joined the fairly apprehensive IVCF team in the classroom booked for this occasion. One of the Lithuanians present was an extremely articulate bilingual agnostic woman named Daiva. During the evening, Denise claimed that it is impossible to lead a moral life without a belief in God. In response, Daiva recited a litany of human rights abuses committed in the name of God throughout history. Denise answered (or avoided answering, depending on one's interpretation) Daiva's question by replying, "Well, I see what you're saying, but I don't think it's really our place to judge other people." When Daiva asked about the possibility of reincarnation and the experiences of children who recognize adults they have never met, Jocelyn answered (or evaded): "Well, that's an interesting question, Daiva. All I can say to it is that we should all read the Bible and find out what it has to say about these questions, because there can't be more than one Truth." Then, addressing Simon, Daiva argued that the biblical (Genesis 1:26) account of the human "dominion over" animals contributed to environmental degradation. Simon seemed dumbfounded. After a long pause, he said he believed that because the first two chapters of Genesis suggest humans are made in the image of God, and that God brought the animals before Adam to receive their names, "animals are here for us. In fact, I think the whole earth would not have been made if it was not for humans." This comment evidently enraged Daiva, who continued to pursue Simon. Simon, for his part, gave no indication that he was interested in discussing the scientific or ethical implications of his statement.

These two anecdotes illustrate that the style of witnessing typical of McMaster's

IVCF does not emphasize the intellectual foundations of Christian faith. By this

characterization I do not mean that IVCF participants do not believe their faith is

intellectually compelling, but rather that they are either not able or not inclined to explain

their faith in the intellectual terms expected by and acceptable to many non-Christians.

In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, evangelical scholar Mark Noll argues

that contemporary evangelicalism favours

> conversion to the exclusion of gradual growth in grace, the immediate experience
> of the Holy Spirit instead of the contemplation of God in the created realm, the
> prizing of popular [evangelical] wisdom over against the pronouncements of the
> authorities (Noll 1994:32).

Noll characterizes as a "scandal" the fact that for many evangelicals and non-

evangelicals, the designation "evangelical intellectual" seems almost oxymoronic.[228]

Noll refers primarily to evangelical academics and their tendencies to avoid the religious

questions raised within their disciplines. However, his insights also help us understand

the role of the intellectual elements of Christianity in IVCF students' friendship

evangelism. Neither the students who tried to "lead me to Christ" during fieldwork, nor

those I observed witnessing in Lithuania emphasized the historical veracity of or

philosophical proofs for the existence of God or any other elements of their shared

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[228] Noll observes that "evangelicals are not exemplary for their thinking and they have not been so for several generations" (Noll 1994:3). Describing the portentous nature of this tendency, he writes that "If evangelicals do not take seriously the larger world of the intellect.... we are saying that we want our lives to be shaped by cultural forces -- including intellectual forces -- that contradict the heart of our religion" (Noll 1994:34). See Guelich (1991), Marsden (1991), Rawlyk (1996), and Stackhouse (1993) for examples of evangelical erudition.

beliefs. Although all witnessing presupposes that witnesses have to some degree systematized their beliefs formally (Ingram 1986), I found that these systems were rarely discussed by team members and were often neither philosophically sophisticated nor well-considered.

Witnessing is intended, at least ultimately, to encourage the listener to convert, or, in Ingram's words, to enter into an alternative "frame" in which to understand and experience the world (Ingram 1989). But conversion is not dependent mainly on the use of eloquent apologetical argumentation to convince non-Christians to accept a predominantly intellectual worldview. On the contrary, one's full acceptance of an evangelical's witnessing message (in other words, one's conversion) is characterized mostly by a reorganization of one's whole being rather than simply one's mind (cf. Cucchiari 1988:418; Harding 1987; Hefner 1993:17; Snow and Machalek 1982). In other words, IVCF students do not emphasize the intellectual substructure of Christianity because their own experiences of faith and conversion are characterized by the profound emotional and existential support they perceive from God and their community.[229]

The second witnessing issue I will consider is the role of God's will in the IVCF's evangelistic discourse. In previous chapters, I described God's will as a frequently invoked explanation for all manner of human experiences and social realities. I argued

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[229] Weiss Ozorak (1996) argues that religious women recognize the theologically- and ecclesiologically-derived inequalities in their faith communities but continue to be more observant or devout than men because women appreciate the emotional satisfactions of their relationships with God and other believers.

that IVCF anxieties about their economic prospects do not paralyze most students because they are certain that regardless of the vicissitudes of the economy, God has a plan for their lives. For IVCF students, the will of God seems to function as a useful explanatory principle, invoked both to acknowledge gratefully the ultimate divine origin of some apparently explicable event (e.g., when a fundraising project is as successful as the planners had hoped) and to decipher the true origin or meaning of some apparently inexplicable event (e.g., when seven hundred participants attend the Church at the John).

Since these students believe that God constantly wills that humans enter into a relationship with him, believers interpret -- perhaps *must* interpret -- events in their relationships with non-Christians as fulfilling some role in this plan. For example, Cindy explained to our Small Group that her grandfather had recently suffered a stroke. She was clearly disturbed by his suffering and its role in God's plan. "I prayed to God, and he doesn't answer my prayers. I just don't understand his plan," she said. However, Cindy continued,

> Sometimes it's hard to remember that he does have a plan for us. I guess that the bright side of this whole thing is that it gives me a chance to witness to my dad, to let him know that Jesus can support him during all these problems.[230]

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[230] During one of the evening Bible studies and praise events in Panavegys, I met John, a retired fundamentalist school teacher from Nova Scotia who now teaches at Kaunus Technical University. The Lithuanian government pays John to teach courses on literature, economics, and English, all of which he bases on the Bible. At one point during the Bible study, referring to witnessing, John said "In times of grief, a person is really ripe for the harvesting, and more likely to be willing to talk about transcendent explanations of life and the hereafter. We have to make sure we take the initiative then."

In Lithuania, God's will was frequently employed to explain experiences for which non-religious explanations might have challenged the sovereignty or benevolence of God. One afternoon at a university campus in Vilnius, one of the group's dramas was interrupted abruptly by an irate Lithuanian university administrator who had not received the appropriate documentation confirming that the group was allowed to perform in the building. Half an hour after the commotion ended and the large assembled audience dispersed, Kelly interpreted the apparent failure positively.

> Who knows? Maybe God didn't want us to continue to do dramas there. But think of how much attention we got because of that scene. Look how many people we had at the book table. That was amazing, wasn't it? He definitely works in mysterious ways.

Team members appeared to accept Kelly's interpretation. When we were alone a few moments later, I asked Denise how she knew that what appeared to be a fiasco from a performative perspective, was actually a part of God's plan for their day. She shrugged her shoulders and replied "I don't know, it just is," later explaining that "it says he has a plan for us in the Bible, so this must have been part of his plan."

That night I did not feel well, so I stayed behind while the group went off to lead another Bible study session. When the group returned to the residence, they were effervescent. Denise poked me playfully in the shoulder.

> Hey, hey, you. This is for you who thinks God doesn't have a plan for everything. Wooooo hooooo! He so totally does it's not even funny. You should have been there tonight. It was awesome. It totally rocked. Just try to tell me God doesn't have a plan, man.

After several other people had gaily celebrated God's mysterious ways, I pressed them for a description of the evening. Apparently there was a misunderstanding that evening, because before the team could unlock the room they thought they had reserved, an Irish woman approached the door and informed the team that she uses that room every Tuesday evening to teach her students English. However, when the instructor learned that the team spoke English and was prepared to perform dramas and discuss English biblical texts, she allowed them to lead her class. She introduced the team and left soon thereafter, leaving the Canadians with, as several of them put it, "a captive audience" of Lithuanian students. The team performed all of their dramas and led an animated Bible study; as well, they answered questions about Canada. I asked the members of the team who were explaining the evening's wondrous events if it would be possible to interpret what happened as the result of coincidence or even a lazy or overworked teacher who wanted to enjoy a beautiful spring evening. The group members paused and looked at me, puzzled, it appeared, that I was not immediately convinced by their interpretation of the evening's events. "No way," several of them answered confidently.

