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Narratives of Architectural Revolution in Online Christian Rhetoric

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by

Quentin Vieregge

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how online Christian communities reconcile the democratizing, anti-hegemonic effects of dialogic web tools, such as wikis, blogs, and video-sharing sites with the authoritarian characteristics of some organized religions. In the first chapter, I discuss technodeterminism and what I call the theme of "revolutionary architectures" in digital humanities scholarship. This theme occurs in narratives that assume that a new interface, Internet tool, or type of coding will redefine the rhetorical relationship between writers, readers, and site administrators, usually in a benevolent way. I argue that scholars within the field of Computers and Composition use narratives of architectural revolution to inscribe communication technologies with certain inherent values even as they claim that these tools require responsible use from an informed, reflective citizenry. The theme of revolutionary architecture reveals the desire within the field of Computers & Composition to view technology as both a space for ideological conflict and a redemptive tool to cure social ills.

In the second chapter I analyze how narratives about the democratizing and collaborative potential of wikis collide with the needs and practices of three Christian wikis. The three wikis—*Theopedia, OrthodoxWiki, WikiChristian*—are opinionated encyclopedias intended to simultaneously inform and persuade their viewers of each website's respective version of the Christian faith. Opinionated wiki writing complicates assumptions about what should be argued and who should be able to author articles. To respond to these complications, the Christian wikis emphasize two different types of

ethotic appeals, what I coin "genesis-ethos" and "composed-ethos." Genesis-ethos refers to the rhetor's character outside of the text, whereas composed ethos refers to the textual representation of the rhetor's credibility. I argue that Christian wikis must rely on a combination of genesis and composed-ethos in order to manage a point-of-view argumentative wiki.

In the third chapter, I examine how dialogic web technologies have provided the Emergent Church with an opportunity to create an updated gospel narrative. I define and analyze this narrative with a kairotic lens, especially as defined by German theologian Paul Tillich. The leaders of the Emergent Church movement draw upon the ideas, language, and metaphors of post-Web 2.0 technologies to explain how Christianity can thrive in a 21st century world. Several Emergent Church writers recognize that traditional organized religion has become increasingly irrelevant in a culture that prioritizes decentralized decision making, networked organization, and the opinions of the laity alongside more authoritative voices (i.e. clergy, pastors, and church leaders). They view blogging tools, open source technology, and social networks as a way to convey Christianity to a frustrated audience of Christians and non-believers.

In the fourth chapter, I speculate on the collaborative possibilities of video-sharing sites, such as YouTube. Even though technologists and compositionists have reinforced a narrative of YouTube as a revolutionary collaborative tool, the website fails to foster intimacy between users. This lack of intimacy stultifies the potential for collaboration between video authors and viewers; in turn, the efforts of writing instructors to use YouTube have not yet taken full advantage of the site's possibilities. One alternative Christian video-sharing site, GodTube, has the potential to engage video

authors and viewers in meaningful dialogue and a more intimate online atmosphere. Martin Buber's I-You and I-It relationships are used as a lens to describe the difference between the two video-sharing sites.

In the final chapter, I discuss how my research into online Christian rhetoric can be used in writing-intensive classes, especially composition courses. My argument about genesis-ethos applies to previous scholarship on wikis and procedural rhetoric; I speculate on how writing teachers can teach with wikis in new ways. Finally, the rhetoric of the Emergent Church offers an example for how scholars within the field Computers & Composition can articulate their values to students, faculty, and administrators outside of the field of English Studies. In the conclusion, I argue that the counterintuitive uses of these dialogic web tools opens up new imaginative opportunities for their use in the writing classroom.

Chapter One:

Narratives of Architectural Revolution in Rhetoric and Composition

In this chapter, I lay the theoretical groundwork for the final four chapters of this study. Using several examples, I discuss how concerns for technological determinism within Rhetoric and Composition scholarship have created a "theme of revolutionary architecture." My methodology involves rhetorical analysis and "methodological triangulation" of computer-mediated-communication. The chapter then discusses why I use the term "narrative" instead of "ideology" as a focus. Finally, several examples of narrative analysis are given from online websites, scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition, and religious studies in order to model my methodology and focus. Several research questions conclude this chapter.

Introduction

Scholars in the field of Rhetoric and Composition have examined the intersections between rhetoric and ideology and the ways a rhetor's context both impinges on and is constructed by the ideological fabric into which we have always already been interpellated. One of the first scholars in our field to articulate this point was James Berlin who argues that "instead of rhetoric acting as the transcendental recorder or arbiter of competing ideological claims, rhetoric is regarded as always already ideological" (717). He then makes a call for further inquiry, assuming that "any examination of a rhetoric must first consider the ways in which its very discursive structure can be read so as to favor one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other

versions" (717). As scholars within the field of Rhetoric and Composition examine the

"discursive structure" of computer-mediated-communication, they have looked at the

ways in which these technologies realign the rhetorical context between rhetor, audience

and text. A review of such scholarship is obviously too great in scope, but several

scholars have examined how Internet writing spaces can realign power relationships

between online writers and readers (Moxley; Porter; Selfe; Benkler). Cynthia Selfe and

Richard Selfe have explored "some of the political and ideological boundary lands

associated with computer interfaces that we and many other teachers of composition now

use in our classrooms" and the ways in which these "borders are least at partly

constructed along ideological axes that represent dominant tendencies in our culture"

(481). And numerous scholars have followed their pioneering work by looking at the way

specific online systems—Internet architectures—reveal, reinforce, or possibly

revolutionize power relationships online (Porter; Spinuzzi, et al; Barrios; Selber; Barton;

Samuels, "Future Threat"; Moxley; Blair and Monske).

If we take wikis, as an example, we see that special attention has been paid to how

these technologies provide an opportunity to promote democratic values. For instance,

Matt Barton has examined how blogs and wikis are an expression of Juergen Habermas's

public square that can "reinforce the principles inherent in a true democracy and thwart

the corporate interest" ("Future of Rationale-Critical" 178). Robert E. Cummings argues

that wiki technology "has created a global transition to networked epistemology that

affects most anyone who is concerned with knowledge acquisition whether it is defined

broadly, as the search for teleological ends, or narrowly, as the search for Chinese

takeout" (3). Toby Coley asserts that "[b]y their very nature, wikis facilitate the

collaboration of multiple users and therefore multiple viewpoints," and thus "construct their own checks and balances system." And Dennis Baron extends the idea that wikis realign the relationship between writers and readers by arguing that "[w]hat the wiki *creates* online is a fluid, complex, self-organizing community of writers, a *textocracy with citizenship* open to all" (195, emphasis mine). Notice the word "creates" implies a power inherent in the tool, but in Baron's subsequent explanation of how *Wikipedia* is governed, he is careful to observe that wiki writers and readers must provide shape to the *textocracy*. He warns readers that governance and vigilance must accompany wiki writing and "readers would do well to remember that some free information may indeed be worth what they pay for it" (202).

There is a tension within Baron's implication that wikis *create* an egalitarian space for writing, even though humans must cultivate that space for it to exist. I intend to show below how the tension in Baron's scholarship runs through much of computers and writing scholarship. If we are to answer Berlin's call to understand how rhetoric is immersed in ideology, then we should understand patterns within our scholarship that negotiate how communication technologies inscribe their values on users and vice-versa. In this chapter, I argue that this tension takes the form of something called the theme of "revolutionary architecture," that there is a religious subtext to this theme, and that we can help to understand our own "revolutionary architecture" rhetoric by interrogating the technological rhetoric of online religious groups.

Technological Determinism and Narratives of Power in Rhetoric and Composition

Defining simple and nuanced technological determinism

When technorhetoricians examine the implications of a particular Internet tool, they often use narratives—either implicitly or explicitly—to convey their ideas. The explicit use of narrative ranges from ethnographic studies to first person reflections, but some of the most interesting uses of narrative occur when they are hidden beneath the surface like fertile soil beneath a shroud of permafrost. That academic writers use narrative is not a new assertion, but a particular narrative pattern has emerged in Computers and Composition that deserves more attention. Narratives often involve a theme, including what we might call the theme of "revolutionary architecture" in Computers and Composition—the idea that a new interface, Internet tool, or type of coding will redefine the rhetorical relationship between writers, readers, and site administrators. In its most extreme versions, this theme assumes "the efficacy of technology as a driving force in history: a technological innovation suddenly appears and causes certain things to happen" (Smith and Marx X). This concept was first introduced with the term "technological determinism" by Thorstein Veblen and suggests that the contours of a technological device shape the values and actions of those who use them. From a deterministic perspective, a technological apparatus' architecture leaves few options available to its users.

Of course, technological determinism does not necessarily have to carry negative connotations and does not need to invoke a Manichean sense of good and evil. Nor does it need to be thought of in terms of an overwhelming influence of technology onto human beings, one where humans are nefariously controlled by machines (think *The Matrix)* or

"improved" by technology, as in *A Clockwork Orange*. A softer version of technological determinism merely acknowledges that technology contributes to shaping human behavior and thought, and it will be helpful to briefly illustrate how. Walter Ong expresses one such nuanced viewpoint in his book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. In this book, Ong suggests we view orality and writing as two fundamental communication technologies and shows how basic material differences between them transform the way humans practice religion, retain knowledge, and even reflect on language itself. From Ong's perspective, humans within primary-orality societies—those societies without any knowledge of literacy—must respond to language's transience, which means that "[s]ound exists only when it is going out of existence" and that spoken language is "essentially evanescent" (32). The transience of language "*determines* not only modes of expression but also thought processes" (32, emphasis mine), for in such societies knowledge coalesces around linguistic parallelism (37-41), relies on epistemological conservatism instead of innovation in thought (41), can only be remembered in terms of praxis ("narrative or genealogy") instead of abstract lists (43), and emerges out of a "homeostatic" tendency to focus on the present, practical, and simple at the expense of the past, abstract, and layered: "Oral cultures of course have no dictionaries and few semantic discrepancies" (47). Near the end of his book, Ong writes that "[l]iteracy opens up possibilities to the word and to human existence unimaginable without writing," and oral cultures desire to achieve the transformations the written word offers them (175). From these distinctions, one might tentatively assume that oral and print cultures are divided by a great deterministic sea.

But upon further inspection, that sea is partially parted, and the differences between oral and literate cultures appear more nuanced and complex. The first way these differences are conflated is through inverting a sense of whether orality or literacy is superior. Ong warns us to avoid thinking that humans are evolving into something better or losing something essential through the transformation to literacy. Primary oral cultures are not "'prelogical' or 'illogical' in any simplistic sense," and when he writes about the incredible mnemonic devices elders and bards would learn in order to retain information, his reader can clearly see how the human ability to retain information has atrophied in concert with the advent of literacy (57). Speakers in oral cultures "learn a great deal and possess and practice great wisdom," and they are able to produce long poetic forms "beyond the reach of literates" (9, 175). The complexities extend beyond explaining that orality is not necessarily inferior to writing; he also implies that both writing and speech have different appropriate spaces and times wherein they are most appropriate. There are some rhetorical spaces in which orality, according to Ong, enjoys a seeming monopoly. When there is an oral exposition, such as a sermon, in communal religious experiences, "the members of the audience normally become a unity," but if a preacher asks his congregation to read the written word, then the audience members are segregated into their "own private reading world" (74). Third, he implies there is a give-and-take ecological relationship between the two, for "reading a text oralizes it" (175). Whenever literate humans speak words, we inevitably visualize them (12), and "orality and the growth of literacy out of orality are necessary for the evolution of consciousness" (175). Some of Ong's claims unintentionally demonstrate this give-and-take relationship between orality and literacy. When he speaks about how the written word creates a

"private reading world" for worshipers, one wonders if that even applies in the age of social networking. What if the preacher asks them to read on a discussion board? What about instant messaging? At the end of his study, he claims, "the written text appears *prima facie* to be a one-way informational street" that, unlike speech, is not "intersubjective" (177). But in the post-Web 2.0 world, writing is interactive, so does that distinction dissolve? Notice that many of his book's final comments conflict with one another, and notice that the notion of writing as an inevitable evolutionary outgrowth of speech continues to compete with the more interactive notion of literacy/orality throughout the book. The conflict between the two is never fully resolved.

I do not mean to suggest that Ong is a technological determinist in the Veblen sense—quite the opposite. What interests me in his book is the nuanced competition between technological determinism and notions of human responsibility to pick and use tools wisely. As Ong observes, our ideological assumptions and culture influence our communication tools and vice-versa (175). Just as Ong never fully resolves the theme of revolutionary architecture, I would suggest that many writers in the field of Computers and Composition flirt with but ultimately avoid technological determinism. Very few if any compositionists ascribe to the most extreme version of technological determinism; in fact, even in the most enthusiastic articles that advocate the social benefits of a particular technology, the authors are careful to note that a tool's promise does not necessitate a particular outcome. Nevertheless, there is a sub-text in many professional articles and popular trade books that technology has the potential to not only influence but to transform our relationships when we write, collaborate, read, remix, and revise online. I am not interested in evaluating the efficacy of this flirtation with determinism (I believe

that the following writers think about technology responsibly and that suspicion regarding the use of this theme is healthy). But I think the pattern of revolutionary architectures—even if healthy—implies an ideological blind spot. We should identify that blind spot and think about ways of turning that opaqueness into a lens (a religious one) from which to learn about Computers and Writing.

The theme of revolutionary architectures in computers and composition scholarship

We can see the excitement for revolutionary architecture in the work of several different rhetoricians. For instance, David Ciccoricco and Billy O'Steen demonstrate this approach when they write concerning the "crisis in the humanities" that "digital communication technologies are not necessarily a contributing cause [. . .] [but] much more likely to be a salvation." The authors compare the digital revolution to the social transformations wrought by the Gutenberg press, which "empowered [that period's] intellectual and educational agenda and was indispensable to this end." They temper this talk of technological salvation with a claim that the humanities are "arguably more relevant and urgent" because of digital communications. The word "arguably" implies a state of uncertainty, but there is, nevertheless, an overall implication that digital communication will irrevocably change education for the better. Joseph Moxley speculates that peer production networks enable a new kind of rhetorical situation to emerge, "empowering teachers, students, and Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) to radically transform composition pedagogies—changing the roles of teachers and students, changing the content of our curriculums, and changing our processes of composing and collaborating" (182). Moxley reminds his reader that the fortuitous uses of peer-

production tools depend on careful and reflective use; nevertheless, when we hear that "datagogies have the potential to dramatically alter collaboration, creativity, and community," we are no doubt encouraged to interpret these tools as having an inherent value system. When Robert Samuels examines how teachers can merge traditional and non-traditional forms of writing together, he asserts that "hypertexts rework our conceptions of rhetoric and our sense of academic discourse" ("Integrating Hypertextual"). He immediately points out that "the mere use of hypertexts" does not guarantee self-reflection, but still argues that hypertext offers teachers tremendous opportunities to teach new literacies to their students. Helen Nissenbaum and Yochai Benkler move closer than any of these authors towards technological determinism when they argue that "socio-technical systems of commons-based peer production offer not only a remarkable medium of production for various kinds of information goods but serve as a context for positive character formation" (394-395). Finally, consider the Call for Papers from the 2008 Computers and Writing Conference, the theme of which was Open-Source Software:

> [. . .]Because something is open source doesn't mean that the open source process and models will automatically promote and enhance the values important to the Computers and Writing community and to composition pedagogy in general.
>
> Ideally, open source development, as both a technology and a concept, is grounded in values of collaboration, interaction, and respect for the user; these same values have also informed writing pedagogy of the process and post-process eras. There is, therefore, an important and enduring

connection between the values that inform open-source technology and composition pedagogy. That connection, nonetheless, doesn't matter if it isn't enacted. For our values to find a place, we need to define them, assert them, and to ask for them to be designed into the architectures, interfaces, and features of both open and closed source products. We need in short to be users, designers, critics, and philosophers of online learning systems, both open and closed [. . .]

Note the tension between describing technology as having an inherent value system and the nuanced assertion that people ultimately determine how a technology is used. When open source technology is described as "grounded in the values of collaboration, interaction, and respect for the user," there is the implication that the very architecture of the software is immersed in particular ideological beliefs. So great is the connection between ideology and architecture that open source is described "as both a technology and a concept." But even though there is already an "important and enduring connection" between our values and the values inscribed into the technology, this CFP claims that our values still need to be "designed into" the "architectures" of the tool. This call for *designing into* is something that the CFP just claimed was already present but not sufficient to ensure our use of technology matches our values. The CFP's disclaimer of technological determinism centralizes the importance of technology even as it effaces it. But it also calls academics to reflect on our values and "to define them, assert them, and to ask for them." There are many ways to define and assert values, including by telling a narrative of their use. That, at least, was they way this CFP was interpreted by many of the participants. Consider the following panels:

- "Open Sourcing the System: Lessons from Learning Management Systems and Course Management Systems Implementation"
- "Case Study: Making Space for Open Source Culture"
- "Open Sourcing Ourselves: Remixing and Remediating the Teaching Philosophy Statement"
- "Adding Value from the Humanities: A Case of Collaboration with Computer Science"

Each of these panels can be interpreted as a type of narrative that coheres together how technology impinges on the rhetorical process. That is what the CFP encourages when it suggests its participants be "critics and philosophers" of the role of technology between writers, readers and site administrators. By aggregating the narratives of individual scholars, the conference itself was a type of collaborative narrative that pieced together the technological story of open source. More importantly, by inviting participants to collaborate, the CFP lends credence to the narrative that there is "an important and enduring connection between the values that inform open-source technology and composition pedagogy." The CFP creates the framework for how the story will end but leaves it unfinished for others to complete. If technological determinism simplifies the complex relationship between rhetors and their tools, narratives of revolutionary architecture have the benefit of inscribing tools with values while leaving their ultimate effect open.

If we look back at the aforementioned articles we can see a narrative subtext in each of them operating in a similar fashion. For instance, Moxley's article about datagogies can be read as a type of 14th century morality play where Everyman—English

Departments—faces a "tumultuous" dilemma and is beset by two angelic forces—the "community of learning" and the "community of power"—one on each shoulder, each giving competing mutually exclusive advice (184, 195). In the past, the protagonist has "resisted efforts to revise majors to account for new academic and workplace genres" and because of this inaction the central character has been lead astray and faces a crisis (184). But a new opportunity has arisen for all to be set aright if the protagonist can understand how "commons-based peer-to-peer technologies are empowering teachers, students, and Writing Program Administrators" (182). It is no coincidence that the intended audience is synonymous with the protagonist of this narrative or that the ending is left open: "What is left to us is our collaborative imagination" (200). By doing so, the author complicates the role of technology in rhetoric and avoids claims of technological determinism by inviting and investing his reader in the story's conclusion. The framework for how the story will be completed is subtly determined, but it is not dictated. In this sense, there is a subtle teleology to the narrative arc of the academic argument. The same morality play can be seen in other writings about technology as well.

In *The Future of the Internet and How to Stop It*, Jonathan Zittrain argues that the very qualities we value in the Internet are subverting themselves and leading to a drastically different, more tightly controlled world-wide-web. The argument begins with the story of "the rise and stall of the Generative Net" because "understanding its history sheds light on different possible futures" (8). To understand its history, we are invited to connect the Internet to other more familiar technologies such as the telephone. The argument describes the Internet as generative; its architecture spurs new information and creates an environment "where mainstream technology can be influenced, even

revolutionized, out of left field" (5). But though there is an ideology to the net, we are reminded that "[t]oday's Internet is not the only way to build a network," and thus nothing is *determined* (7). The very generative nature of the web creates instability, and "if security problems worsen and fear spreads, rank-and-file users will not be far behind in preferring some form of lockdown" (4). That lockdown will strip power away from users, making them simply consumers without any productive creative possibilities, and it will increase the surveillance power of private and public sector administrators. Though this is a story about technology, the protagonist of this story is still the reader and the ending is left open for us to complete.

The story reads like a modern day American Jeremiad—first identified by Sacvan Bercovitch—wherein the audience is informed that they have been given a great blessing, which they have squandered; yet it is not too late to reverse the trend if good men and women pay heed, repent, and act now. We are told that we started with a great blessing: "our fortuitous starting point is a generative device in tens of millions of hands on a neutral Net" (246). But ignorance and moral laxness have meant that "today's consumer information is careening at a breakneck pace, and most see no need to begin steering it" (245). Zittrain tries to persuade us that "our technologists are complacent" and "rank-and-file Internet users enjoy its benefits while seeing its operation as a mystery" (245). We are "sinners in the hands of an angry God," for we are about to face "the first true shock waves" and realize that "the state of the hacking arts is advancing" (Edwards; Zittrain 245). All that's needed to reverse this trend are "technically skilled people of goodwill to keep [the generative Internet] going" (Zittrain 246). To properly invest his reader in his argument, Zittrain must do two different things. First, he must tell a narrative for reasons

he indirectly admits: "The deciding factor in whether our current infrastructure can endure will be the sum of the perceptions and actions of its users" (246). Second, he must finish the story with an open ending, which allows him—like the Conference CFP and Moxley's article—to create a more nuanced alternative to technological determinism by encouraging the reader to finish the story. The contours of the story already suggest an ending but leave its outcome open.

Leaving aside similarities to literary tropes, there are a few important patterns in each of these narratives that deserve attention. First, there is the assumption that the impact technology has on rhetoric operates on two levels. One level is the architecture of tool itself: for instance, looking at the welcoming nature of open-source technology—such as wikis—or the opportunity for dialogue among blogs. Second, there is also the narratological level, which identifies the significance of a communication tool, its most fortuitous uses, and its likely trajectories of use. The narrative is important because it inscribes a tool with the values that we are reminded, paradoxically, it both has and are told that we must assume it might lose. Third, the story's ending is left untold, and its central actors are usually in the first person plural. It is up to "us"—the author and his or her readers—to end the story correctly. Nevertheless, the ending has been already subtly suggested, which allows narrative to act as a replacement for technological determinism. Fourth, "power" is almost always at the forefront of the discussion. The narrative is usually a story of the distribution of resources or of creative ideas.

If these assumptions inform the way rhetoricians think of technology, then it behooves us to understand more about the narratives of revolutionary architecture; one way of doing that involves looking at how they operate similarly in online religious

communities. Religious communities are especially interesting because their ideologies—the ideas, customs, texts, community boundaries, and ontological and epistemological assumptions they share—are often more slow to change. Just as importantly, religious doctrines are very carefully articulated, and religious institutions are more self-conscious about their limits and scope than what exists in other types of communities. In other words, there is often a more pronounced centripetal force binding together a religious community. This centripetal force is important because it creates a natural laboratory in which to experiment, to study what happens when a community's ideological assumptions run up against those embedded within an online interface. Finally, as I have tried to indicate in the examples of Computers and Writing scholarship above, there is an undercurrent of faith flowing throughout implications about the liberating nature of technology.

Methodology: Textual and Discourse Analysis Through a Theoretical Lens

My methodological approach draws primarily upon textual analysis of online web sources, such as blogs, wikis, and meta-talk pages, analyzed through the lens of rhetorical theories, such as Aristotelian and sophist conceptions of *ethos*, as mentioned in Chapter 2. In order to explain the purpose behind my methodological approach, I draw connections between "methodological triangulation," "scavenger" research, and assumptions about post-positivistic knowledge. In his recent study on digital research methodologies, Kevin De Pew stresses that scholars should balance online textual analysis with considerations of audience, rhetor, and context. He implies that direct interaction, including interviews and ethnographic study, are the best method of "triangulating" one's rhetorical analysis. He references numerous examples of recent

scholarship to demonstrate that "[l]ike CMC studies, textual analysis has been the dominant research method for studying web pages" (51). DePew contends that "despite the different research foci, the rhetoric of the various sites are presented and analyzed from one perspective—the scholars' interpretations of the texts" (51), and this myopic approach represents an unnecessary limiting scholarly approach. He calls for a triangulated methodological approach that considers the rhetors' intentions, the audience's reception, "the digital text or discourse," and the broader context wherein the conversation occurs (52). For instance, when conducting usability testing, web designers should consider interviewing potential web users and even immersing themselves within the community that will be using the produced website. Or, instead of simple textual analysis, he mentions how Heidi McKee interviewed eleven students about online discussion forums that impinged on racial conflict and Internet flaming[1]. Depew observes that some research studies, such as those that exclusively address discourse analysis, may not be able to benefit from interviews and ethnographic study. One such study Depew features is Albert Rouzie's study into serio-ludic discourse, which "does not align with the triangulation strategies" offered in Depew's argument (61). But Depew isn't quite ready to abandon the efficacy for a triangulated methodology for studies that rely only on discourse analysis. Instead, he questions "what other insights might we learn about serio-ludic discourse if we designed a study that asked synchronous CMC discussants to explain their composition strategies for their posts, as well as their reception of other's posts" (66). In short, he's calling for research that considers the rhetorical perspective of

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[1] McKee, Heidi. "'YOUR VIEWS SHOWED TRUE IGNORANCE!!!': (Mis)Communication in an Online Interracial Discussion Forum." *Computers and Composition* 19 (2002): 411-434.

a text's writer, reader, as well as the researcher's point of view. By "triangulating" one's research, bias can be hedged (but not avoided) with greater nuance.

I agree that "we should try to avoid the separation of discourse from rhetorical situation" and that textual analysis alone does not provide the fullest analysis possible, but I would differ from Depew in that there are multiple ways that one can triangulate research by considering the rhetor and audience's perspective, as well as the context. Textual analysis can be an avenue into understanding authorial intention and audience reception. One may read the encyclopedic page of a wiki and then the meta-discussion page to understand the writer's intentions; one may read special foundational pages to gain insight into the perspective of site administrators; furthermore, links to other websites, where editors might blog about their experiences, are reservoirs of information. Each of these pages represents a different perspective; some may be autobiographical in nature, or they may comment on the motivations for rhetorical choices on another page. When contributors on one meta-wiki talk page reference their work on other sites, the links offered provide a larger rhetorical context. On one website to be discussed in Chapter 3--opensourcetheology.net—the site's founder and chief administrator, Andrew Perriman, provided each contributor with autobiographical spaces, discussion spaces, and blog threads. In this sense, textual analysis is not simply one third of the triangular methodology, but a means to discovering authorial intent, audience reception, and a broader perspective.

This more flexible approach toward methodological triangulation may be informed by a "scavenger" metaphor introduced by Michelle Sidler (71). Whereas in the past, print based scholarship allowed research to originate from a smaller number of

vetted sources, rhetoricians in the 21st century are "actively searching for information in the library, online, and even on broadcast media, creating a pastiche-like set of methodological strategies inspired both by the rhetoric of science tradition and Web-based research of online communities" (74) Sidler discusses how this scavenging and gazing approach leads to a "leveling of communication channels" and multiple avenues for research that were heretofore impossible (73). Even though she focuses on the ethics of scavenging and gazing, her argument illuminates how digital research practices resemble a foraging for useful data. For instance, she discusses how in her search for information on one of her scholarly sources, she discovered additional biographical data, which lead to an ethical dilemma about whether she had a great obligation to a fellow scholar's privacy or to her audience's need to fully evaluate a source (80). But aside from the dilemma, the story exemplifies the interconnected nature of the web; online texts that are linked to other web pages offer broader contexts to explain the rhetorical position of those authoring the pages. For example, if we return to Andrew Perriman (previously mentioned), we can better understand his motivations for creating *Open Source Theology* by looking for relevant information on his personal blog—www.andrewperriman.com. Though the emphasis is on ethics in Sidler's argument, her study also exemplifies how scholars can more fully examine a triangulated methodological approach through what is ostensibly textual research. Of course, this scavenger approach is imperfect: it leaves out offline dialogues between the researcher and subjects that could validate claims, provide nuanced perspective, or round out histories. In future iterations of this study, I will further triangulate my study via Depew's study, but his model for research can be appropriated to a purely textual analysis.