For the first three weeks of the mission, team members placed a great emphasis in their witnessing and prayers on the conversions they anticipated happening at the weekend Bible Camp near the end of the month. However, by the end of the mission, no one had committed themselves to Christ.[231] This apparent numerical failure seemed

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[231] There was considerable debate about this. Some people said two people had "come to Christ," whereas others considered these to be examples of re-commitments. I could not establish these figures with certainty because team members were unsure themselves and because the team had asked me not to problematize new Christians' faiths by interviewing them (even informally) about their religious investigations.

to disappoint most team members, even though they tried to construe (for my benefit and their own, I imagine) the lack of conversions positively, as being part of God's plan for the Lithuanians.[232] "We planted some seeds, for sure," Oliver commented. Steve echoed Oliver's sentiment, asserting that

> You know, I was never that into the whole numbers thing, or with the whole way the Bible Camp was organized around the big moment of commitment. I'm just glad that I had a chance to spend some time really talking with Lithuanians. I know we all planted some seeds this weekend; now we have to wait and see what happens next. I'm definitely going to keep in contact with the people I met here and see if I can help them get to know Christ that way.

The immediate and unequivocal consensus among the mission team that all events, even people *not* becoming Christians are manifestations of God's plan for their individual lives or the team's fortunes, was also characteristic of IVCF participants at McMaster. Whether the mission team or individual witnesses in Canada meet with apathy or intolerance in their endeavours, all events in which they find themselves are (and, again, must be) somehow authored or lovingly overseen by God.

The final issue I explore is the role of witnessing in the negotiation of otherness, or the maintenance of boundaries between the Christian and non-Christian worlds. Witnessing in both the McMaster and the Lithuanian contexts requires students to venture out of what is for many of them a comfortable IVCF or Canadian evangelical cocoon. As is probably the case for all inherently stressful practices, witnessing situations can be

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[232] Several team members admitted to feeling pressure to "produce" converts. This pressure came from their churches (which were funding these students) and from the lore surrounding the previous teams, all of which attracted more converts than the 1996 team.

particularly revelatory of a person's self-understanding and indirectly of his or her understanding of the other to whom he or she is witnessing. During my fieldwork with the IVCF witnesses in Hamilton and Lithuania, two elements of their self-understanding were especially evident.

First, I observed that students identified to a great extent with the experiences of Christ's apostles. Since, as noted in Chapter Four, these students often experience some form of estrangement from their non-Christian peers and professors, such a self-understanding should not be surprising. As Larry, for example, expressed it:

> I don't think Christians should complain about being marginalized from the world, because in this world we are in self-imposed exile. We have to accept what the world will do to us....[and] that the world will want to isolate us. We should try to share what we have with others; but if they don't want to hear it we can't do much about it.

Echoing Larry's comments, Barbara, a second year Science student, observed that "[I]n the Bible it says 'Blessed are you who are persecuted in my name.' This makes me feel better, for sure." In another interview Gillian commented that she does not consider her alienation from her non-Christian peers to be an undesirable state, "because I'm a Christian and am holy and called to act differently."

When an IVCF student approaches a non-Christian in the adjacent residence room at McMaster and attempts to engage this student in conversation leading first to friendship and then (the former student hopes) to conversion, at some level the IVCF student understands him or herself as obeying the Great Commission, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The anger, rejection or indifference the friendship evangelists

may receive from the unbeliever is interpreted as part of the price of being a latter-day apostle. By making public what in our culture is usually a private matter (Bruce 1992:20), Ingram argues that the witness has broken some of our culture's implicit rules of civility and privacy (Ingram 1989:20).[233] The witness has stepped outside of what IVCF students call their "Christian comfort zone" and has risked the ridicule of her or his non-Christian peers. However, possibly because of the gentleness of friendship evangelism espoused by the IVCF, students' witnessing efforts almost never result in complete ostracization from non-Christian peer groups.[234] McMaster witnesses might therefore be called "occasional apostles": their forays into witnessing are, for most of them, exceptions to the normal course of their lives.[235]

In Lithuania, on the other hand, team members were well aware that they were being observed not only by me (*qua* ethnographer and, as importantly, a non-Christian whose conversion many of them thought to be immanent), but also by Lithuanian students. This awareness shifted the apostolic self-understanding to the foreground.

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[233] See Goffman for a discussion of these "territorial violations" (Goffman 1971:28-41).

[234] In fact, within the McMaster IVCF there is a tension between a minority of members who consider all their relationships with non-Christians to be opportunities to witness and a majority or members who believe that witnessing is more or less compulsory for Christians but should be understood as a part (and for some, not even a large part) of a Christian's relationship with a non-Christian.

[235] Highly involved IVCF participants would tend to disagree with this characterization or definition of witnessing. These relatively exceptional evangelicals would argue that a Christian should always consider him or herself to be witnessing, even if only by setting an example. Several students told me they understood their role on campus in this manner. However, the majority of students would maintain that there is a significant difference between direct and indirect witnessing strategies.

During morning devotions on theBook of Luke two days after the team arrived, Kelly prayed: "God, please help us to remember that we're all like little apostles out there. What we're bringing these people, well, without it they really are living in the shadow of death." Kelly's comments were echoed frequently by team members throughout the month in Lithuania.

The mission to Lithuania required apostolic fortitude for several reasons. First, our physical surroundings and new diets were, as I mentioned, significantly less appealing than those to which most team members were accustomed. Second, the congested residence rooms in which we lived meant that the interpersonal difficulties that emerge among any small group of travellers went largely unresolved, although attempts were made to ameliorate the tensions. Third, three of the Canadian participants are members of visible minorities (two Indo-Canadians one African-Canadian). Although Carla tried to prepare the team for the stares and "double-takes" we would encounter in Panavegys and Vilnius, no amount of advance orientation could disarm such blunt demonstrations of racism and xenophobia. There were several difficult incidents involving racism during the month.[236] By the middle of the mission Oliver, the African-Canadian team member, had become discouraged by the almost daily reminders of his racial otherness. However, as he described in a debrief session one night,

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[236] One evening as Steve, Simon, Oliver, Jocelyn, Gabrielle and I were walking in Vilnius, we walked through a park and were immediately assailed by loud shouts of "Nigre!" and "Go home, nigre!" from several directions. As we were leaving the park, three "skin-heads" lunged at us menacingly. On another occasion, Steve and Oliver were walking around the city when a photographer from the local newspaper asked permission to take their photograph. The next day the picture appeared on the front page of the newspaper with the caption: "African tourists having fun by the fountain."

For the last while I've just been really bummed about the whole race issue. All those guys dropping the "N-bombs" [calling him and his two team-mates "niggers"] and all the stares were just starting to make me just want to get out of this place. But then Steve came over to me one day and gave me a biblical verse -- from Second Peter -- and I read it and wow, that just totally put things into perspective. So now I'm okay.[237]

The team members' identification with Christ's emissaries fortified them as they commenced and continued what was for all of them their most challenging witnessing experience.

The apostolic designation was not applied solely to themselves. The team often used this language to praise the committed and enthusiastic work accomplished by the LKSB leaders. Reflecting the modern dialogical form of witnessing, one afternoon during lunch, Steve said reverently,

I'm just so blown away by Yrata and Renata. Yeah, like *I* came here to teach them something. *As if.* They're just amazing. I love them. Those two are like twentieth century Pauls. They're so fearless it's amazing.

Another facet of the team members' apostolic self-understanding involves the role of Satan. Recall that in the previous chapter I discussed the prominence of Satan and his demons in IVCF discourse but noted that these characters from the spiritual realm are not spoken of or noticed every day. However, in Lithuania, all team members made

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[237] The verses to which Oliver referred, and which he read to the group, were 2 Peter 4:14-16: "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting in you.... Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear his name." Timothy also advises that "Everyone who wants to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12).

frequent references to the work of the devil. For the first week in Lithuania I was puzzled by the heightened prominence of anti-Satan rhetoric used in the group's devotions, prayers and conversations. Moreover, I noticed that the group was never as animated during their prayers as when they "prayed against" Satan.

The first morning after we arrived, several team members felt slightly ill or had not slept the night before. Amid whispered murmurs of "Yes" and "Yes, Jesus," Wanda prayed:

> Satan, we bind you from this campus and this team.... God, we thank you for giving us the power to crush serpents and scorpions, and Satan we bind you. Because of Christ you cannot affect us here. Even though some of us may get sick, or feel tired, we know we have God protecting us and that in his name we can rebuke you, Satan.

A variety of the above prayer was offered almost every day. Sometimes the prayers were oriented toward protecting the Lithuanian evangelicals, as when Steve prayed: "God, I just pray that the Evil One would not attach himself onto Yrata and Renata."

But even more frequently the prayers were directed at preventing Satan from damaging the team's mission, health and internal dynamics. On the third day of the mission, Steve asked me what I thought about their spiritual warfare. Since Steve was the past President of the IVCF he and I had worked together throughout the previous year. I knew that I could not evade his questions or give him only a partial or sanitized answer: he would notice and feel patronized. Consequently, I told him that the rhetoric of spiritual warfare was one of the most baffling elements of IVCF life for me; that it

was very difficult for me to "get inside of" this sensibility.[238] I explained that I thought

that the prominence of the spiritual realm in the Lithuanian context reflected the need for

order in a time of chaos. In other words, in places and times of cultural dislocation,

means of diminishing disorder and inexplicability are crucial.[239] Thus, I suggested

Satan was being employed by the group to symbolize and concretize the amorphous sense

of anxiety[240] and disorientation they were experiencing as they tried to come to terms

with their new (albeit brief) lives in Lithuania.[241] Unfortunately, as soon as I had

finished explaining my interpretation, Steve and I had to discontinue our conversation

when another team member joined us.

One evening when the whole team was talking about the differences between

Christianity in North America and Lithuania, I asked them how they would explain the

sharp increase in the number of references to Satan and demons during their prayers in

Lithuania. Did their frequent references and allusions to the spiritual realm suggest that

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[238] For a parallel in another ethnographic context, see Rosaldo (1989:1-21).

[239] Geertz argues that one of the defining features of a religion is that it "formulates conceptions of a general order of existence" which appear to humans as sufficiently compelling and authentic to quell our otherwise unfettered fear of chaos and our own mortality (Geertz 1973:98-108).

[240] In *The Courage to Be,* (1952) Paul Tillich argues that humans try to diminish the persistent, vague and crushing presence of anxiety by condensing it into the fear of a particular object or (in the case of the IVCF, a spiritual) being. This, Tillich argues, makes anxiety more palpable and therefore bearable.

[241] As I discuss in the previous chapter, the team may have been accurately describing their experiences with real and aggressive spiritual beings. I do not casually or categorically reject the veracity of the spiritual realm. However, since I cannot verify the existence of Satan and demons, I can comment only that their existence is possible and semiotically provocative.

there were more demons in Lithuania or that the team was being "attacked" more often

here? Wanda replied:

> No, it's not that. There are demons everywhere, and Satan is at work
> everywhere, attacking us in a lot of ways. I think we're just more aware of his
> activities here because we're trying to live out our faiths and to think about them
> every day, whereas in Canada, it's just, you know, not as conscious a thing every
> day.

Wanda's answer seems to confirm my hypothesis. Although her explanation presupposes

the existence of the spiritual realm while my interpretation does not, Wanda and I agree

that because of the new circumstances in which these IVCF members found themselves,

Satan's efforts are more conspicuous to them.[242]

Conclusion

Witnessing brings several elements of evangelicalism into focus. I would argue

that the following three conclusions follow from my observation of and participation in

the IVCF's witnessing efforts. First, during witnessing, the intellectual component of

the faith of these students is regularly subordinated to the experiential and emotional

elements mainly because these latter emphases reflect what the witnesses value in their

own religious experiences (cf. Roof 1996) and what they assume potential converts will

also value. Second, relative to non-witnessing contexts, the Pauline vision of non-

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[242] Her explanation also assumes that this new conspicuousness is a function of a positively-evaluated change (team members living out their faiths all day), while mine assumes that their heightened awareness of the Evil One's opposition is a symbolic construction of a negatively-experienced change (team members living in uncomfortable surroundings, experiencing culture shock, illness, and interpersonal tensions).

Christians as "lost" and the more modern (Peretti-esque) sense of witnesses as Satanically "attacked" become more prevalent and perhaps necessary elements of these evangelicals' self-presentations and apostolic self-understandings when they are sharing their faith (cf. Ingram 1989). Third, the frequent references to God's will and Satan's attacks seem to represent creative responses to the anxiety, disorientation, and culture shock witnesses experience in witnessing situations both in Lithuania and (albeit very differently) at McMaster.

Witnessing represents one of the major negotiation contexts for the evangelical contracts with the secular world outlined in previous chapters. Moreover, by requiring the believer to distinguish quite formally between him or herself and his or her others, and to position him or herself in the role of the disseminator of truth, witnessing contributes significantly to IVCF students' self-understandings as well as to the definition of their others. Witnesses by definition adopt a position of spiritual superiority (Harding 1987:171) from which to coax non-Christians out of the "shadow of death," to quote Kelly. Consequently, witnessing requires that one adopt (to varying degrees) a paternalistic approach to one's others. Although non-believers often find this dimension of conservative Protestantism distasteful, for evangelicals, witnessing is based on God's clear directive to bring the gospel to all the nations of the earth.

In Lithuania this paternalism (much more established than the newer dialogical method) was exemplified in a range of ethnographic encounters: from the team member who said she was determined to help Lithuanians but (three weeks after we arrived in Lithuania) did not know that communism was the political system in place in Russia

before the fall of the Soviet Union; to the team members who would often describe Lithuanians as "Catholics, not Christians;" to Oliver who discredited all other world religions without knowing anything about them.

During fieldwork I experienced many examples of mild condescension, as many IVCF participants took me aside and in various ways expressed their concern for the ultimate fate and current state of my soul. At the end of several interviews at McMaster, students asked me pointed questions about my own tradition and, as a means of witnessing, asked me what I thought would happen to me once I died. In Lithuania, team members (often several at the same time) would draw me into conversations late at night apparently to explain some element of Christian truth, or to disabuse me of some erroneous belief. In the context of one of these conversations, Kelly explained a common witnessing metaphor to (and certainly for) me. "Look, I guess I just see myself as a beggar who has found some free food. Now I'm trying to tell all the other beggars where they can find the food."[243] By this time in the mission the team had accepted me as a member of the group and I had developed strong friendships with several participants. Therefore, I felt I could be honest with them. I replied:

> Well, that sounds great. But it seems to me that you're doing more than this. Actually, it seems more like you're trying to tell people who are full that they aren't. Actually, it's even more than this. You're telling people who are eating other food that it is actually the worst kind of poison, though very good tasting poison.

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[243] Several members of the chapter have used this metaphor in our conversations.

Several members shook their heads, looked at me compassionately, and replied that I had missed the point of the metaphor. Maybe I had. Unfortunately, as is often the case in ethnography, the conversation was cut short by another event, so we could not discuss this issue further.

While I think my representation of the essentially paternalistic relationship between witnesses and non-Christians is fair, it misrepresents, or only partially captures evangelical aims. During my fieldwork, I also witnessed undeniably laudable elements of these missionaries' interactions with and responses to non-Christians. For example, on several occasions when the team was performing dramas or sharing testimonies at Lithuanian universities, members of the audience would mock the performers, mimicking the teams' movements or turning their backs on the performance. Perhaps even more challenging for the team were the occasions when no one seemed even remotely interested in the presentation. On these sorts of occasions, the team simply continued to present their dramas and testimonies, refusing to let a hostile or sometimes nearly non-existent audience thwart their witnessing. During these difficult performances, I often watched the team with amazement and wondered how many of my own beliefs were sufficiently strong to withstand either disinterest or coarse impudence.

IVCF members' attempts to witness to me became increasingly tolerable and eventually flattering once I felt the sincerity of their concern and the depth of their faith commitments. Of course, weeks before we left Canada, participants had explained their motivations for witnessing; but somehow experiencing their sincerity personally allows one to know, and later to describe, their intentions more "thickly" (Geertz 1973). For

IVCF students, the firm belief in the righteousness of their convictions empowers them to express their love for others profoundly. They may believe that the Lithuanians, like myself and other non-Christians, are "lost" or "sick," but I have seen IVCF students weep for the desolate living conditions of the Lithuanians and have been touched by their prayers and concern for me.

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the balance the IVCF is able to maintain between fortress and bridge approaches to non-Christians and the non-Christian ethos in general. I have suggested in previous chapters that these strategies facilitate the negotiation of metaphorical "contracts" between Christians and the non-Christian world. Because witnessing often involves the intentional interaction of believers *qua* believer with the non-believer *qua* non-believer (Hammond and Hunter 1984), it represents the most explicit example of the negotiation of these contracts. Moreover, because friendship evangelism by definition requires the believer to engage the non-Christian in a non-confrontational manner, it seems to represent a clear example of a bridge strategy, aimed at diminishing the distance which separates Christians from non-Christians.