The notion of the digital scavenger also invokes post-positivistic research: "Scavengers of 21st-century scientific research must employ textual analysis like those of 20th-century rhetoricians while approaching texts from a digital ethnographer's perspective as well" (76). This type of scavenger hunting relates to what Rebecca Rickly calls a "localized, situated, rhetorical approach towards conducting research" (392). She argues that most "quasi-experimental methodology dictates that a site of study must identify controls, independent variables, and dependent variables; the groups must be as uniform as possible; and so forth" (391). But research within the field of Computers and Composition is "situated, messy, unpredictable, and chaotic," which means that "we need to adapt existing methods to the specific (rhetorical) situation, idea, and research question(s) being explored" (393). This does not mean that research can be drawn in a "wily nilly" manner though (393); it must be thoughtful and reflective, even if it is adaptive and a mixture of methodologies. Drawing on the work on John Creswell, Rickly identifies eight different ways that researchers can "verify results and add rigor" (391); she and Creswell suggest that writers use two of those eight methods. Three of these methods include triangulation, "clarifying researcher bias," and "rich thick description" (392). I've already mentioned triangulation, which Rickly defines as "[u]sing multiple methods, sources, investigators, or perspectives" (391). One of these possible methods might include an application of theory to frame one's textual analysis; to frame my own textual analysis, I plan on grounding my research with several theoretical lenses. For instance, in Chapter Two, I will use classical and 21st century notions of *ethos* as a lens for cohering together discussions of identity online on Christian wikis. In Chapter 3, I will use Paul Tillich's conception of *kairos* as a lens to understand how Emergent church

websites discuss the connections between their faith and their use of technology. In Chapter 4, I use Martin Buber's distinction between I-Thou and I-It relationships in order to analyze the pedagogical opportunities latent in video-sharing websites. The textual analysis I employ will draw when possible from self-reflective and analytical writing from authors to triangulate their writing and web design on websites. As I describe each website and online community, I will endeavor to provide a context and background before entering into analysis. For instance, below in this chapter, I discuss *Conservapedia,* modeling the type of research I will be conducting.

In terms of clarifying researcher bias, Rickly asserts that writers should enable "the reader to understand the researcher's position, as well as any biases or assumptions that might impact the inquiry" (392). Turning one's gaze upon one's self is difficult, but any self-assessment of my perspective should clarify several things. As a computers and composition researcher, I'm continually looking for examples of successful computer-mediated-communication. Successful examples or the seeds of what may be successful online interaction have tremendous value to me as a teacher and as a researcher. As a teacher I can implement them in my own classroom, and as a teacher-researcher, I can theorize about them and persuade others to use them. Therefore, my bias is toward looking for what works. This bias is in some ways productive. Consider Rickly's distinction between theoretical and replicable knowledge-making and praxis knowledge-making:

> These field methods allow for a focused, problem-solving, rhetorically-situated, user-centered approach to research. They are not conducive for long-term study of a culture, and replication is not a normal goal; instead

they are localized, contextualized inquiries that allow for a greater

understanding of a task, a situation, a technology, a design, a system, and

so forth. Although not generalizable in the traditional sense, the results of

such studies are often used generally to address problems in a specific

locale, system, process, community, and so on. (393)

In this sense, my study looks for conclusions that can be applicable to the composition

classroom. In the second, third, and fourth chapters of this dissertation, I look at the use

of wiki, blogging, and video sharing communities, and in the final chapter, I suggest how

technological narratives can be used in writing-intensive computer classrooms. My bias

also relates to my background in Christianity. My Master's thesis focused on the

influence of the Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, on the drama of Christopher

Marlowe. This research provided me with a background in Lutheranism and Calvinism,

which has influenced which online communities I have researched, especially in Chapter

3.

Revolutionary Architecture as "Narrative" Instead of "Ideology": Cause and Effect and Characters

My use of "narrative" originates both out of a sense of pragmatism and an

assumption that our lives are embedded within narrative. In terms of pragmatism, the

choice to use the word "narrative" instead of "ideology" has more to do with functional

practicality than the relative aptness of each word. Ideology certainly aptly describes the

hope imbued into Internet technologies. When Berlin wrote, "Rhetoric and Ideology of

the Writing Class," he was speaking of the same power tensions that preoccupy narratives

of architectural revolution. Just as Berlin argues that rhetoric is ensconced in ideology,

we may assume that narrative is immersed within our ideological assumptions. But the use of narrative affords several practical benefits. Though fitting for a discussion about the intersections between religion, technology, and power, ideology is less useful as a lens precisely because of its all-encompassing nature. Ideology is an ineffable presence, which is much harder to discuss precisely because it is everywhere. In contrast, narratives provide rich analysis through the use of plot and character, which illuminate the perspective of the storyteller. First, narratives imply a sequence of events, which in turn—for the most part—imply a cause and effect relationship. These causal relationships imply something about the viewpoint of the storyteller and are an avenue for understanding ideology. Narratives let us see things through the storyteller eyes. Stories expose the concerns people have through their choice of plots and rising and complicating action and resolutions. They provide a concrete expression of people's anxieties and hopes, and they show much more explicitly how storytellers make sense of the world around them.

But my use of narrative is not simply pragmatic; it is a way of looking at rhetorical choices made by individuals or groups when their own ideological assumptions are challenged by other people, tools, or events. The work of Jim Corder and Mary Louise Pratt illuminate this perception of narrative. Jim Corder, in this work "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love," proposes that each human constructs a narrative of his or her own life that emphasizes, omits, and arranges the world to create and reinforce an ideological viewpoint. His real interest lies in the ethical communication choices we make when our own narratives are challenged and become untenable after encountering other narratives:

All authors, to be sure, we are more particularly narrators, historians, tale-

tellers. Going through experience, hooking some version of it to ourselves,

accumulating what we know as evidence and insight, ignoring what does

not look like evidence and insight to us, finding some pieces of life that

become life for us, failing to find others, or choosing not to look, each of

us creates the narrative that he or she is. We tell our lives and live our

tells, enjoying where we can, tolerating what we must, turning away to re-

tell, or sinking into madness and disorder if we cannot make (or remake)

our tale into a narrative we can live in. Each of us forms conceptions of

the world, its institutions, its public, private, wide, or local histories, and

each of us is the narrative that shows our living in and through the

conceptions that are always being formed as the tales of our lives take

their shape. (170)

The emphasis here is not on narrative as a carefully constructed fictional or non-fiction

work. As readers, we are not asked to think of narrative as a conscious and discrete act of

storytelling, but a continuous and tacit construction of the word around us. The narratives

that Corder writes about are not necessarily written down, at least not in any one

particular place. When he writes that "[w]e tell our lives and live our tells," his words

imply that these tales are dispersed within our different daily conversations, papers, blog

posts, or notes. How does one go about reconstructing these narratives that exist

underneath the surface of otherwise expository writing? We might do this by retracing

and reconnecting the "conceptions of the world, its institutions, its public, private, wide,

or local histories" found through wiki meta-talk, blog posts, and discussion posts.

Computer-mediated-communication allows for Corder's ideas to take on a less abstract

form because blogs, wikis, and social networking sites often record their users'

assumptions about the world and technology. When reconstructing these narratives, the

focus, at least from Corder's perspective, should be on conflict; but whereas Corder is

interested in how disagreements between people force us to "nudge, poke, or remake our

narrative," I'm interested in a different kind of conflict (171). I'm interested in the

conflict between our assumptions about revolutionary architectures and the actual digital

experiences that combat with our "dogma, arrogance, and ignorance" about the likely use

computer-mediated-communication, either among technorhetoricians or among online

Christian religious groups. We can study the conflict that arises from the difference

between the expected affordances of a tool and the way those tools are actually used.

These conflicts are similar to what Mary Louise Pratt calls "contact zones," which are

"those social spaces [post-Web 2.0 technologies] where cultures [or technological

assumptions] meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly

asymmetrical relations of power [. . .]" (34). So from Zittrain's perspective, the contact

zone exists between our assumptions about the openness of the web and the "tragedy of

the commons," wherein this openness actually contributes to the destruction of the web.

For the Computers and Writing 2008 conference proposal, it may involve how open

source software can actually increase rather than eliminate the digital divide. Finally, my

decision on which online religious communities to choose to study in the subsequent

chapters is based primarily on the Corder-like conflict embedded within their practices.

That is to say, I am more interested in the tension between the online space and the

assumptions of the online Christian community than I am with the religious beliefs of the

community. What unites each of the religious communities I have chosen is the conflict explained above rather than doctrinal similarities these religious communities may share. Below are several specific examples about how the Corder-like conflict works within digital scholarship and also religious Internet technologies. These examples model my methodological approach that relies in large part on textual analysis.

For instance, Evgeny Morozov, in his book *The Net Delusion,* claims that Internet enthusiasts mistakenly reinterpret past events and predict hopeful future outcomes by overestimating the importance of technology in revolutions, social movements, and democratic uprisings. The tale of *The Net Delusion* shows how a narrative can personalize and exemplify an argument about prevailing ideology in a way that would be much harder without a story. Though Morozov uses the word ideology throughout his book, he frames his argument as a series of stories, and, more to the point, clarifies how the stories are embedded in the way others—those deluded by the net—think. His analysis examines the same discourse pattern of "revolutionary architectures" mentioned here, except that the computer-mediated communication occurs on a geopolitical level. Coining the term "digital utopianism," Morozov observes that the Internet has been seen as "the ultimate cheat sheet that could help the West finally defeat its authoritarian adversaries" (xii). He sprinkles his analysis with a series of religious metaphors that illuminate the hold that digital utopianism—itself a term with religious connotations— has on its adherents. Digital utopians perceive Internet technologies as a type of panacea, and they "endow the Internet with nearly magical qualities," but what characterizes them most is "a naïve belief in the emancipatory nature of online communication that ignores its downside" (xxi-xxii). These utopians adhere to the "The Google Doctine," and when

this false sense of utopian faith is combined with "Internet Centrism," then the flock

succumbs to "the Net Delusion" (xvii).

He structures this complex argument about technological determinism and

ideological beliefs though a series of personal and social narratives. One story begins

with his own wayward mistakes into Internet folly and how he then saw the light. This

shorter story sets the backdrop for the larger more important one, which is how

politicians, literati, and business leaders are suffering from the same delusions he suffered

from. His personal story begins by his admission that he "was intoxicated with cyber-

utopianism until recently" and that this book "is an attempt to come to terms with this

ideology as well as a warning against the pernicious influence that it has had and is likely

to continue to have on democracy promotion" (xiv). He began with dreams of changing

the world but soon discovered he was chasing false dreams and worshipping false idols

because he was one of many "idealistic young people who think they are onto something

that could change the world" (xiv). Slowly his dreams proved false, and like the parable

of the prodigal son whose vain ambitions have been spent, he faced a choice. He found it

"tempting to throw [his] hands up in despair and give up on the Internet altogether," but

he admonishes us that surrender would be "the wrong lesson" (xv). Instead, finding

redemption in the golden mean, he combines an excitement about the potential for

Internet revolution and for its ability at "democracy promotion" with a continual self-

reflective consideration about how technology fits within specific cultural contexts. The

concern is for how web technologies can be used for both good and evil. Having told his

own personal story of enlightenment, he then describes how "those who care about the

future of democracy" will need to see the light as well (xvii). Each chapter resets the

narrative, framing it a different way. For instance, in one chapter, he contextualizes web technologies by comparing them with previously hyped technologies, such as the telegraph, the radio, and the television (275-279). These stories remind us that "the rhetoric that accompanied predictions about earlier technologies was usually every bit as sublime as today's quasi-religious discourse about the power of the Internet" (276). In one chapter, he juxtaposes the personal and political by comparing Kierkegaard's critique of spiritual shallowness with how social media "may distract us from developing a more effective capacity to organize" (196). This synthesis is more telling than Morozov realizes (196). In addition to showing how Morozov's stories illustrate the ideological beliefs of others, they also reveal his own unstated assumptions. His dual use of narrative—Kierkegaard and political activism, for instance—illustrates that Morozov thinks that the technological myths we falsely subscribe to affect us on both a personal and social level. The synthesis of personal and public narratives indicates that he sees both spheres as intertwined through technology. The same web technologies that affect us as individuals reshape or society.

Morozov's dual stories also point to something else about the narratives of architectural revolution: these narratives must have a complicating action that involves some kind of tension between characters. This tension is catalyzed by an impersonal but possibly malignant force, an antagonist, or by an opportunity that presents itself and changes the protagonist's fortunes. To give three parallels in American Literature, in Stephan Crane's short story, "The Open Boat," the four men in the rowboat struggle against an impersonal nature that threatens their lives even though it bears them no actual malice or even knows of their existence. In *The Scarlett Letter*, Hester Prynne is beset by

the malignant desire of Roger Chillingworth, and in the *The Adventures of Huckleberry*

Finn, the catalyzing force is not malignant even though it is impersonal: the river. It is the

river that provides Huck and Jim the opportunity to escape, to radically transform their

lives. In order to understand non-fiction narratives of technological revolution, we need

to locate the antagonizing character, as well. If we review the stories just mentioned, each

has a villain or a catalyzing agent. Jonathan Zittrain's villain is the "precarious"

relationship between an innovative Internet and an appliance-centered Internet (3).

Though both are valuable, if either grows too influential, a chain reaction will lead to the

"lockdown on PCs and a corresponding rise of tethered appliances" (5). The villain here

is similar to Crane's naturalistic impersonal nature. It is an impersonal enemy because

"[a]s time passes, the brand names on each side will change [,] [b]ut the core battle will

remain" (5). In other words, there is no villain per se, just an unfortunate unending

dilemma that society must respond to. In Crane's story, "As the boat caroused on the

waves, spray occasionally bumped over the side and gave them a fresh soaking, but this

had no power to break their repose" (50). It was grit and determination against an

unending but impersonal threat. In Zittrain's story, our boat or "our Net technologies are

experiencing the first true shock waves from their generative success" (245). Again, the

enemy is even more devilishly impersonal: it is our own success! What is required is the

grit and determination of "technically skilled people of goodwill to keep them going"

(246). In Moxley's tale of datagogies, the antagonist of the "community of learning" is

the "community of power," much like Chillingworth is the antagonist of Hester and

threatens to suppress her. The CFP for the Computers and Writing Conference speaks

about Open Source as an opportunity that is neither benevolent nor malignant. It is a

vehicle through which compositionists can teach students "collaboration, interaction, and respect for the user." Much like Huck Finn's river, the catalyzing agent in the conference's narrative is an opportunity that the protagonist seizes. These connections are important because they illustrate whether the storyteller has an antagonistic or sympathetic relationship with technology.

How narrative analysis may work in an online religious website

These types of catalyzing agents and concerns for plot occur within religious online narratives as well, and an example will illustrate the relevance of this kind of methodology. For instance, consider the case of the Conservative Bible Project at *Conservapedia*. A brief recounting of *Conservapedia's* history and political agenda will be necessary before a narrative can be constructed. Many writers have argued that open source software—wikis in particular—have inherent democratizing tendencies that encourage users to be "netizins," "prosumuers" and lay contributors to community-built scholarship (Barton and Moxley). However, sites such as the Conservative Bible Project at *Conservapedia* challenge the supposed trajectory of wiki technology. The *Conservapedia* project defines itself in contradistinction from *Wikipedia*, referring to the latter as a "mobocracy." One of its responses to the more practiced "wiki way" is to create a "hierarchy" and a "meritocracy" of editors whose practices are very different from those theorized by technorhetoricians. Consider the following differences between *Wikipedia* and "The Conservative Bible Project" at *Conservapedia* concerning the scholarly assumptions about the "natural" uses of wikis. For instance, *Conservapedia* asserts that "we do not drive away experts by pretending that some random anonymous user who just signed up is as knowledgeable and authoritative as a scholar with decades

of experience in teaching or research." In addition, they warn editors who would damage

their sight to think twice: "The IP addresses of vandals will be reported to authorities.

That includes your employer and your local prosecutor." In stark contrast to this

authoritarian control, *Wikipedia*'s primary rule is self-effacing: "If a rule prevents you

from improving or maintaining *Wikipedia,* ignore it." Though the period of deciding what

texts are canonical may appear to be over for many religions—for instance,

Christianity—the meaning of those texts is still continually debated by readers, scholars,

and congregations. But there has been a renaissance of efforts to rewrite sacred texts in

the era of open-source software. *Conservapedia's* efforts include, "utilizing the 'best of

the public' to render God's word into modern English without liberal translation

distortions." The origins of the website are explained on an "about" page. The wiki began

in 2006 with the efforts of Andrew Schlafly who teaches history and has a law degree. In

order to counteract the implicit bias he sees in *Wikipedia* based on his students' writing

(for instance, the use of B.C.E. instead of B.C), Schlafly created this site as an

educational resource about history from a Christian and conservative perspective. The

website quickly became a repository for information about all things conservative, and

within three years it had become "one of the 50 most popular conservative websites in

terms of web traffic by the conservative blog Right Wing News." The site describes the

vandalism and "ridicule" heaped upon *Conservapedia* after it received national

recognition.

Contrasts in the narratives and conclusion

Based on this data and the self-reported history of the site, there are some

important distinctions between this site's story and the Computers and Composition

narrative of architectural revolution. First, *Conservapedia* addresses issues of power distribution in similar fashion to Computers and Composition theorists, but from this conservative perspective, wiki software provides the deleterious effects of revisionist history, liberal bias, and "mob rule." This narrative fashions wikis as unwieldy and dangerous, needing the stern hand of experienced and vetted conservative experts to rein it in—to tame the software and make it confirm to traditional power structures. Second, whereas the theme of revolutionary architecture privileges power, *Conservapedia* describes power as a means to what the site considers a more important end: truth. This emphasis on truth comes from a "merit system" of editing rather than a "democratic system" and from the site's intent to provide "information about the American people that liberal critics would rather hide." Third, this site reinterprets popular culture theories of technology in order to accommodate them for their purposes. For instance, the site's phrase—mentioned earlier—"the best of the public" closely resembles James Surowiecki's notion of *The Wisdom of the Crowds.* Whereas Surowiecki's argument is that a large group of laypeople can sometimes provide more accurate or useful information than a small group of experts, *Conservapedia's* notion of "the best of the public" is that a small group of well-read laypeople (with a heavy emphasis on males) is better than both "mob rule" and "elite gatekeepers." This alternative Surowieckian story posits that "extraordinary achievements are attained by ordinary people." Fourth, the antagonist in this story is not the technology itself, nor is there an emphasis on impersonal technological forces. Instead of focusing on wiki technology as the foe, the antagonists include liberals, experts, and the great unwashed who pollute the Internet.

These four observations illustrate a larger tentative conclusion that may be gleaned from *Conservapedia's* story and applied to a larger understanding of how wikis work. The website's authoritarian impulse rejects the democratic architectural advantages that wikis offer, but that architecture is so fundamental to the software that the site must spin rather than ignore the implicit logic of wikis. For instance, perhaps most interesting is the site's creation of a "best of the public" concept, which spins Suroweicki's notion of the "wisdom of the crowds." The site also has an open-editing prohibition, which means users must create an account to make even the smallest edit. This policy lead to an open critique by an experienced *Wikipedia* editor who explained that "Wikipedia's rate of growth took off and its use became viral" because of open-editing; according to this editor, *Conservapedia* would never become comparable in size or scope without an adaptation of this openness. The hindrance is compounded by the site's emphasis on a stable unchangeable truth since wiki software emphasizes revision and metadiscussion, both of which are specifically repudiated by the conservative site. When one considers that the site defines itself obsessively in relation to *Wikipedia* ("Secularized Language," "Wikipedia," and "Examples of Bias in Wikipedia" are the third, sixth, and ninth most viewed sites respectively, for instance), then *Conservapedia* appears to be tethered to the very site it loathes. It rejects but cannot ignore the wiki way; it may only spin off of the wiki software's democratizing structure. The site's narrative illustrates that *Conservapedia* works not because of the wiki software but despite it; it functions in large part because of the face-to-face culture that surrounds it. The offline "help of several students from his fall 2006 World History class" provided some of the unity and purpose that was lost through the abdication of wiki advantages. If compositionists are interested

in how wikis can "have the potential to reinforce the principles inherent in a true democracy and thwart the corporate interest," then Schalfly's website shows that this software can be used for more authoritarian purposes (Barton, "Future of Rational-Critical" 178), but these authoritarian purposes may be hindered by the architecture of the site. From these observations about *Conservapedia*'s narrative, we may gather some tentative conclusions that add to our knowledge about wiki writing:

- Wikis used in ways that violate their architectural advantages can have limited success.

- This limited success depends on reinterpreting—instead of simply ignoring—those architectural advantages (i.e. the "wisdom of the crowds").

- When a site defines itself through dissension from the norm (*Conservapedia's* relationship to *Wikipedia*), that very tension limits the smaller site's scope and purpose.

- Onsite personal connections increase in importance when users violate a software's architectural structure.

The wiki way in rhetoric and composition

The previous method of narrative analysis concerning *Conservapedia* has precedent within Composition studies and relates directly to recent scholarship on the use of wikis. Bob Whipple discusses his first use of wikis in the classroom. After reading about them on listservs and hearing about them at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Whipple decided to "jump into the wiki stream and see how the water felt," using one to manage student writing on a course website (226). But his use of wikis was decidedly unconventional. His wiki had a password-protected

login for each student; each student could only edit his or her own work, and every person in the class had his or her own personal page on the site. The wiki was only used at the end of the class: "[t]hey drafted; I read and commented; they revised; I graded" (227). What this teacher attempted to do with a wiki was very similar to Schlafly's strategy; he ignored or went against the architectural advantages of the software: "Of course, you know what is wrong from reading this description: I didn't really need a wiki to do what I had done. I didn't use the wiki as a wiki; I was, essentially using the wiki the same way I would have used Blackboard or another CMS" (227). His unorthodox application of the software began to make him feel like he was "not being true to the wiki," which in turn made the wiki "sound either like a soon-to-be disappointed deity or a HAL 2000-like, omnipresent intelligence—'Bob? What are you doing, Bob? Why are you separating and password protecting all the student papers, Bob?'—or perhaps some kind of 1960s self-actualizing guru" (231). In order to understand why he "wasn't exploiting the wikiness of wikis," Whipple retraces his story through a variety of narratives, framing his story as someone "who grew up anytime before, say, 1990" and, therefore, on the other side of the digital divide (228). He also remembers his role as a teacher who must balance privacy concerns with the promise of public writing on the web (228). By telling us his story once, and then remediating it twice more through larger contexts, he concludes that "the choice of technology can determine the outcome rather than the other way around" (231). He concludes by quoting Brian Lamb who argues that denying the architectural benefits of wikis "risks diluting the special qualities that make wikis worth using in the first place" (228). It is possible to use them in these ways though such efforts are self-defeating and limiting. We are implored to "loosen-up" and self-

reflect on our praxis to discover if wikis are meant for us (234). Whipple's narratological methodology allows him to form provisional knowledge about the use of wikis. His conclusions appropriately fall short of maxims but are still illustrative of the problems that can arise when wikis are used against the grain. Schlafly's story departs from Whipple's in at least one respect; the conservative community has an ideological cohesiveness that creates a unity in purpose that Whipple's site was missing. Both Schlafly and Whipple were teachers who used this software in ways that were purposefully limiting in order to maintain control over what Whipple calls "messiness" (232).

Connection to Religious Studies

Some work has been done considering how technological narratives play a role in online religious discourse in other fields such as religious studies. One especially pertinent study is entitled, "Spiritualising the Internet: Uncovering Discourses and Narratives of Religious Internet Usage," by Heidi Campbell. Campbell examines ways in which religious communities define the Internet's use and connect it to their communities' overall values and missions (1). Such a study "involves identifying the common discourses employed by religious users that conceptualize the Internet for acceptable use and the narratives of use that emerge from these discourses" (1). This process of reconciling the Internet with a religious community's values is called "spiritualising the Internet," and she names a non-exhaustive list of four different discourses occurring in traditional religious communities: they include the Internet as "a spiritual medium facilitating religious experience, a sacramental space suitable for religious use, a tool promoting religion or religious practice, and a technology for

affirming religious life" (10). Campbell also examines how these four discourses correspond to four different narratives told by religious communities: the Internet as "spiritual network," "worship space," "missionary tool," and tool for "religious identity" (14). However, her works differs from mine in several respects. She asserts that the scholarly study of "spiritualising" narratives offers an alternative to technological determinism, but she does not suggest that the narratives themselves fulfill this function. I would like to look into the ways in which these spiritual narratives have a deterministic effect as well. She also assumes that there is a fundamental difference between these types of online communities and secular communities (5). For instance, she argues that "the choices of religious users about technology, especially those within traditional religions "[. . .] are negotiated through different ways than those within other groups" (5). I agree with her that there are important differences, but these differences are in degree rather than in type. In other words, I believe that by interrogating the narratives used by Christian organizations, we can either better understand the assumptions that undergird our own technological narratives as rhetoricians or—just as importantly— adapt and secularize religious technological narratives that may help us better understand how people use technology both in and outside of religious groups.

This spiritualising process that Campbell introduced is inevitably influenced by at least two significant factors according to Christopher Helland, a professor of Sociology of Religion: first, "how the creators of the web page view the Internet medium" and second, "how do they want to interact with the medium and how do they want 'to do' religion online" (294). Based on Helland's two factors, I suggest that this spiritualising process includes—indeed, essentially is—a narrative process because whatever "views"

they have or things they "do" must be accepted by the larger community and must be related to offline religious experiences. By exploring the ways spiritual Internet narratives overlap with technological narratives created by professionals in the field of Computers and Composition, we can better understand how our own values inform our use of technology. But, just as importantly, we can perhaps glean new ways of viewing Internet technologies that had not been considered before. The field of Computers and Writing is well known for its interdisciplinary nature, but the research in Rhetoric and Composition on the sizable numbers of online faithful is somewhere between sparse and non-existent. The enormity of online religious conversations, communities, organizations, and meta-discussions provides a rich new discursive field from which to reap research.

The time for this research has arrived because religious usages of Internet technology have become increasingly important in our society. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, as of 2004 approximately 82 million Americans—or 64% percent of all Internet users—reported using the Internet for purposes "that relate to religious or spiritual matters" (Hoover and Clark i). As of April 2009, 28% of all Internet users report that that they have searched for religious or spiritual information online (ii). The eighty-two million is higher than those who have looked for information on political campaigns (60%), conducted research for school and job training or work-related activities (57 and 52 percent, respectively), participated in online banking (57%), or even watched a *YouTube* or Google video (62%; "Trend Data: Pew"). Those who have searched for religious information rivals the numbers of those who have used Twitter (19%), purchased or used peer-to-peer platforms to acquire music (28%), used a chat room, tagged photos or blog posts (28%), remixed music (15%), or created an avatar (6%).

Elana Larsen, author of another Pew Survey, writes that the web "allows the faithful wide access to resources and links, and it offers the doubtful or curious a safe place to explore" (6). Clearly, the Internet is used to practice faith and explore religious beliefs and practices; but in the process of exploring, the online faithful are also writing, reading, persuading, and listening to arguments. As they practice these rhetorical acts, we, as technorhetoricans, can learn from the ways they use online spaces.

With these exigent circumstances in mind, I study the contact zones between the ways religious organizations actually use computer-mediated communication and Computers and Writing scholarship about the fortuitous or expected usages of those tools. By studying religious communities, rhetoricians can come to a greater understanding of our own assumptions about online narratives. Just as importantly, we might be able to glean new ways of using Internet technologies that have not occurred to teachers of writing. From the digital religious practices of Christians, we can not only learn about narrative and ideological assumptions, but we can hopefully find clever uses of technology for the classroom. My research questions include:

- In what ways do online Christian communities interpret the benefits and drawbacks of specific online interfaces and how do those interpretations differ— or not—from the interpretations of computers and writing theorists, both within and outside of Rhetoric and Composition?

- How do the uses of online interfaces by Christian communities move "against the grain" from what many theorists believe to be their most "natural" or fortuitous uses?