However, this appearance may be misleading. In Chapter One, Hammond and Hunter were quoted as pointing out that

> to be surrounded by secularists not only elicits a seige mentality apparently; by opening up missionary opportunities, it also provides the occasion to hone and renew [the witness's] faith (Hammond and Hunter 1984:232).

While witnessing does seem to be a bridge from the Christian to the non-Christian world, this bridge is designed to lead converts directly back to the evangelical fortress I have described elsewhere. Once the evangelical "frame" "intrudes" in a non-Christian's life

(Ingram 1989), the new believer gradually becomes increasingly critical of certain (permissive, secular, pluralistic) elements of contemporary culture. For new believers who may feel the need to repudiate with extra vehemence the paradigm which once gave their lives meaning, a critical resistance to secularism often manifests itself as animosity. Recently saved individuals thus often place themselves on the opposite side of a wide chasm which divides them from non-Christians (cf. Cucchiari 1988; Harding 1987). Obviously this increases the believer's alienation from non-Christians.

Nevertheless, friendship evangelism has two bridging consequences, both of which Hammond and Hunter (1984) neglect. First, even when witnesses fail to draw their non-Christian peers closer to Christ, their friendships with non-believers remain. These affiliations may even be fortified by the witness's demonstration of concern for the non-believer (provided, of course, that the Christian witnessed gently). These friendships seem to ameliorate the estrangement IVCF students sometimes feel from their non-Christian peers. The second bridging function of witnessing is related to the purpose of evangelism. Specifically, among the witnesses I have studied the ultimate goal of friendship evangelism is to draw everyone over the bridge and into the fortress of evangelical faith. However, if everyone was to enter the fortress, eventually it would cease to function as a bastion of Christianity against a culture of non-Christian others. None of the evangelicals I have met before, during or after my fieldwork are confident that such complete evangelization is realistic or immanent; in fact, most are highly doubtful. Nevertheless, the conversion of non-Christians is, for most believers within the IVCF as well as within the broader evangelical community, an ideal (Rawlyk

1996:123) which seems, in the grand scheme of God's plan (cf. Mt 28:19), to reflect a bridge rather than a fortress strategy.

In short, the IVCF's style of witnessing contributes to contracts in which the fortress and bridge strategies coexist. As previous chapters have also demonstrated, in a variety of ways the McMaster IVCF evidences a delicate balance between protecting the faith from the corruptions of what some members consider an anti-Christian world, and offering the faith to the vast majority of needy non-believers.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

> For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of the governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the Emperor (1 Peter 2:13-17).

In *The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals and Secularism* (1989), Robert Wuthnow summarizes the support for the conventional notion that university education and religiosity are fundamentally opposed.

> [V]irtually all surveys and polls, whether of the general public, college students, church members, or clergy, show inverse relations between exposure to higher education and adherence to core religious tenets, such as the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, the divine inspiration of the Bible, life after death, religious conversion, and the necessity of faith in Christ for salvation (Wuthnow 1989:145).[244]

Given the congruity of the surveys and polls to which Wuthnow refers, how can one explain either the sheer size of the McMaster IVCF chapter or its success at facilitating

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[244] See Ammerman (1990) for a consideration of the pivotal role played by education in characterizing the divisions within the Southern Baptist Convention.

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the retention of its members' faith commitments? On the surface, it seems reasonable to expect that a religious group devoted to markedly conservative ideas would not flourish at a secular university. Since precisely this is happening at McMaster, we are left with three possible explanations. First, one could argue that these two hundred evangelicals are somehow totally immune to the secularizing effects[245] university education is supposed by Wuthnow to have on believers. This hypothesis is obviously untenable, if only because students consistently speak of their frustrations about the secular ethos of the campus. Secondly, one could suggest, following Hammond and Hunter (1984:233), that these believers inhabit a well-fortified "Christian ghetto," the natural consequence of living among so many non-believers. I have suggested throughout this thesis that IVCF members do indeed have access to an evangelical fortress which protects them and their besieged subculture from certain elements of secularism. However, applied to the IVCF, Hammond's and Hunter's model overlooks another major source of the group's vitality: that in a variety of ways the IVCF facilitates constructive interaction between its members and non-Christians, interaction that is not oriented primarily toward the purposes of witnessing. The third, and I would argue, most plausible interpretation of the vitality of the McMaster IVCF is that this group promotes the negotiation of contracts between its members' evangelical convictions and the university's broadly liberal and pluralistic conventions.

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[245] By this I am referring to both intellectual or theological secularization as well as a concomitant moral liberalization.

When asked to provide illustrations of university experiences they perceive as cognitively threatening, IVCF students commonly mention listening to lectures about scriptural authorship, human evolution, feminism, the age of the earth, critiques of religion, and the moral neutrality or biological basis of homosexuality. But, as I have outlined throughout this dissertation, it is not primarily in the realm of ideas that secular education and evangelicalism are most opposed. For IVCF students such as Harriet, who refers to McMaster as a "cesspool of STDs and drinking," the sexual promiscuity, alcohol consumption and moral relativism associated with the non-Christian student ethos (especially the residence ethos) often generate or underscore the most serious disjunctions between themselves and their non-Christian peers. During my fieldwork, I met a small number of IVCF members who reported almost no tension between their religious convictions and their academic experiences (often in Engineering, Kinesiology or Commerce programs); but like virtually all other participants, these students reported strains between their evangelical moral commitments and the comparatively permissive moral standards of non-Christian students. Whether IVCF students are motivated mainly by intellectual challenges to their beliefs or by moral aversion to the behaviour of their non-Christian peers, all members of the IVCF seem to have negotiated some form of a metaphorical contract with McMaster's dominant non-Christian ethos. I argue that such contracts are oriented toward forging a practical compromise between the requirements of evangelical faith and those of the new academic and social settings in which IVCF students are embedded.

In this thesis I have explored both the tensions which arise between IVCF members and non-Christians, and the ways IVCF students and the group as a whole respond to these tensions. After laying the intellectual groundwork for the thesis in Chapter One, I devoted Chapter Two to introducing readers to four IVCF members. Chapter Three explored the rhetorical practices central to the construction of members' religious identities among non-Christian others. In Chapter Four I addressed the types of otherness and estrangement experienced by IVCF students. The problematic role of women both within the larger evangelical tradition and in the McMaster IVCF chapter was examined in Chapter Five. The prominent role played by Satan and his demons in the worldviews and daily lives of IVCF members was considered in Chapter Six. In the seventh chapter I explored the function of foreign and campus witnessing among the "occasional apostles" of the IVCF.

Throughout this thesis, I have attributed the management of the threatening elements in IVCF students' academic and social *milieux* to a "selectively permeable membrane" suspended between the evangelical and non-Christian worlds. I chose this metaphor because it seems to represent quite accurately an interpretive screen employed by the group's members to distinguish themselves from the rest of campus.[246] But

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[246] A word of clarification about membrane(s) is in order. I would argue that on the one hand, a semi-permeable membrane is evident in the broader evangelical discourse. On the other hand, the specific form this membrane assumes is determined by each individual in response to the unique situations in which he or she finds him or herself. In other words, in this chapter I refer to the general *membrane* which separates evangelicals from the secular ethos; but I also discuss the deployment of personal *membranes* which are simply more specific individual versions of the larger and more abstract membrane. For the sake of simplicity, I normally refer to both the general and specific variants as a single membrane.

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other metaphors might work equally well to explain this process. For example, during an interview, Carrie, a prominent member of the group, echoed what several other students said or implied. In response to a question about whether she experienced any tension between her education and her faith, she replied:

> It's a continual battle for me in university. In my Psychology classes, of course, they don't teach according to Christianity. I feel like what I learn in class has to go through a filter of some kind, although the filter is not always that efficient because sometimes there's so much information coming at you. I think there must be two parts of my brain.

When I asked her if she could describe a situation in which her filter is operative, she referred to

> some of the philosophies they teach us about in class. In one class we learned all about Freud and how all of our motivations come from our libidos. But I think there are other, higher motivations; so I file that information on Freud because I know I need to know it; but I just can't accept it.