- What rhetorical lenses (*ethos* and *kairos,* for example) help to explain how members of online Christian communities adapt to conflicts between the architecture of online interfaces and the ways they intend to use those interfaces?

- Finally, how might Computers and Writing specialists use knowledge about the first three questions to improve writing pedagogy in the classroom?

Chapter Two:

Establishing Ethos: Genesis and Composed Ethos on Christian Wikis

In this chapter, I argue that effective Christian wikis invoke a sense of *ethos* among their contributors. The chapter begins by coining two terms—genesis-*ethos* and composed-*ethos*—based on classical and contemporary notions of how character works within a text. I draw upon classical notions of *ethos*—from Aristotle and Isocrates—and compare them to Roland Barthes' argument concerning the "death of the author." I then apply these two conceptions of *ethos* to biblical rhetoric before analyzing how three websites—*Theopedia*, *OrthodoxWiki*, and *WikiChristian*—negotiate their use of this rhetorical appeal. Whereas *Wikipedia* relies on composed-*ethos*, these three Christian wikis must rely on genesis-*ethos*. The reliance on genesis-*ethos* complicates their efforts at collaboration, and they must use a variety of creative and rhetorically savvy methods to effectively manage their wikis. Finally, this chapter shows how these dual conceptions of *ethos* impinge upon technological narratives.

I begin this chapter by asking you to consider a series of colloquial phrases: "Damning with Faint Praise" (Pope), the "Elephant in the Room," and "what was left unsaid." These terms all point to a commonly understood observation that those words left unsaid or those characters missing from a scene can have the greatest impact on our understanding of a rhetorical situation. The missing element from a rhetorical space can define a conversation and profoundly affect a rhetorical space; those within the conversation might either search out whatever is missing (the source of an anonymous

accusatory note, for instance), or scrupulously avoid the presence of a rhetorical element

(a long standing disagreement between old friends, for instance). When the rhetorical

space in question occurs online then one of the elements most likely to be missing would

be the rhetor's *ethos*. As Nicholas Burbules observes, "one of the most-discussed topics

about the World Wide Web is how users can be expected to assess the credibility of

information they find there" (441). The size of the web, the "self-referential" nature by

which information is documented online, and the speed with which it becomes common

knowledge create "a different and challenging credibility context" for online materials

(Burbules 442). Extending on his research, Barbara Warnick compares the evaluation of

online authorial credibility to 4th Century Athenian courtrooms, where juries decide

whom to believe based on "the portrayal of one's moral character and the extent to which

it aligns with the conventional values and beliefs of the host society and the speaker's

audience" (256). She observes that website users often "make rapid choices based on a

number of aspects, similar to the way in which Athenian juries make their decisions,"

relying more on design and appearance to judge credibility than the authorial or

institutional source of a website (257). Her conclusion is that rhetoricians should avoid a

"modernist" approach for online credibility, which "considers the source or author of a

site as an essential gauge of its trustworthiness and expertise" (263). Drawing on the

work of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and field research on how users actually

evaluate websites—as opposed to their self-reported evaluative methods— she proposes

that we should move away from the author as the centerpiece for credibility and "revise

the theoretical models on which Web site credibility judgments are made" (264). The

idea of moving away from the author as the centerpiece of credibility is more simply said

than done, especially when religious texts are written online, and to understand why, we

should look more carefully at what Barthes, Aristotle, and Isocrates say about *ethos*.

When Warnick suggests we rethink our method of evaluating online texts, she

implies that polyvocal texts have diminished the importance of the author in cyberspace.

Her argument calls to mind Roland Barthes who argues that "it is language which speaks,

not the author: to write is to reach, through a preexisting impersonality—never to be

confused with the castrating objectivity of the realistic novelist—that point where

language alone acts, 'performs,' and not 'oneself'"(Barthes 3). Though this line of

reasoning by Barthes has gained prominence in textual analysis, let us consider how it

impinges on three Christian Bible verses. The first verse is Matthew 5:5, in which Jesus

of Nazareth claims, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (NIV). This

claim carries weight because of its supposed source: the manifestation of God on earth.

The words assume a vastly different and much deflated meaning without consideration of

the source because the implied call to action is based neither on *logos* nor *pathos* but on

the credibility of the speaker. But even if the reader finds meaning in the holy beatitudes

irrespective of the source, then what would he or she make of John 14:6? In this verse,

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father

except through me.'" (NIV). This line—which was written perhaps by disciples of John,

using his name and his recollections of words spoken by the historical figure of Jesus,

who in turn spoke words allegedly inspired by Holy Spirit—mirrors the complexities

Barthes speaks of when referencing the story "Sarrasine" by Balzac. But unlike Barthes'

analysis of Balzac, we cannot simply reduce the source of these words to the "scriptor" or

to a layering of voices. We cannot say that this verse "is that neuter, that composite, that

oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning

with the very identity of the body that writes" (2). If we choose to adopt the perspective

of a faithful Christian believer, the identity of the writer becomes central, and Barthes'

words become problematic. From the perspective of a religious believer it makes no

sense to say that "to write can no longer designate an operation of recording, of

observing, of representing, of 'painting' (as the Classic writers put it)" (4). For biblical

scripture is in part a faithful (in more ways than one) reflection of an actor who "pre-

exists it, thinks, suffers, lives for it" (Barthes 4). The devout believer might hear Barthes

assert that "[w]e know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single

'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God), but is a space of many

dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing" and answer

with a resounding "no!" (4). In short, the "I" in Jesus of Nazareth's claim is not just a

subject but an author, an historical figure who is the center of the claim's linguistic

meaning. Barthes may have crucified the author, but Jesus has resurrected him. Of

course, this contestation of Barthes' perspective concedes that "a text consists of multiple

writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into

parody, into contestation," even within scripture, even from a believers' perspective (6).

Instead, it is meant to show that within religious discourse the speaker's role takes on an

irreducibly important added layer. That layer requires that the audience inquire into the

speaker's *ethos*, and this inquiry extends and becomes even more important when

discussing computer-mediated conversations.

But it isn't merely that the speaker assumes the role of an author and not simply

scriptor in the midst of religious discourse; nor can we simply state that a writer's *ethos* is

especially important. Religious discourse demands that the audience consider the type of *ethos* that is most important. One question concerns whether it is the rhetor's character within the text or his or her character that precedes the text that is most crucial. Isocrates in his treatise, *Antidosis*, argues that the most crucial dimension of *ethos* concerns the person's morality preceding the speech:

> Furthermore, mark you, the man who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character; no, on the contrary, he will apply himself above all to establish a most honorable name among his fellow-citizens; for who does not know that words carry greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who live under a cloud, and that the argument which is made by a man's life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words? Therefore, the stronger a man's desire to persuade his hearers, the more zealously will he strive to be honorable and to have the esteem of his fellow-citizens. (Isocrates 278)

As William Benoit notes of this passage, "[i]t is worth stressing that it is the speaker's prior reputation which concerns Isocrates" (257). There is within this argument an assumption of a direct proportional relationship between the "desire to persuade his hearers" and a rhetor's reputation as "honorable" and claiming the "esteem of his fellow-citizens" (Isocrates 278). Benoit argues that Isocrates "considers *ethos* to be the reputation a speaker develops throughout his life and brings to the speech situation" (257). Isocrates' connection between the rhetor's morality and his persuasiveness is so powerful that he sees a feedback loop occurring, whereby a speaker can reinforce his own

positive attributes by dwelling on examples of high moral character in others: by "habituating himself to contemplate and appraise such examples, he will feel their influence not only in the preparation of a given discourse but in all the actions of his life" (277).

In stark contrast to this perspective, Aristotle presumes that "*ethos* is important in persuasion, but less so than the proof created by enthymemes" (Benoit 258). Benoit concludes that rather than Aristotle's conception of *ethos* being "the impression the audience has of the orator before the speech, he declares that it is created by the rhetor through skillful use of language" (258). I would agree that Aristotle puts less emphasis on the author's morality but would argue that his conception of *ethos* actually emphasizes the *ethos* embedded within the text rather than within the person. In Book Two of his treatise of rhetoric, Aristotle writes that a rhetor must "construct a view of himself as a certain kind of person [. . .] for it makes much difference in regard to persuasion [. . .] that the speaker *seem* to be a certain kind of person and that his hearers *suppose* him to be disposed toward them in a certain way" (1378a2-3, emphasis mine). The emphasis is on appearance rather than the authenticity of the rhetor's character, and Aristotle's subsequent advice for speakers is to match an assumed persona to the audience's perspective because "things do not seem the same to those who are friendly and those who are hostile" (1378a4). For instance, after discussing the characteristics of old age and youth, he writes that "since all people receive favorably speeches spoken in their own character and by persons like themselves, it is not unclear how both speakers and speeches may *seem* to be of this sort through the use of words" (1390a16, emphasis mine). The emphasis in Chapters 12-17 of Book Two, which focus on *ethos,* are on the

audience's characters, personalities, and virtues, instead of the speaker's wisdom or virtue. The reason for this emphasis is that the speaker's own character is malleable, whereas the audience's disposition is not. The savvy rhetorician will be "a person *seeming* to have all of these qualities"; therefore one must learn "the means by which one might *appear* prudent and *good*"; it is essential to "*present* himself" in whatever way fits the desires of the audience (1378a6-7, emphasis mine). Notice that this approach to character uses words like "suppose," "appear," and "present." The actual virtue of the speaker is almost irrelevant. Rather, the emphasis seems to be on creating an appropriate persona and fitting that persona within the author's argument. This is why Aristotle claims, "[f]or things do not seem the same to those who are friendly and those who are hostile, nor [the same] to the angry and the calm but either altogether different or different in importance" (178a4). The author's *ethos* should then be adjusted to the text; in fact, the author's *ethos* becomes a composition, a revision, something rewritten along with the enthymemes to match the audience's emotions. The author's *ethos* is invented within the text at the time of composition. But wait! Where have we heard this before? Ah yes, in the "modern text," the author—or shall we say his or her *ethos*—takes on a different form: "there is no other time than that of the utterance, and every text is eternally written here and now" (Barthes 4).

James S. Baumlin draws a similar interpretation from his analysis of Plato's *Phaedrus*, by comparing a speech given by Phaedrus and the response of Socrates. The initial speech by Phaedrus was an imitation of the sophist Lysias, who is known for his "elaboration on the structures and strategies of *ethopoiia,* the technique of conveying human character through language" (xii). The speech given by Phaedrus disgusts

Socrates because Lysias' contribution to *ethotic* appeal centered around his ability to construct an identity that matched the needs of his audience rather than one that related to any intrinsic essence of the rhetor (xii). He demonstrated that "human character, with its particular habits, strengths, weaknesses, virtues, and vices, can be rendered or represented in language" (xii). In contrast, Plato uses Socrates to present the idea that "language must be placed in the service of a truth that, though ideal and eternal, can be known only by means of its embodiment in the individual" (xii). Notice that Lysias' rationale is based on secular motivations and methods and that Plato's argument rests on philosophical and metaphysical logic.

With this juxtaposition in mind, I would like to suggest a framework for thinking about *ethos*, one that contrasts two different notions of that rhetorical proof. The first is what I would like to call the "composed-*ethos*," which assumes that what matters is matching the rhetorician's reputation to the audience's character type and emotional disposition. In this sense, it is an Aristotelian model (or Lysian), but it also implies that the author becomes a "composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes," which is to say it implies the "Death of the Author" and a thoroughly modernist approach (2). The second notion is what I would like to call the "genesis-*ethos*" approach because it implies that the rhetor's *ethos* "pre-exists" the text, and the text leans upon the writer's *ethos* for its own persuasive ability (4). This second *ethotic* model is notable for three different reasons. First, the approach to *ethos* is pre-modern. Second, it more carefully corresponds to the approach used within Christian rhetoric, and, third it does not resonate well with how computers and composition theorists conceive of the use of *ethos* through

collaborative writing, especially through the use of wikis. It is no coincidence that Plato's metaphysical worldview also produces a genesis-*ethos* model as Baumlin implies.

Biblical scripture places a high value on genesis-*ethos* because it is at the very center of the validity of Christian claims. Take for instance the following instances of ethotic appeal in the Bible.

- "Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (NIV Gal 1: 1-3)

- "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either." (NIV 1 Cor. 15: 14-16)

- "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." (NIV 2 Cor. 3: 1-3)

Each of these verses reinforces the genesis-*ethos* model. The first verse is a typical beginning to a New Testament letter, which begins with the author's introduction, followed with who he is "sent" by, which precedes who that person—Jesus—was sent by. Before even beginning the argument, the authority of the speaker is traced to "our God and Father." The second and the third passages exemplify how this type of approach is emblematic of a genesis-*ethos* rather than a composed-*ethos* mode of persuasion. In second verse, the author argues that his and his reader's appeal to *logos* is inextricably tied to the *ethos* of their teacher. Note, it is not the supposed or represented *ethos* of the teacher but the "argument which is made by a man's life" (Isocrates 278). The third passage most clearly illustrates this vision of character's importance, for the "letter of recommendation" the author needs stems from the readers' lives, which ultimately stems from the author, Paul, who persuaded them to convert to Christianity. What one should draw away from these three verses is that the genesis-*ethos* model is buried deep within the DNA of Christian rhetoric.