The purpose of Carrie's filter is to control the potential influences of subversive ideas and values; and the IVCF-supported membrane between her and the non-Christian campus accomplishes exactly this task.[247] Similarly, historian Michael Gauvreau (1991:230) suggests that nineteenth century Canadian Methodist and Presbyterian evangelicals used their creeds as a "screen, filtering new ideas." However, just as the evangelicals Gauvreau studied *used* their creeds as a screen, IVCF students' adaptable

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[247] Gauvreau also refers to these early evangelicals' tendencies "to 'capture,' or to 'tame' what to the modern mind might seem to be serious threats to their theology" (1991:229). Taming and capturing might explain IVCF participants' relations with some aspects of the secular ethos; but it would not explain their tendencies to employ the group as what IVCF members sometimes referred to as a "haven" or "comfort zone," as well as their evident use of the group as a vehicle for improving relations with the secular ethos.

membrane is also not in any way autonomous. Rather, this filter may be understood as the tool of two distinct evangelical approaches to relating to non-Christian students and institutions: the fortress and the bridge strategies.[248]

The fortress strategy is most evident when an evangelical employs a constricted form of this filter to impose barriers between him or herself on the one hand and secular peers and situations on the other. In such a situation, the membrane functions to protect evangelicals from threatening elements of the secular educational ethos such as relativism, evolution, promiscuity, and alcohol consumption. For example, IVCF members commonly construe themselves as God's allies in the on-going battle between angels and demons (cf. Chapter Six). By casting non-Christian individuals and institutions in the roles of unwitting pawns in Satan's battle against God, IVCF students can feel justified as they retreat behind the walls of their fortress and consequently separate themselves from their hell-bound non-Christian peers.

The fortress strategy is also manifested by the two main evangelical interpretations of biological evolution I observed during my fieldwork. In order to disarm the

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[248] As I have suggested in previous chapters, the fortress and bridge strategies are ideal types and therefore do not exist so purely in practice. Since both of these strategies are often expressed simultaneously, it is sometimes difficult to discern two distinct approaches. However, I would argue that at least in the phenomena I am studying, both ideal types are at work beneath the sometimes confusing surface of social relations and personal contracts. I realize that the metaphors I have chosen -- fortress, bridge, filter/membrane, negotiation and contracts -- to interpret this group are drawn from multiple conceptual domains. Although combining the imagery of architecture, biology and commerce may seem unwieldy at times, these assorted terms still strike me as the most suitable conceptual aids for explaining this group. Adapting the work of Daniel (1983), Kirin Narayan refers to this eclectic methodology as the "'tool box approach,' choosing from an array of theoretical implements as different themes demanding intellectual craftsmanship emerged" (Narayan 1989:7).

threatening materialist element inherent in evolutionary theory, those who espouse the first interpretation of evolution reduce it to, in the words of dozens of IVCF students, "*just* a theory," after which students can continue to embrace a putatively literal version of the biblical account of creation. The second approach to evolution is to subsume the theory and its evidence under a larger creationist interpretation. In other words, students may accept that the earth is billions of years old, and that evolution did happen, but they usually hasten to add that evolution did not occur among *homo sapiens*, and that God (rather than natural selection) has simply used evolution to make the sort of world we have. In this way, God's sovereignty is unaffected, since everything remains under his *aegis*.[249]

The metaphorical filter I have described regulates which non-Christian ideas and experiences flow *into* an evangelical's world. In addition, it regulates the sorts of interactions IVCF students are encouraged to have with the non-Christian world. In other words, the membrane in question is selectively permeable in both directions.

When faced with what they perceive as cognitively or morally threatening situations, IVCF members are reluctant either to relate at all or at least in a casual way with non-Christian students or ideas (cf. Titon 1988). For example, approximately half of the students I interviewed are morally opposed to drinking at bars, and some of these students are opposed to drinking in any context. Other relatively liberal members indicated that while they consider purposely getting drunk immoral, they are not opposed

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[249] See McMullin (1985) for a collection of articles discussing the possible compatibility of evolution and creationism.

to having one or perhaps two drinks at a bar, "as long as you don't get drunk."[250]

However, for all the students I interviewed, the amounts, purposes, and contexts of one's

alcohol consumption are tightly circumscribed. Drinking at a bar in order to get drunk

is the least acceptable option and total abstinence is the most acceptable option, with most

students' opinions approximating the latter option. Most students did not pause before

answering my question about alcohol consumption, suggesting that they had already

formulated personal policies on the problematic issue of the appropriate contexts for

drinking. Their resolute positions on alcohol consumption reflect not only the complexity

of this issue but also the varying degrees of permeability the membrane I have described

can assume.

Similarly, these Christians' interactions with the non-Christian world are also

problematized and restricted in cognitively dangerous situations like discussions about

evolution and other contentious intellectual issues. During interviews, IVCF students

described a complex array of inhibitions surrounding the ways they relate to non-

Christian ideas and individuals. In most cases, when a peer or professor criticizes

Christianity or challenges some aspect of evangelical orthodoxy in class, students choose

to remain silent because they are afraid of being punished either academically (by

comparatively materialist professors and teaching assistants) or socially (by non-Christian

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[250] This was a very common response. At most, one might "get a little buzzed," as one former and liberal Executive member put it, but wilful drunkenness was rejected by all sixty of the students I interviewed.

classmates who might be startled or alienated by evangelical beliefs).[251] The secular university classroom is an environment which typically privileges or presupposes if not always what Clark Pinnock calls a "bias against God," (cf. Chapter Four) then at least a general indifference to the possibility of God's relevance to most academic matters. IVCF students indicate that they experience the nearly absolute hegemony of the assumption that personal faith is not germane to most of the social or intellectual issues explored in their classes. It is not surprising, therefore, that these students usually choose to exclude their religious convictions from academic settings.

When students do choose to introduce into classroom discourse convictions such as the young age of the earth, the second coming of Christ, or God's establishment of absolute moral truths, they do so in a very cautious manner.[252] These rare assertions often assume the form of witnessing or apologetics, discursive forms which rely on specialized rhetorical practices in order to disabuse and/or convert non-believers (cf.

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[251] Mark Noll observes that even evangelical scientists "have generally gone along in silence with contestable theoretical issues" (Noll 1994:178).

[252] Noll notes that even when professional evangelical scientists contribute their perspectives to the scientific discourse in a non-witnessing context, they "have usually approached their subjects as carefully segregated fields of knowledge rather than with the intent of studying scientific concerns in relation to theology or other spheres of thought" (Noll 1994:177). Noll argues that Christian scientists avoid certain spheres of research to circumvent conflict between their faith and the materialist assumptions of their peers or disciplines. Noll's insight may help explain why only two of the two hundred members of the McMaster IVCF major in Religious Studies, and why IVCF participants in general typically evade situations in which direct contention might arise. (If one conducted an ethnography on a campus art club at a university with a thriving art department, would one expect only one percent of the club's members to be students in the department?) The minimal interest of IVCF members in Religious Studies reflects the perception among evangelicals that the academic (or, in Wuthnow's sense, the "scientific") study of religion may undermine faith.

Hammond and Hunter 1984; Harding 1987; Ingram 1989). Gabrielle, a former student

of mine in a bio-medical ethics course, felt sufficiently protected by my presence in the

classroom to tell the class about her biblically-based negative evaluation of

homosexuality. "You saw what happened," she said in an interview. She continued:

> I was just attacked. That experience was really frightening. I just jumped in
> with two feet and prayed that God would give me the words. I just wanted to let
> the group know that not everyone was thinking the same way as they were.

I was able to restrain her classmates' responses to her views; but this experience

reminded both of us of the privilege enjoyed by liberal values at McMaster.[253]

While the filtering process associated with the fortress strategy neutralizes, or to

use Gauvreau's metaphor, tames the more threatening features of secular education and

a liberal ethos, the IVCF's selectively-permeable membrane also functions according to

a more positive strategy. I have called this second approach to the secular ethos the

bridge strategy to connote the reconciliation of differences and the linkage of previously

separated terrains.

In situations of minimal or non-existent cognitive or moral danger (during a

Linguistics or Engineering lecture, or the registration process), IVCF students might

discern almost no differences between themselves and their non-Christian peers. Some

students (mainly those in Engineering, Commerce and Kinesiology programs) seemed

confused when I asked if they ever felt uncomfortable in their classes because of their

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[253] Gabrielle also had a literary submission rejected by the English Department's
journal. She commented: "I'm not into the kinds of things the other students are into,
like blood and gore and sex. I write about the way people live and can be transformed
and the struggles we go through. I also use the words Jesus and God, so they reject my
writing."

religious convictions. "No, not really. I'm in Engineering, so we pretty much just study how to make things work. Religion isn't really an issue in my classes," one student replied, chuckling. In fact, most of the evangelicals I interviewed do not spend the majority of their days paralyzed by the hegemony of McMaster's secular ethos. In the majority of their social interactions, explicitly religious matters are rarely at the forefront of IVCF members' minds; nor is alienation a bi-product of the majority of their experiences with non-Christian individuals and institutions. In terms of the metaphors I have been using, for most students much of the time the holes in the filter are open wide and the bridge is well travelled in both directions.

However, the best way to comprehend the bridge strategy is to observe its association with the fortress strategy. For example, in situations of moderate or significant cognitive or moral danger, the bridge strategy is a crucial means of diminishing estrangement. The defining feature of the bridge strategy is its ability to improve relations between evangelicals and non-Christians. One of the ways it can ameliorate these interactions is by cooperating in the eventual transformation of dangerous ideas or values. In other words, it is often, and possibly usually the case that the bridge strategy works in conjunction with the fortress strategy. For an example of this collaboration we can return to the question of evolution. After evolution is reduced to one of many theories or a theory commensurate with creationism, students are able to assimilate it intellectually as such, without the apprehension which might otherwise accompany its consideration. Thus, both fortress and bridge strategies seem to be operative: the fortress strategy repudiates what several IVCF participants call the "anti-

Christian" dimensions inherent in the theory of evolution, and the bridge strategy allows students to accept the transformed idea.[254]

The next bridging movement allows evangelicals to narrow the gap sometimes separating them from secular individuals, or from the secular ethos in general. Let us consider once again the example of biological evolution. Since evolutionary theory arguably forms part of the intellectual assumptions of many people at university, being able to use this theory in academic and social settings reduces the estrangement that might arise as a function of students' ignorance of the theory's ramifications for the age of the earth or the origin of species. Many of the IVCF students I interviewed were able to talk about evolution in an informed manner; but none of them accepted any of the atheistic implications of evolutionary theory.[255] This ability to speak intelligently about evolution also has the effect of facilitating these students' academic success, since professors expect them to be able to attain a familiarity with the theory. Consequently, for IVCF members, the scientific literacy yielded by the transformation, integration, and employment of this problematic theory has welcome dis-alienating consequences.

The simultaneous or sequential expression of fortress and bridge strategies is also evident in the function of the spiritual realm in IVCF discourse. As I described earlier,

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[254] Of course, for strict fundamentalists whose courses at McMaster do not require them to grapple with the theory of evolution, no such second bridging step need occur. While these students would agree that the theory is "just" a theory, since it is so obviously an erroneous one, they are not particularly interested in learning about it.

[255] See Badone (1989:18;284), Wuthnow (1989:149) and Geertz (1973) for discussions of the common western tendency to alternate between scientific and non-scientific worldviews.

construing non-Christians as the defenseless victims of and sometimes agents for Satan accentuates the difference between believers and non-believers. However, by maintaining that all humans are victims of the same demonic forces, the distinction between Christians and non-Christians is somewhat mitigated.

Another instance of the collaboration between the fortress and bridge strategies is manifested in the role of a particular strand of popular youth culture among IVCF members.[256] Consider the influence of "Seinfeld" and "Friends," two of the most popular situation comedies on prime time television and the centrepieces of the National Broadcasting Corporation's Thursday night offerings. In the days and weeks following an episode, I have heard my own (mainly non-Christian) students as well as IVCF members imitating the characters' dialogue, gestures and quips, suggesting strongly that these students' verbal rhythms and vernacular are either reinforced or generated by the discursive conventions normalized by the casts of these television programs (Fiske 1989).[257]

IVCF students' participation in the popular culture of their generation seems unproblematic until one considers the moral messages implicit and explicit in the lifestyles of these television characters. None of the characters in either "Seinfeld" or

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[256] For a consideration of the power of popular culture to shape our identities, see Collins (1989); Schultze (1991); and Fiske (1987; 1989).

[257] For example, in Chapter Two when Simon said, "that's just *so* not true," (referring to his erroneous belief that God needed to have time to "cool off" in order to forgive him) he was echoing the intonation of several of the characters on "Friends." Further study would be required to determine if these television programs are models of or models for undergraduate discourse (cf. Geertz 1973:93).

"Friends" lives the sort of life or celebrates the kind of values embraced by most IVCF students. For example, none of the characters is married, and all of them engage in casual sex. In fact, probably half the dialogue on these two shows is explicitly or implicitly sex-related. Moreover, none of the characters shows even the slightest interest in religion. In fact, when a character's sphere of concern does reach beyond his or her private interests, it rarely extends beyond the material prosperity or sexual conquests of his or her own small group.

I have discussed the ways an IVCF member can participate in a conversation about evolution by drawing the theory through a filter and reducing it to an erroneous or incomplete and therefore cognitively admissible theory. It seems likely that a similar filtering process is also occurring with respect to television programs. The restrictive porousness of this membrane may strain out some of the more troubling elements of popular programs like "Seinfeld" and "Friends" in order to allow inoffensive elements such as verbal inflections and some jokes to be assimilated into evangelical discourse without simultaneously betraying believers' convictions.[258] This process not only increases students' cultural literacy, but also normalizes their relations with non-Christian students. If IVCF students can become conversant in the popular culture of their generation, then they are more likely to be accepted into a non-Christian's intimate social

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[258] For example, I have never heard IVCF students replay any parts of "Seinfeld's" famous "masturbation episode," in which the characters wager to determine which of them could resist masturbating the longest. Many loyal fans of the show can quote dialogue from this episode.

sphere.[259] One of the advantages of being able to converse freely with their non-Christian peers is, of course, that it makes the religious convictions (promoted either through explicit witnessing or by example) of these "occasional apostles" more palatable, less other.[260]

Largely because the IVCF is capable of addressing if not always satisfying the social and spiritual needs of both its fundamentalist majority and liberal minority in the chapter, a coherent group ethos is maintained amid considerable theological and ideological differences. The fundamentalists in the group might prefer to employ the fortress strategy to preserve what Frank Peretti (1986:349) calls "the Remnant" of loyal Christians; and these members would rather the chapter did not experiment so much with female leadership and liberal worship styles, materials and messages. However, the fundamentalists in the IVCF are evidently willing to allow the liberals in the group, including the Staff Worker and most of the Executive Committee members to set the more moderate tone of the chapter. Although the fundamentalists in the IVCF find in the fortress strategy a means of relating to the secular ethos more in keeping with their own predispositions, most of the liberals I interviewed also employ the fortress strategy when they find themselves in situations of significant cognitive or moral danger. And while liberals have a tendency to favour the bridge approach to the non-Christian world,

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[259] Non-Christian students may also filter out elements of these programs. However, I would argue that evangelicals would be especially troubled by some of the moral assumptions implicit in these situation comedies.

[260] See Fiske (1989) for a discussion of the way marginalized groups can appropriate and reinterpret elements from popular culture as means of resisting the hegemony of the dominant culture.

fundamentalists often make non-patronizing bridging overtures to non-Christians (including myself). However, it would be inaccurate to argue that the fortress strategy is rooted exclusively in the fundamentalist side of the chapter and the bridge strategy exclusively in the liberal side. It is even inappropriate to suggest that there are two distinct factions. In fact, with a few significant exceptions, most members of the group combine elements of the fundamentalist and liberal evangelical worldviews, even though most participants have a (sometimes only slight) preference for one or the other of these ideal types. Similarly, evangelicals and fundamentalists I have met from the broader evangelical community outside the university do not restrict themselves to one strategy.

Moreover, the evangelical tradition in which almost all of the group's participants were raised includes rich theological and moral resources which have engendered both strategies for relating to the non-Christian world. I would suggest that for the most part, twentieth century North American evangelicalism has (with varying degrees of success) employed both of these approaches in an attempt to preserve what many believers perceive to be a besieged gospel *and* to ensure that they are on good terms with their non-Christian neighbours.[261] What is unique about the McMaster IVCF chapter is its success at striking a balance between two impulses which are at the heart of evangelicalism. Both of these strategies and the selectively permeable membrane which

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[261] Even though the overall proportion of evangelicals in Canadian society has not changed dramatically (Stackhouse 1990:233), the broad nineteenth century "evangelical consensus" on morality and public education has completely eroded (Rawlyk 1992:279, 298). Moreover, non-evangelical Christians now espouse a Christianity which many evangelicals consider increasingly (or totally) nominal or at least "fragmented" (Bibby 1987).

facilitates them allow evangelical students to sustain and even cultivate their faiths during the impressionable years spent within an institution which is often both philosophically and morally inhospitable to their convictions.