Why Wikipedia Loves Composed-Ethos and Christian Wikis Need Genesis-Ethos

The non-point-of-view stylistic approach that Wikipedia employs impinges upon the choices online collaborators make between a composed-*ethos* and a genesis-*ethos*. This non-point-of view works dramatically differently in religious wikis. To understand these complications, it is helpful to understand the fictional but necessary distinction made by Jimmy Wales—founder of *Wikipedia*—between three different approaches to editorial writing—objective, argumentative, and neutral styles. Objective truth involves information that is beyond reproach, for which there is no credible dissenting opinion, such as an argument about how the earth is round, or how "Abraham Lincoln is the 16th

President of the United States of America." These statements assert a POV that is widely accepted by every stakeholder group that would have an interest in the article. Argumentative truths are claims that are empirically or rationally compelling, the type of claims made in most academic writing, for instance. These texts assert a POV that, by definition, always have an opposing point-of-view. Argumentative texts make a claim, such as, "credit default swaps contributed to the 2008 economic recession" or "Walt Whitman is the greatest accepted American author of the 19th century." Wikipedia's writing style revolves around the third approach to truth, the neutral point-of-view. According to *Wikipedia*'s page of NPOV style, editors of *Wikipedia* should "[a]ssert facts, including facts about opinions—but do not assert the opinions themselves." If the subject matter involves disputed facts, the text should be written to give proportional—as opposed to equal time—to each subject relative to its credibility. Each opinionated claim should reference a previously published argumentative claim. Though there are "borderline cases" where it is difficult to tell if the controversy is legitimate or whether a statement is properly fact or opinion, "editorial consideration of undue weight will determine whether a particular disagreement between sources is significant enough to be acknowledged." Maintaining a neutral point-of-view still requires some discursive limits because "[t]here are virtually no topics that could proceed without making some assumptions that *someone* would find controversial." Whenever possible these "article spinouts" are avoided because *Wikipedia*'s general rule is "that all facts and major points-of-view on a given subject are treated in one article" whenever possible. In addition to a neutral point of view, Wikipedia has a policy of "verifiability, not truth." The principal behind this accompanying policy is that information should be included based on

"whether readers can check that material added to *Wikipedia* has already been published by a reliable source, not whether editors think it is true." The principals of neutral point-of-view and verifiability mean that *Wikipedia* is not a source that reflects empirical reality but rather one that reveals the discourse about external reality.

But this focus on discourse rather than empirical reality means that *Wikipedia* has no interest in the virtue or beliefs of its writers, their genesis-*ethos*. One's genesis-*ethos* would be a huge detriment to successful editing on that site because the value of the content comes from its ability to represent what other writers, individuals, or institutions have done outside of *Wikipedia*. A skilled *Wikipedia* writer does not need to be an expert in a chosen subject matter to write an article; instead, the savvy wikipedian should subsume his or her own personality and opinions to the more important representation of what others have said. Similar to a customer visiting an international franchise, a visitor to *Wikipedia* should find the same non-point-of-view style on every page. In this sense, there is ideally only one all-encompassing *ethos* of *Wikipedia*, which resides and does not precede the text. The author is dead. Even though this non point-of-view structure is required by the encyclopedia's purpose, the use of wiki software complements the synchronicity between *ethos* and style. Wikis require collaboration, and with each additional user, stylistic choices converge through the collaborative choices of editors.

In contrast, Christian wikis rely much more on the *ethos* of individual authors because the virtue and beliefs are central to the persuasiveness of the text. But this focus on genesis-*ethos* undermines the most salient features of wiki software because it conceives of editors as individuals rather than collaborators. This emphasis creates a series of complications that online Christian organizations must address. For instance:

- If the virtue of online writers is essential to a text's persuasiveness, then how do editors evaluate one's genesis-*ethos*?

- How do editors define a collaborative online *ethos* when each contributor considers his faith and therefore his relevance to the text deeply personal?

- If wikis usually rely on composed-*ethos*, then how does the tension between genesis-*ethos* and encyclopedic structure impinge on the purpose of Christian encyopledias?

Textual Analysis of Ethos in Four Christian Wiki Encyclopedias

Genesis-*ethos* is buried so deep within Christian rhetoric that the same *ethotic* appeal is found online through the use of Christian wikis. We may find it is used to varying degrees in three websites: *Theopedia*, *OrthdoxWiki*, and *WikiChristian*. Each of these websites has been eager to imitate the success of *Wikipedia*, but they have had mixed success with creating content, recruiting a stable editing base, and even determining a purpose. They struggle to find contributors or readers because of frequent discussion of redefining their site's purpose, abandoning a site altogether, or merging different Christian wikis together. Their tepid beginnings center on their struggles to define community boundaries, concerning who may author texts, who would want to read them, and whether texts should express a point-of-view[2]. One axis of these problems is the site's expression of *ethos*, especially its use of genesis-*ethos*. These three wikis exemplify the difficulty Christian websites have with open source software because their communities are by definition prescriptive in nature. Whereas *Wikipedia* is defined as a

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[2]   These three wikis have small but dedicated groups of editors and administrators. The number of active contributors for each appears to be under 50, even though there is a much larger number of lurkers and one-time editors.

secular community that merely reports on issues, Christian religious organizations are

called to prosthelytize. If believers are to take seriously Paul's admonition that "whatever

you do, whether in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," then they cannot

simply report, educate, or describe (NIV Col 3:17). Instead, they must somehow edify the

reader—making them spiritually stronger—and they must witness to them. This clarion

call has not gone unnoticed by any of the three wikis, yet each approaches the dilemma

slightly differently.

Table 1: How Three Religious Wikis Use Composed-Ethos and Genesis-Ethos

Statistics of Site Usage	Registered Users	Active Users	Average Edits Per Page	Content Pages	Administrators
WikiChristian	1714	N/A	2.66	3309	18
Theopedia	2739	36	7.97	1840	7
OrthodoxWiki	6131	N/A	5.11 (as of 2006)	N/A	N/A

Each of these wikis either fully or partially abandons a non-point-of-view policy, and it

would be helpful for technorhetoricans to analyze how each website handles these

dilemmas and the effectiveness of their solutions. Each of the three point-of-view sites

emphasizes *ethos* as a way of controlling of what is written on the wiki.

Theopedia

For instance, *Theopedia* requires that each of its writers conform to a prewritten

"primary statement of faith" and a "secondary statement of faith" before editing or even

registering on the site. Both of these statements-of-faith represent two levels of *ethos*; the

first represents the genesis-*ethos* of the writer and the second represents the composed-

ethos of the text. The two statements-of-faith require different levels of commitment from

potential writers because the first statement speaks to the writer's internal character whereas the second statement merely requires that writers assume a certain persona when writing. Would be contributors are told that "[a]ll editors at *Theopedia* are required to personally affirm the *primary statement of faith,*" but "[a]n editor is not required to agree completely with the *secondary doctrinal statement*" (emphasis theirs). Instead, the second statement-of-faith must merely be followed as *Theopedia*'s "preferred point-of-view" in addition to conforming to the style guide.

The structure of the first statement-of-faith involves a series of affirmations and declarations that create a self-selecting community of authors. The first statement-of-faith involves a short affirmation and nine subsequent declarations. These declarations are designed to welcome most evangelical Protestant Christians, while simultaneously excluding Catholics and any non-Christians. For instance, number three asserts, "We believe in the literal death, burial, bodily resurrection, and ascension of Christ," a belief that presumably excludes anyone not of the Christian faith. The fourth statement implores the reader to confirm that "Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who through His perfect life and sacrificial death atoned for ungodly sinners." With the abundance of Christian wikis on the Internet, this statement of faith expresses *Theopedia's* clear preference toward a Protestant theological understanding. Two of the declarations might immediately exclude most Catholics from editing in good conscience. The second declaration proclaims that the Bible alone is the inspired word of God, and the sixth asserts "that salvation comes for the sinner by the grace of God alone, through faith alone in the person and historical work of Jesus Christ alone." If there were any doubt about whether Catholic viewpoints were welcome, the footnote explains that "[b]y 'historical,'

we mean to deny that saving work is continuing to be accomplished through the sacraments, the mass, or any other means."

Even though the declarations attempt to create a self-selecting Christian authorship community, there is no actual mechanism to evaluate the sincerity of those who agree to these declarations, nor is it clear how there could be such a controlling mechanism. There is not a "check here" box to indicate one has read and agreed to these ideas, and there is no explanation of how those ideas could be enforced. Instead, the site relies on the honesty of potential editors, especially—and ironically—those individuals whose beliefs the administrators would find heretical. Yet, based on the statement-of-faith's discussion page, several potential editors adhere to the website's admission rules. Their comments on these discussion pages illustrate the efficacy of *Theopedia's* strategy of limiting authorship of the wiki. Each comment comes from someone who does not fully subscribe to the primary-statement-of-faith.

- "I agree with #3 through #8 wholeheartedly, but not completely with #2; and I have real problems with #1. Is this close enough? Is there any point in creating a user account to discuss the possibility of working together?" –Ed Poor

- "Are those who do not completely affirm the "*Theopedia*: Statement of faith", forbidden from editing talk pages as well? (If not, I assume, if this statement appears, there is an exception only for this type of inquiry.)" –Lumenos

- "I am glad that doctrinal integrity is a part of this project. Like some of the posts on here by potential editors, I am wondering what my status is if I do not completely articulate my faith the way that the Statement of Faith does. Namely, I

am an evangelical; however, I do not articulate my doctrine of Scripture and

Revelation the way that it is stated in point 2." –User: Mcw79

In each of these instances, the potential writers were either denied entrance into the

collaborative group or told they would need to clarify their points-of-view. The

forthcoming nature of each of these "heretical" potential contributors speaks volumes

about the diplomatically exclusive tone created by editors. Though the exclusivity is

obvious, the diplomatic skill is perhaps not. By asking potential editors to bear witness to

their personal beliefs, the administrators of *Theopedia* are able to create a collective

authorial identity among their writers. The statement-of-faith reminds editors that their

writing cannot be separated from their identities; their writing is inextricably linked to

their *ethos*. Rather than implying that non-believers could not convey Christian

knowledge, *Theopedia's* point-of-view approach to writing would require non-believers

to assume a different spiritual persona if they did not share the editors' faith. Creating a

different persona is not wrong by itself, but the website's goals "[t]o build a Christian

community" and "[t]o promote the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all things" would be

undermined if non-Christians or believers of different faiths were to participate. For

Theopedia, it is not simply the aggregation of knowledge that is crucial; it is creating an

online forum for believers to come together. This message bars many otherwise eager

editors but does so without unnecessary elitism. The tone used by the editors is always

respectful. Their pronominal word choice reinforces the sense of character created for

themselves and their possible editors. For instance, in their effort to create an online

community, each of the nine declarations in the statement-of-faith uses "we," instead of

"I." This pronominal usage subtly reminds potential editors of the importance of

community orthodoxy on the website; the "we" emphasizes that if editors do not share the stated beliefs then they undermine both the website's theological perspective and infiltrate a community unwelcome to them. The "we" puts the emphasis on the editors rather than on the text, which sharply contrasts with the emphasis of text over authors at *Wikipedia*.

The second statement-of-faith focuses on the composed-*ethos* rather than that of the writer, but the demanding quality of the second statement unnecessarily limits the number of potential contributors. Editors of the wiki don't need to believe each part of the second statement of faith but merely need to keep all online contributions to the wiki consistent with the precepts outlined within the statement. Though at first, it appears that the second statement is an easier hurdle for any potential editor to jump, the complexity of its theological beliefs create what could be a prohibitive requirement. This can most easily been seen through the sheer length of the texts one would need to read to be familiar with the second-statement of faith. Whereas the first statement consists of nine easily read declarations, the second brings together three hyperlinks to collaboratively written proclamations by other organizations: these documents include the "Together for the Gospel Statement," which includes 18 sub-sections, "The Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals," which has 5 theses and eleven sub-sections, and "the Calvinistic Doctrines of Grace," which is a short summation of Calvinistic faith. The first statement-of-faith is only 294 words long, uses contemporary diction, and refers to basic theological beliefs, yet the second statement-of-faith is over 5000 words long and incorporates Latinate and Early Modern language at times. The process of editing on this site becomes prohibitively difficult because each time an editor attempts to add text, he or

she is admonished to remember the second statement-of-faith. The site's vision statement

includes creating a "Christian community" and "[centralizing] the efforts of thousands of

Christians into a comprehensive encyclopedia on biblical Christianity." But the high bar

that any editor would need to leap to becoming an editor precludes a dialogic community.

Instead, it becomes a de facto collaboration of experts who share their opinions with the

lay community. The bar of collaborating on *Theopedia* is so much higher than *Wikipedia*

because the site is especially concerned with both the writer's virtue and knowledge.

The difficulty with creating a sense of online *ethos* extends beyond deciding who

may edit the wiki and who may not. The online encyclopedia's dual conception of *ethos*

also complicates its ability to define for itself and its readership a working definition of

"truth" and "falsehood" on each of its individual pages because the credibility of the cited

sources must be questioned too. For instance, we might consider their page entitled

"Calvinism," which has special weight in defining who they are and how others should

view them. Since *Theopedia* defines itself as a "Reformed Church Community" heavily

influenced by Calvinistic thought, this page will have deep relevance for each of the

contributors. The editors have trouble deciding what constitutes Calvinism, and this

disagreement originates from whom they consider an authority on the matter. The

disagreement largely addresses soteriological issues, especially the five main tenets of

salvation. The contributors disagree about whether these five tenets, which are commonly

referenced by the acronym TULIP[3], adequately represent Calvinist thought or whether

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[3] TULIP is an acronym that refers to the five tenets of Calvinism: "Total Depravity," "Unconditional Election," "Limited Atonement," "Irresistible Grace," and "Perseverance of the Saints" (Jackson 129). There is considerable debate about to what degree Calvin actually advocated these five tenets or whether some of them were added on by later Calvinistic theologians. This debate complicates notions of what "Calvinism" is on *Theopedia*.

they are gross oversimplifications. Some contributors believe that TULIP provides a necessary if regrettable primer to those unexposed to the faith, whereas others see it as an irresponsible mirroring of false ideas, repeated by more secular groups like *Wikipedia*. While virtually everyone in the debate agrees that TULIP is not a perfect reflection of the faith, disagreement abounds about whether a perfect illustration is necessary or even desirable. If one assumes that the page requires a genesis-*ethos*, then it is especially important that the ideas not only be practical but originate from a credible source, but a composed-*ethos* would put more emphasis on text's usefulness.