The contract metaphor I have employed throughout this dissertation connotes both the negotiated and the dynamic qualities of the compromises made by IVCF members: negotiated because difficult and contentious; dynamic because on-going and revocable. These contracts are necessarily negotiated by each individual; but the group facilitates this mediation by offering its members patient moral support when women are struggling with their roles (cf. Chapter Five); rousing admonitions by guest speakers to avoid excessive compromises (cf. Chapters Two and Three); models of durable contracts through the testimonies of older members (cf. Chapter Two); shelter from and access to the negotiating "table" of campus life (cf. Chapter Four); images of their diabolical enemies (cf. Chapter Six); and witnessing opportunities to traverse the gulf sometimes separating the evangelical and non-Christian communities (cf. Chapter Seven).

The relationships between conservative Protestants and their non-Christian neighbours and institutions have attracted serious scholarly consideration since the 1970s. The present study contributes several new elements to the on-going academic discourses on the nature of contemporary evangelicalism and on the survival of minority groups in general.

This dissertation represents the only comprehensive social scientific study of any chapter of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in North America. In fact, as far as

I can tell, this project is the first full-length academic study of *any* contemporary evangelical university student group. As such, this dissertation provides insights into the ways members of a conservative Protestant campus group speak, pray, worship, organize themselves, and understand their relations with the larger secular institution in which they are located. More broadly, this ethnography also represents a case study in the nature of evangelicalism in Canada as well as among a generation whose religious inclinations are, as would be expected, just beginning to be studied. Commenting on the state of social scientific research on evangelicalism, nearly ten years ago Robert Wuthnow wrote that "ethnographic research should be a high priority. We need to hear evangelical church members speaking in their own words to learn how they construct reality, how they confront the secular society" (Wuthnow 1989:171). This thesis is one response to Wuthnow's appeal.

The above contribution is largely phenomenological; other contributions are essentially theoretical. I studied the McMaster IVCF not simply to understand the group itself, but also to use the group as a case study in the survival of religious groups in essentially secular environments. By combining previous scholarly findings with the insights I gained during fieldwork, I have constructed an explanatory and interpretive paradigm which emphasizes the continual negotiation of contracts facilitated by a filter which is deployed according to fortress and bridge strategies. In short, the members of this group (and perhaps other evangelicals) are able to maintain their religious identities in a secular environment because they sustain and employ an elaborate psychosocial

construct which enables them to manage, transform and sometimes diminish the otherness experienced when they confront non-Christian worldview(s), values and individuals.

While writing this dissertation, I have benefitted from the work of many scholars. A brief discussion of this body of research should contextualize some of the specific contributions my work might make to the study of evangelical groups, other marginalized religious groups, and other non-religious minority groups. Ethnographer Nancy Ammerman argues that the rise of conservative Protestant groups should be understood positively as a validation and defence of a "culturally coherent way of life" (Ammerman 1987:193; cf. Wilcox 1992). Similarly, anthropologist Susan Harding defends her conservative informants and their communities from the "otherness" imposed on them by academics who often parody fundamentalists as "aberrant, usually backwards, hoodwinked versions of modern subjects" (Harding 1991:374). Furthermore, in his ethnography of a group of Appalachian Baptists, Jeff Todd Titon (1988) concludes that fundamentalists do not create pathetic delusions to protest the death of their way of life. Rather, these believers creatively adjust and apply their pre-existing traditions to their new life circumstances. Harding, Titon and Ammerman offer crucial corrective insights for both the scholarly and popular perspectives on evangelicalism. The individuals whose voices I have woven throughout this dissertation and the complex group dynamics I have delineated further validate the perspective that evangelicals are not illiterate hillbillies;[262] nor are the coping and survival strategies employed by these believers

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[262] Wuthnow writes that "I am not at all convinced that evangelicalism, or even fundamentalism, is as rigid and intolerant, as out-of-step with the times, as most intellectuals think. It may appeal to a certain simplistic pragmatic strand in American

purely reactionary or desperate responses to the dominant culture of contemporary North America. Furthermore, I would argue that these conclusions are also pertinent for the study of numerous social groups -- religious and non-religious -- experiencing the opposition of (and thus similarly "other-ed" by) some dominant group. In short, minority groups in many contexts may be involved in the process of negotiating contracts with their cultures' dominant majorities (cf. Comaroff 1985).

The negotiating process so central to the paradigm I am proposing helps IVCF members forge new relationships with non-Christian individuals and institutions. The transformation of threatening experiences reduces both the cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962) evangelicals sometimes feel on secular campuses and the alienation this dissonance sometimes creates between these students and their non-Christian peers (or from the university ethos in general). As the instigators of this transformative process, the students in this ethnography emerge as religious and cultural innovators. By focusing on evangelicals' creativity in the face of the perceived hegemony of the secular ethos, we will not only gain a more nuanced view of the resistance of marginalized groups (Comaroff 1985); we will also begin to see these Christians as the multi-dimensional and imaginative people they are. This clearer understanding of evangelicals is obviously useful for social science. At the very least, an emphasis on evangelicals' enthusiastic and creative responses to perceived marginalization might help scholars understand why evangelical church and para-church groups show no signs of disintegration and are almost the only sector of Canadian Christianity sustaining and even increasing its membership

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culture, but I doubt it is really simplistic or unreflective" (Wuthnow 1989:171).

during the secularization of our society's major institutions (Bibby 1993:6; Rawlyk 1996). Finally, a more complex and problematized vision of these believers might also challenge the profound condescension I have encountered when discussing evangelicals with liberal Christians, academics, and friends.

As in the IVCF case, I suspect that analogous metaphorical membranes exist between most evangelical groups and their surroundings, and that in order to forge an acceptable contract, individuals in these groups participate in the on-going contraction and expansion of the membrane's perforations.[263] Moreover, it seems plausible to suggest that similar dynamics (involving fortress and bridge strategies, a membrane, and contracts) are at work in the relationship between other religious groups and their non-supportive or antagonistic environments (for example, Muslims and Orthodox Jews in secular institutions), and perhaps even between non-religious groups and their inhospitable settings (for example, African-Americans living in predominantly white suburbs, or women in predominantly male corporations).

My interpretation of the IVCF may also help to explain the evangelical proclivity for combining elements of apparently contradictory worldviews in their contracts. IVCF participants represent a relatively learned subculture within the broader evangelical population. Consequently, one would expect to find among these students a fairly high degree of awareness of the contracts they are negotiating. However, I have found that these students often blend elements of the secular and evangelical worldviews with

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[263] It is likely that the degree and consciousness of participation in this process would vary dramatically from group to group and from individual to individual.

neither extensive reflection nor a great deal of awareness of this mixing. During interviews I occasionally (and gently) commented that a participant seemed to maintain contradictory views.[264] Students were surprised and often unaware that the beliefs and values they held might be contradictory. The negotiation process draws into one's contract seemingly disparate elements largely because this process normally occurs in fragments, with a compromise on the issue of alcohol one month, and then resistance to compromise on the issue of women in the ministry the next week, followed by a re-consideration of one's position on homosexuality two weeks later, and so forth. Consequently, although students are conscious of the tension between themselves as Christians and the secular ethos, they are rarely aware of the larger contract which the dynamic process of negotiation is designed to construct.[265] Students' lack of formal awareness of the larger agreement they are mediating does not detract from the creativity I mentioned above. Nor does it distinguish them from non-Christians or academics. Few of us ever think of the larger themes, tendencies, or contracts in our lives on a self-conscious level. We should not expect of evangelicals a degree of self-awareness we do not expect of others. Nevertheless, since the secular university mandate reflects the

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[264] For example: the equality of women in principle, but the inequality of women in most evangelical churches; or the espousal of Jesus's championing of the poor, but the support for conservative political parties advocating cutbacks to social programs.