Several of the editors believe that the central question about defining Calvinism is connecting a specific doctrine back to an individual or institution. The debate begins when some editors want to include podcasts explaining TULIP at the beginning of the article. Jordan Barrett, one of the contributors, disagrees with this approach because "Calvinism encompasses much more than TULIP and soteriological issues" and that "putting the mp3s there simply sells this idea which isn't correct." The use of the word "sells" emphasizes the evangelistic mission of this wiki, and the insistence on selling people the correct information reminds users of the wiki's point-of-view approach. The writers must not simply portray the varying debate surrounding Calvinism, but rather use the page as a type of expository sermon to persuade. But it is Barrett's reason for defining Calvinism as more than TULIP that illustrates his focus on genesis-*ethos*. He reasons that ["p]ersonally, I don't believe Calvin taught 'L' or 'I', although, if you pushed his system (as others did), it could logically work out that way." So even though Calvin's ideas might logically produce a TULIP structured understanding of faith, it is the lack of origination from the man rather than any illogical connection to his theology that is most

important. He reminds us that "Calvin never liked to speculate." When he discusses whether Calvinism and Reformed Theology can be considered synonymous religious movements, he references a scholar who focuses on the personal attacks made against Calvin: "Far better are the terms 'Reformed theology' and 'Reformed Orthodoxy' as these actually reflect the fact that so-called Calvinists were not those who looked to Calvin as the major authority but rather those who looked to the tradition of Reformed confessions." Another neophyte editor interjects on behalf of Barrett's perspective with greater fervency for maintaining the evangelical mission of *Theopedia*: "If we really want this to be '*Theopedia*: An Encyclopedia of Biblical Christianity,' we should be writing articles about what ideas *really are* instead of what is commonly perceived." This second writer, Dawson Bean, even asserts "that whatever the Bible says, is in fact Calvinism, since that would have been consistent with the heart of Calvin himself." The prepositional phrase "with the heart itself" puts Calvin's core character rather than the logic of theological arguments at the forefront. He then asks us to consider that "what hundreds of Calvin's followers have written which is consistent with his thought over the past 400-odd years and THAT [emphasis his] is Calvinism, not just TULIP." The phrase, "which is consistent with his thought" emphasizes John Calvin rather than the body of Calvinistic thought and how it evolves over time. Bean is convinced that any effort toward reaching people based on where they are "does not excuse us [the editors or Theopedia] to allow people to use terms or talk about ideas ignorantly" and that "[m]isunderstandings of terms and ideas should and must be corrected." But their emphasis on misunderstandings centers on how Calvinism is connected to John Calvin, the man.

The assumption that Calivinism should be defined based on the writings on John Calvin may seem obvious, but consider the alternatives. To define Calvinism, the editors would need to create consensus about who or what is an authority on the faith: the thoughts of John Calvin, the summation of thought about his ideas since then by other theologians, comparisons between Calvin and scripture, or a comparison between different schisms in the Church. If Calvinism is the summation of John Calvin's original writings, then the page should focus on his thoughts alone. If Calvin's ideas were merely the foundation of the faith, then the page should include the totality of Reformed thought since then. Calvinism may be described as a modern day understanding of Reformed Theology or as a simplified understanding of the central characteristics including total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. If the page incorporated writing from other theologians, then that creates complications as well. Just as the statement-of-faith questions the spiritual authenticity of its contributors, the accepted contributors would need to evaluate not just the expertise of a theologian who is quoted but his or her faith as well. These types of dilemmas occur within the *Theopedia* page for "Calvinism" and show why a genesis-*ethos* is necessary but problematic for religious wikis.

The minority opinion on this talk page asserts that what is important is not so much the essence of Calvinism but an accessible representation of its most well-known features. For this group of editors, that representation would mean a heavy emphasis on TULIP. Aaronshaf, the dissenting contributor on this talk page, best represents this perspective. He asserts that "[t]he issue isn't over what the *ideas* 'really are' but rather what matters is how others view what the "term and label represents." He believes that

they need to worry less about accuracy because "sometimes terms get an overhaul in the general population, and we have [sic] adapt to be effectively communicative." They need to be especially cognizant of how Calvinism is popularly conceived, which he believes is "mainly about TULIP and the relevant soteriological issues." He views the MP3s as supplemental information that do not misrepresent how "many things can be considered as part of Calvinism." Notice his language employs passive voice. Calvinism "can be" considered differently from different perspectives; the use of passive voice puts the emphasis on the ideas rather than the subject. That is to say it puts the emphasis on the text rather than the rhetor.

Even though many more of the authors adhered to the genesis-*ethos* perspective, the beginning of the article leans toward a NPOV approach that adheres more closely to Aaronshaf's perspective: "In popular vernacular, Calvinism often refers to the Five Points of Calvinistic doctrine regarding salvation, which make up the acrostic TULIP. In its broader sense, Calvinism is associated with Reformed theology." So why would the composed-*ethos* model win out? The majority perspective—the genesis *ethos* model—requires a uniquely argumentative tone because an evangelical definition of Calvinism is self-referential, in that the definition is really an expression of the rhetor's faith rather than a referent of some external reality. Though this type of persuasive model certainly works within other genres, the fluid nature of wikis encourages a different epistemological perspective, one that presumes knowledge is socially constructed. Wiki software prevents especially argumentative texts from forming. As more people become involved in the article, each person's opinion must be melded together. This encourages a more provisional construction of knowledge.

Wikipedia's neutrality policy offers an easy resolution to any such difficulties because one writes over the positions in the debate. But from *Theopedia's* perspective, the debate is a foregone conclusion, one that happened over 400 years ago during the Protestant revolution. The same should hold true for any article on *Theopedia*, Calvinism included. With this in mind, Dawson Bean explains that "[w]ords are imbued with meaning and when these words are being used in a way that was not intended by the author or speaker, it is only responsible to understand and explain what was originally meant. This is hermeneutics 101."

One might contrast this debate with that of the editors of "Calvinism" on the *Wikipedia* article. Whereas the *Wikipedia* article begins with historical background of John Calvin and the Protestant Reformation, the editors of *Theopedia* insisted that "a simple theological summary and a scriptural presentation take priority above the historical development." Thus, the *Theopedia* page has a greater emphasis on theological belief than its *Wikipedia* counterpart. The *Wikipedia* page addresses many of the same concerns as the *Theopedia* page, but the absence of the point-of-view approach prevents such disagreements from dominating the page's purpose. The *Wikipedia* editors can also easily resolve most disputes by "describing the debate." For instance, there was a debate about what constituted Calvinism and who was a Calvinist, but the debate was quickly resolved by creating a "description rather than enforcing distinctions," which would avoid enforcing a POV approach.

OrthodoxWiki

Theopedia's approach to opinionated writing represents only one way that Christian wikis focus on the need to cultivate a specific *ethotic* appeal through

collaboration. Another such site is *OrthodoxWiki*, which is predominantly written by Eastern Orthodox Christians, but it is intended for a wide international audience of Christians and non-Christians. Unlike *Theopedia*, the site does not have an evangelical emphasis. The site focuses primarily on Eastern Orthodox history, theology, notable figures, and welcomes discussions on controversial issues. The purpose of the site is to develop a "community" and for "Orthodox Christians to share their knowledge and experiences." Through a number of strategies—including 1) a specially adapted NPOV strategy, 2) the use of personal and collaborative pages, and 3) the bureaucratic characterization of possible theological disputes—the site shows remarkable savvy about the bind between genesis-*ethos* and composed-*ethos* that religious wikis must negotiate.

The first strategy that illustrates this site's savvy is their inclusivity in terms of authorship. The site does not discriminate between Orthodox practitioners and other believers or non-believers. Anyone can write on the site as long as their content fits *OrthodoxWiki's* style, content guidelines, and specially adapted NPOV approach. There isn't even a rule against non-Christians editing. In this sense, it is very similar to *Theopedia's* second statement-of-faith, while completely ignoring their first. One's soul is not on trial, merely one's representation of the faith. It is composed-*ethos* that matters on this website.

This second strategy relates to the modified NPOV strategy used on the site, which provides *OrthodoxWiki* with a specialized authority based on text rather than virtue. The neutral-point-of-view of *Wikipedia* is adjusted to the Orthodox website in order to make a distinction between Orthodox communities and other Christian communities. On the site, there are two sets of rules in terms of bias. When discussing the

differences between Orthodox and non-Orthodox viewpoints, the approach has an

unabashed and clear bias. Every page must either be directly connected to an aspect of

the Eastern Orthodox Church, or it must discuss something that is tangentially connected

to the Eastern Orthodox Church. References to doctrine are written from an Orthodox

perspective. Furthermore, whenever terms are used to describe something, they must

follow the Mainstream Chalcedonian Bias, which is a particular sect to which the system

operators of the website belong[4]. But within the Eastern Orthodox point of view, the site

maintains a NPOV bias whenever possible. For instance, wherever disagreements

between people occur on the wiki, the editors explain that "disputes between Orthodox

Christian groups will be characterized and described rather than entered into." If a reader

is within the denominational camp, then balance is weighted between perspectives. But

any perspective outside of this religious sub-community is presumed to be false. This

strategy allows the articles to parody *Wikipedia's* strategy of covering the debate without

entering into it, while still giving the *OrthodoxWiki* a sense of purpose and specialization.

As the editors observe, "A solid descriptive overview of some of these controversies

simply does not exist, at least in English." The authority of the site comes from its

content not the character of its collaborators, but without the modified NPOV strategy

that content would have been identical to *Wikipedia*. This balancing act creates a

provisional non-point-of-view approach that gives the site a purpose distinctly different

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[4] The website describes Mainstream Chalcadonian Bias the following way: "By *Chalcedonian* we refer to those churches of the Orthodox Church who hold to the decrees of the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon (A.D. 451). By *Mainstream* we refer to those 'official' churches comprised of the fourteen or fifteen autocephalous and the autonomous churches generally recognized as the 'mainstream' of the Orthodox Church—for those of us in North America, this will be all Episcopal Assembly jurisdictions and those with whom they're in communion."

from *Wikipedia*, even while maintaining *Wikipedia's* NPOV structure. This strategy also allows *OrthodoxWiki* to be much more precise than *Wikipedia* in content. The site's administrators believe that the site "shines in the way difficult and/or divisive topics are worked out, articulated in descriptive pro and con formats, complete with an outline of different thinkers and their arguments." The purpose of *OrthodoxWiki*, indeed, is to provide a contact zone for Orthodox Christians to discuss their intellectual and spiritual differences. They want to "push its users towards a constructive conversation on polemicized issues which threaten to, and in fact do, divide Orthodox Christians." The method allows *OrthodoxWiki* to have a website "adapted to fit our Orthodox community and confession of faith."

But genesis-*ethos* is not completely disregarded within the website either because authors are provided the opportunity to have personal pages. These personal pages "may represent the personal views of their authors." The personal pages do have boundaries because "anything that is clearly unorthodox will be removed or edited," a decision that ultimately belongs to the site administrators. Despite these restrictions, contributors can express themselves on these pages in ways that cannot be adapted or changed by other users. Unlike the encyclopedic pages, the website's policy is that no one "has the right to change users' words in such a way as to misrepresent what they are saying about themselves." Administrators promise, "[w]e may edit or even censor, but we won't twist." The site is especially cognizant that its members will want to both express their personal beliefs and yet also contribute to a collective wiki site. In *Theopedia* this tension between personal belief and community agreement creates a problem because—as has been noted before—collaboration requires that personal beliefs be subsumed. Since

spiritual discussions are inherently personal, this creates an inherent tension between contributors, editors, and the audience. This site's use of personal pages gives a means of expression to individuals in order to relieve that tension. These personal pages rely on the virtue and beliefs of the author and in that sense rely more on genesis-*ethos* than composed-*ethos*. The language used is incidental to the person's belief behind the language. *OrthodoxWiki* also has a third type of content, community pages, which "tend to represent what we might call the 'Community Point of View,' a mentality which has developed through interaction with the various personalities and circumstances of the *OrthodoxWiki* community." These pages function as an intermediary to the encyclopedic—or what they call "documentary"—pages and the need for personal expression. Since these pages are "personal" they do not reinforce the *ethos* of specialized debate that *OrthodoxWiki* attempts to establish. Their credibility originates from the personal faith of their writers, a type of genesis-*ethos*, but that personal faith precludes collaboration.

Finally, similar to *Theopedia*, this site tries to remove the possibility for passionate disagreement from the site and by doing so invokes in its writers a civil tone by relying on composed-*ethos*. The invocation of civility is partially done through an explanation of the practical need behind the site's bias policy. The site is careful not to imply that the bias is a judgment on others' faith. Instead, the editors list several reasons for the necessity of the bias. First, they encourage us to remember that "there must be some sort of bias regarding the issues outlined above, or else we'd have the potential for perpetual renaming and revision wars, all in one massive conflict." Furthermore, they assume that most users see MCB as the default or mainstream version of Eastern

Orthodoxy and therefore would look for pages according to that terminology. The editors

point out "the rest of the world, when looking for information about Orthodoxy, tends to

think definitionally in MCB terms." The use of "wars" and "conflict" are two examples

of warfare imagery that reoccurs throughout the site's explanation of its bias. We are also

warned that "polemic" will be avoided. This language reminds potential collaborators of

what type of persona they must assume when writing on the site. The language invokes a

sense of collaboration while eschewing a combative tone, even to the point of removing

the personal and creating a bureaucratic self-image: "The MCB is not a judgment on any

group or persons. It is simply a protocol for the *OrthodoxWiki* project." Even when the

editors call upon potential collaborators' religiosity, it is less personal than *Theopedia*:

"We ask you that, while we are certainly trying to be *Orthodox*, we take special care also

to be *Christian*." The use of "to be" emphasizes *being* Christian online rather than one's

offline faith. The emphasis is on one's *performance* of Christian love through the text

that matters, whereas in *Theopedia*, one's offline Christian faith is more important.

This emphasis on civility can be seen through the conflict resolution of the site's

owner, Friar John, when collaborators complain about the site's bias. For instance, many

of the meta-discussions have centered on how to refer to Orthodox Christians who are not

part of the Mainstream Chalcedonian Church. For instance, the terms "Oriental

Orthodox," "Monophysite," "Eastern Orthodox," "non-Chalcedonian" or "anti-

Chalcedonian" each refers to those not part of MCB, but each word carries widely

different connotations. The editor's response is to take the concern seriously and to use

the opportunity to engage the non-mainstream group in a discussion. Once again the

focus is on resolving conflicts, and the editor's response is that "perhaps some of the non-

Chalcedonian folks would like to chime in too." The editor does personalize the debate.