[265] In fact, at the end of dozens of interviews, participants told me they had never thought about these sorts of issues before. Many thanked me for giving them a forum in which to formalize these previously implicit elements of their contracts.

priorities of the non-Christian majority, evangelicals' contracts with this institution may strike observers as awkward, anachronistic or at least conspicuous.[266]

Another way to explain the sometimes confusing content of evangelical contracts may be implied in Chapter Five. As I explained in that chapter, many evangelical women employ what ethnographer T.M. Luhrmann calls a "strategy of ambivalence" (Luhrmann 1989:341) during their years at McMaster.[267] Such a strategy allows these women to maintain feminist and fundamentalist values simultaneously while not fully embracing either (Balmer 1989; 1994; Byle Bruland 1989; Patterson 1980).[268] The postponement of what might be called intra-contract conflict resolution may decrease the tensions produced by the problematic elements in many of these women's contracts.

This period of uncertainty seems to correspond to what Victor Turner calls a "liminal" period (Turner 1969) during which believers are suspended "betwixt and

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[266] However, I would argue that even non-Christians (in both the evangelical and social scientific senses) harbour convictions and assumptions which are in significant tension if not completely contradictory, such as the value of motherhood and the upward career mobility of women; or the value of environmental protection and the pursuit of material wealth. I would suggest that in order to sustain these essentially contradictory beliefs and values, we all make contracts with the institutions in which we participate.

[267] According to Luhrmann (1989), this strategy is employed by English magicians to remain simultaneously committed to magic and the expectations of a rationalistic culture.

[268] It is difficult to speculate about which "side" of the issue the women I interviewed will eventually sympathize with after they leave McMaster. Sometimes an IVCF member would seem to be using her four years at McMaster as an opportunity for a symbolic rebellion against her family, which will likely be followed by a prodigal daughter's return to her original tradition. However, for other women, the IVCF appeared to represent an experimental atmosphere for the egalitarian ideals these women intend to adopt in the future. Only a longitudinal study of these women could determine which "side" these women will eventually embrace.

between" social roles. Turner's concept suggests that alternative or ambiguous values and roles may be adopted during liminal periods; but he does not include in his definition a clear indication of the duration of liminality. I would suggest that liminality might persist for the entire period of a student's three or four years at McMaster. This understanding of the concept of liminality may explain why the seemingly untenable blending of conflicting ideas in evangelicals' contracts can continue for so long.

Most dissertations are, by their very nature, incomplete. In the process of substantiating a theoretical position, describing a given phenomenon, and also in my case, proposing a new model for understanding an unstudied phenomenon, unexpected issues arise which deserve further attention but must be deferred for future consideration or the work of another researcher. Some of the more fruitful possible avenues for further study are discussed below.

Stackhouse (1993) observes that the IVCF is a significant component of Canadian evangelicalism. However, my focus has been primarily on the McMaster chapter and more specifically on the balance between the fortress and bridge strategies employed by evangelicals in this chapter. Of necessity, my study has not dealt with the IVCF as a national institution, nor with the national tradition of "transdenominational evangelicalism" which Stackhouse (1993:12) suggests is characteristic of Canadian conservative Protestantism. A more elaborate examination of the McMaster chapter's prominent place in the national IVCF and within Canadian Protestantism would situate this group and further illustrate the theoretical arguments I have advanced.

All social institutions are embedded in unique cultural, political, economic, historical, and geographical settings. For example, like many contemporary Canadian student bodies, the students of McMaster University are ethnically, religiously and socio-economically diverse. Moreover, this university is located in an economically-depressed medium-sized city on the periphery of Canada's wealthiest and largest city. It would be unwise to assume that McMaster IVCF students would relate to the secular academic ethos in exactly the same way(s) as do students from the Universities of British Columbia or Winnipeg. Nevertheless, I would expect some version of the fortress and bridge strategies, as well as the contracts I have observed at McMaster, to exist on other campuses. A comparison between the McMaster chapter and IVCF groups in other regions of Canada or the United States should illuminate the extent to which regional differences influence the interaction between evangelicals and their non-Christian surroundings.

It would also be interesting to apply the model I have developed to other religious groups. For example, one could compare an Orthodox Jewish student group with the IVCF to determine the extent to which my thesis can explain non-Christian groups' relations with their dominant social *milieux*. In addition, applying the paradigm I have suggested to other evangelical groups such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Navigators, Athletes in Action, Reach Forth Sports, the Christian Coalition, and the now defunct Moral Majority would further test the plausibility of my interpretation. A reconsideration of such groups might demonstrate that their fortunes and popularity depend as much on the absence or existence of the sort of balance I am describing as

upon more standard sociological explanations such as resource mobilization, status politics, and the politics of lifestyle defence.

Another promising avenue of future research would involve a longitudinal or "panel study" of a group of IVCF students. It would be possible to select between four and eight of the IVCF members I interviewed and re-interview them every five years. Such a study would add an entirely different dimension to the present research by exploring these individuals' relations with the non-Christian world over time and outside the slightly artificial context of a three or four year university program. Do such relations continue to manifest the fortress and bridge approaches? Do members continue to affiliate themselves with alternative institutions analogous to the IVCF?

The *Lietuvos Krikščionių Studentų Bendrija* (LKSB) was created and cultivated through the joint efforts of Lithuanian and McMaster students. However, the McMaster chapter no longer sends missionaries to this Baltic country. A study of the trajectory of the LKSB since the cessation of direct support from Canada would provide a useful ethnographic account of the impact of North American groups on religious practice and belief in the former Soviet Union.

During this dissertation I have discussed several theological, ecclesiological, and historical issues in order to clarify elements of my larger argument. However, I have been unable to explore exhaustively important abstract or philosophical issues, such as the theological differences between fundamentalists and evangelicals, as well as the biblical and historical roots of IVCF students' beliefs about the will of God, Satan, and gender. A more comprehensive account or even schematization of the theological and

denominational backgrounds of McMaster's IVCF students would elucidate some of the diversity apparent in the group. Such a project would also provide insights into some of the patterns of interaction between theological fundamentalists and liberals in the group.

In the tradition of post-modern ethnography, I would like to conclude this dissertation by re-introducing Ruth, one of the individuals who inspired this study. More specifically, I would like to consider the contract she has negotiated. Ruth is a graduate student in Psychology and has been active in the McMaster IVCF for five years. She has served on the chapter's most prestigious committees and has been a close friend with all of its Presidents and Carla, its current Staff Worker. Nurtured by the IVCF structure and ethos, Ruth has taken advantage of many opportunities to contemplate and formalize the contract between her faith and her academic responsibilities. Her age, maturity, and proximity to the centre of the IVCF as well as her prominent career within the chapter mean that she is not representative of most of the chapter's members. Like her sister, Carrie, Ruth has also employed a filter of sorts to harmonize what Carrie called the "two parts of [her] brain." In many ways, the contract Ruth has negotiated between her faith and her scientific responsibilities exemplifies one, if not the, McMaster IVCF ideal.

Ruth entered McMaster as a fairly naive fundamentalist from a rural Brethren background, and has maintained many traditional conservative Christian beliefs and values.[269] Although she originally joined the IVCF because she was apprehensive

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[269] For example, like the vast majority of IVCF members, she believes the Bible is literally true and that one should not have sex before marriage.

about what she called the "very secular" nature of university, she no longer relies on the group as a "haven or a shelter for Christians. I wouldn't make excuses for this function. But I want to motivate people not to be so afraid of secularism." Her faith is now regularly challenged (perhaps not less than when she arrived, but at a more intellectual level) and "stretched." In response to my question about whether or not she experiences tension between her faith and her education, Ruth said

> As I grow academically, I have to think hard, but I always try to fit it into my spirituality. In school I am eager to learn what is being presented. I don't want to be close-minded. But I don't want to separate my science and my Christianity. I strive to bring it all together.
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> Sometimes I need to accept that there's a real difference between me and non-Christians. I need to think through my bias. But sometimes I'm going to stick with my bias. Like with creationism -- I believe in it, but also that the earth might actually be billions of years old. I won't budge from that. I'll get my M.Sc., but I will have had to live with the tension.

Ruth is uneasy about the commensurability of her scientific endeavours and non-Christian friends on the one hand, and her faith and IVCF friends on the other. She "won't budge from" certain components of the contract she has negotiated between her scientific and religious commitments. Like other IVCF participants, she is engaged (in her case, quite consciously) in an on-going negotiation process aimed at reconciling these issues. Few IVCF participants are as aware as Ruth is of the "bias" she describes; and almost none of them has constructed as elaborate a contract as Ruth's. Almost none of the IVCF members I met consider themselves finally successful at "bringing it all together," as Ruth puts it. Nevertheless, Ruth and the other participants with whom I lived for a year

and a half are compelled and often content to "live with the tension" of being children

of God in a Godless institution.

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