He does not want to go "heretic hunting" but rather wants to come to a basic

understanding of what these two terms means. In another argument, a dissenter prefers

the term, "pre-Chalcedonian," which he sees as the most often used term and the least

offensive. He states that "Monophysite is a Greek term" and that "[i]t was wrong in the

first place to try to impose a Greek term on Coptic speakers." The term that he prefers is

used by several different Orthodox Christian groups: "The hierarchs and priests of the

Pre-Chalcedonian Churches in Australia, all object to the term Non-Chalcedonian.

Eastern Hierarchs chose to always use Pre-Chalcedonian because it is not loaded." Friar

John responds in the same way as he does with the preceding complaint, a congenial and

diplomatic response but a persistent opinion of his own position. When asked if a

discussion can be opened on the topic, he responds, "Sure, you can open the discussion!

Do you have any other examples of how MCB is out of step with the MOC?" But then

Friar John turns the discussion about how the terminology should be used on each of the

pages and proposes that it be made the subject matter for one particular article page: "I

think a discussion on the nuances and history of the two terms, if worded properly, would

be an excellent addition to one of the articles dealing with these questions." By doing so,

Friar John actually reverts an argument to a discussion "over the history of the two

terms." This strategy shows how the architecture of wikis moves them with inevitable

inertia toward a composed-*ethos* and a non-point-of-view strategy. The brilliance of

OrthodoxWiki is its ability to recognize this limitation and its inherent tension with what

a religious wiki would need to do. What Friar John and the site do so well are find ways

to adjust the collaborative logic of wikis without futilely attempting to reject them outright.

WikiChristian

WikiChristian has a point-of-view bias as well, and in some ways its manipulation of the NPOV approach is the most sophisticated of the three. *WikiChristian* has four different kinds of pages. The simplest of these sections include index pages, which merely list groups of famous historical figures, gospel songs, books in the Bible, and historical periods. There are also text pages, which have biblical or otherwise religious texts (the Nicene Creed, for example), and commentary sections, where individual Bible verses, chapters, or books in the Bible are analyzed. But the most interesting sections include the Information Articles and Opinion Articles, which are attempts to resolve the difficulties between adhering to personal belief and working collaboratively with strangers on a document. The opinion articles can be created by "any user [who] may write his or her own personal opinion article on the topic, which only he or she should edit."

WikiChristian relies on a composed-*ethos* for its Information articles similar to *OrthodoxWiki* and dissimilar to *Theopedia.* The articles are written with a Christian specific non-point-of view approach, meaning that wiki pages are written with the assumption that the tenets of the site's statement-of-faith are true, unlike *Theopedia,* which requires its contributors to believe the primary statement-of-faith. The assumption places the *ethos* within the text rather than within the writer. Unlike *Theopedia*, which requires editors to agree spiritually with a primary statement of faith as well as adhere rhetorically to a secondary statement of faith, "*WikiChristian* is set up with the belief that

every Christian, regardless of age, race, education, and gender has something of value to offer!" In fact, the invitation goes to non-believers as well because "[i]ts policy is that believers or non-believers can write articles." The inclusivity further places the emphasis on the text's *ethos* rather than on that of the writer, even as it celebrates the unique spiritual essence of each Christian. The page even allows some point-of-view writing on *WikiChristian* information pages "as long as the author of the article makes it clear what his or her background is." Graham Grove, one of the co-founders of *WikiChristian* requires writers to sign their names at the end of articles and write a "brief note describing your Christian background […] so that the reader understands your perspective better (for example, if you write an article on purgatory, let the reader know if you consider yourself Roman Catholic or not)." By asking contributors to put their name, spiritual background, and religious beliefs next to any subjective comments on an Information article, it may appear that the site emphasizes *genesis-ethos*, as well. But this purpose behind this invocation of *genesis*-ethos enables readers and fellow contributors to communicate with each other rather than being used to evaluate or judge a comment's efficacy or value. Putting one's name on a subjective comment on an encyclopedic wiki undermines several basic assumptions about online collaborative encyclopedic writing, but it is necessary given the contributors' desire to be "both an *encyclopedia* and a *wiki* community." Non-Christians can even write about their own point-of-view on these pages, though it is not clear what restrictions in terms of subject matter there would need to be: "If you are not a Christian and you want to submit an article, that's fine too—we can all learn from everybody's understanding, even if we don't agree with their perspective." The pages are expected to "[evoke] emotion and passion for Jesus in a

reader" in order to be successful. In this way, the site has found a strategy for celebrating the soul of each writer without making the text they share a combative space between each writer.

The site avoids focusing on the contributor's virtue in other ways as well. For instance, the use of an adapted NPOV structure—similar to *OrthodoxWiki*—helps the contributors avoid flaming wars. From someone who does not indentify as a Christian, the site would appear very biased, but for readers and contributors who have agreed with the site's religious precepts, it appears much more like *Wikipedia's* NPOV structure. Contributors are told that "[w]here there is debate about details of doctrine, the Information Article should explain this debate in a non-emotive way, showing both sides of the argument." Though each page should be written with a passionate Christian perspective, within the context of internal Christian debate the page tries to create a different tone, very similar to *Wikipedia's*. Second, the site focuses on the text's *ethos* rather than the contributor's *ethos* by reminding its users of the arbitrary nature of the site's definition for who is a Christian. Much like *OrthodoxWiki*, *WikiChristian* is especially cognizant that labels can have intense semantic weight in terms of denotation and connotation. Even though *OrthodoxWiki* is primarily concerned with how labels relate to definitions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, *WikiChristian* is more concerned with whether particular denominations fit into a more general description of Christianity. Their page on Information Articles acknowledges that "there is a wide variety of opinions regarding what makes a particular denomination Christian." Their way of resolving this issue is to point to three very general rules. They argue that "a denomination is considered Christian if those in its leadership" believe in a "loving God," the Nicene

Creed, and that "the Bible is God's word." Aside from being a remarkably broad definition, the leaders of this website describe this distinction in terms that purposely emphasize its arbitrary nature. They describe it as a "line in the sand," but the description is not meant to conjure up notions of a battleground or to be divisive. The purpose instead is to remove any sense of moral outrage or sense of judgment. For instance, concerning the three tenets that define Christianity, the page states, "We recognize that these three points may be considered ambiguous by some people, but unfortunately, these lines in the sand are never perfect." At another point in the page's directions, it is made clear that this is a "practical line in the sand." Indeed, the page is remarkably welcoming to all visitors. All of this diplomatic language about possible disagreements emphasizes that what is on trial is not each contributor's personal virtue but merely their adherence to the virtue of the text, a strategy that creates a more welcoming tone.

Connection to Narratology and Conclusion

The negotiation between these two forms of *ethos* impinges upon rhetoricians' understanding of narrative as well, and it teaches technorhetoricians about the stubborn tacit structure of wikis. To understand how these narratives and this tacit structure connect, we should review what these three sites did correctly. Part of what makes Christian wikis successful is the bend-don't-break model of incorporating personal opinion. Two of these three sites create personal pages for contributors, which provide authors a way of expressing their Christian convictions without creating collaborative fights. The same two—*WikiChristian* and *OrthodoxWiki*—created nuanced NPOV strategies that allowed these sites to offer something *Wikipedia* could not, while at the same time acknowledging that a fully POV style would be enormously difficult to

maintain on a collaborative space. *Theopedia* illustrated the importance of genesis *ethos* to a religious wiki model, while at the same time showing that enforcing that type of *ethotic* cohesion makes editing on a wiki exceedingly hard. Finally, each wiki site did an especially effective job of invoking within potential editors—especially those who may not have been welcome—the desired type of *ethos*: for *Theopedia*, reflection of whether they were doctrinally fit to edit (a type of genesis-*ethos*); and for *OrthodoxWiki* and *WikiChristian*, a desire to perform as a Christian while on the site (a type of composed-*ethos*). What each of these sites have in common is their need to define themselves in relation to *Wikipedia*. What do *we* offer that the most popular wiki in the world does not? How do our unorthodox uses of wiki architecture differ from their conventional usage? Just like my discussion of *Conservapedia* in Chapter 1, the similarity between these sites shows that Christian wikis work best when they reflect on differences and try to spin or play off of wiki architecture rather than completely deny it. Just like Bob Whipple's experiences with wikis (mentioned in Chapter 1), they "didn't use the wiki as a wiki"; they weren't "exploiting the wikiness of the wiki"; they had denied "the wiki's essence," and this inevitably created problems (227). It was through careful self-reflection and the bend-don't-break model that they responded to these problems.

But you may have noticed something else happening that relates to this bend-don't-break model. There were three narratives occurring in each of the three websites. The first narrative was the story of each group's Christian faith. *Theopedia* wants to tell the story of the Reformed Church; *OrthodoxWiki* chooses to clarify knowledge about the Eastern Orthodox Church, and *WikiChristian's* mission is to tell the general story of Christianity. In order for this narrative to be successful, the editors had to explain how

they differed from *Wikipedia*, which ostensibly accomplishes the same goal. This

distinction constituted the second narrative, which forced them to think through the ways

in which they would negotiate genesis and composed-*ethos*, NPOV and POV styles, and

manage to keep all potential editors civil. This second narrative caused all three wikis—

especially *OrthodoxWiki* and *ChristianWiki*—to realize that they needed to make room

for both collaborative writing about the story of their faith and personal writing about

each contributor's individual's faith. And, of course, the reason each of the wikis needed

room for personal writing is because their contributors wanted to include personal

narratives. It was their careful use of genesis and composed-*ethos* that made the

interweaving of these three narratives possible. These three Christian wiki sites

understand that and find ways of balancing genesis-*ethos* and composed-*ethos*.

Chapter Three:

The Balanced, Divine Kairotic Moment: Using Post-Web 2.0 Technologies to Tell

the Story of the Emergent Church

In this chapter, I explore two different dimensions of the Greek work *kairos*. The first dimension focuses on "balance" and "proportionality" of rhetors who invoke a *kairotic* moment, and the second is Paul Tillich's definition of *Kairos* (purposely capitalized) as the moment when the timeless divine meets a specific historical moment. I suggest that Tillich's notion of *Kairos* can help researchers within the field of Computers and Writing understand how people—especially in education—use computer-mediated-communication. I then use the rhetoric of the Emergent Church as an example of the applicability of this Tillichian sense of *Kairos*. After a brief explanation of the Emergent Church and its focus on a crisis moment in Christianity, I examine how two websites—*EmergingChurch.info* and *Opensourcetheology.net*—and one writer, Tim Bednar, discuss the relationship between technology and the Emergent Church in order to invoke a Tillichian *Kairotic* moment within the history of Christianity. In each instance, the Christian writers adhere to a sense of balance and proportionality.

Kairos has become an increasingly important term recently in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, one that has been reinvigorated as "a seminal concept in numerous arts and discourses" (Sipiora, "Introduction" 3). This classical Greek concept refers broadly to the opportune moment when a rhetor's argument can have the most impact (Sipiora; Kinneavy; Thompson). Even though much of the focus on *kairos* has

been on the opportune moment, it has often been noted that there are other dimensions to this Greek term, including the word's association with a moment of crisis or a sense of proportionality or balance on the part of the rhetor. In the words of Eric White, "*kairos* regards the present as unprecedented, as a moment of decision, a moment of crisis" (14). And the "right measure"—or sense of balance and proportionality—is "intimately connected with *kairos*" (Kinneavey 64). These other two dimensions of *kairos* already play an important role when studying computer-mediated-communication. For instance, when Joe Moxley speaks about how compositionists should start thinking about datagogies due to the "tumultuous moment in the history of English departments and literacy practices," he is invoking a sense of *kairotic* crisis to show the relevance of his argument (184). And when as teachers or administrators we speak about the importance of matching our innovative technological pedagogy to our learning objectives, we are paying attention to how balance and proportionality inevitably play a role in computers and composition. These two notions of *kairos* help us to understand how and why people both within and outside of the classroom use new forms of computer-mediated-communication.

However, I would like to argue that a less referenced dimension of *kairos* is also helpful when understanding how new forms of technology are used to communicate with others, one that originates from the 20th century theologian Paul Tillich. From Tillich's perspective, the moment of *kairos* is when the rhetor becomes aware of a juxtaposition between the timeless divine and the everyday lived experience of human beings. This application of *kairos* helps explain the rhetoric surrounding the crisis of faith felt by a dwindling Christian population in Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. Christians

in these countries are facing a crisis of dwindling numbers, and some Christians, especially those within an amorphous group called the Emergent Church, are actively examining ways to boost their own populations. They have decided to simultaneously reinvent the mission of their church and get back to the roots of their faith. To do this they have used—probably unknowingly—Tillich's conception of *kairos*, bridging the connection between the divine and the particular. This bridge comes through their balanced and proportioned use of computer-mediated-communication and their invocation of Post-Web 2.0 technologies as an opportune moment for a religious awakening. In this chapter, I analyze their skillful use of Tillichian *kairos* and suggest its application to studying computer-mediated-communication, more generally.

To understand how Emergent Church writers employ *kairos* within their digital writing, I must first review how this Greek word has traditionally referenced proportionality and the happy medium within classical rhetoric. Though an extensive review is outside the scope of this argument, a brief definition will be helpful. This *kairotic* notion of balance or proportion is perhaps less well known than the more common description of "'timing,' or the 'right time'" (Sipiora 1). James Kinneavy argues that the two most fundamental components of *kairos* are "the principle of right timing and the principle of a proper measure" (60). This second principal is what concerns me here, though, as Kinneavy observes, the two meanings are often used simultaneously (60). This sense of "proportionality" can be understood by briefly reviewing some of the ways scholars have defined the word, *kairos*. In Philip Sipiora's non-exhaustive list of verbal associations, words like "symmetry," "propriety," "due measure," "fitness," "proportion," and "wise moderation" hint at this application ("Introduction" 1). Kinneavy

proposes Plato's *Phaedrus* reflects this usage of proportionality, for Socrates reminds his readers that a student of rhetoric must not only learn about the quality of men's souls but how to apply that knowledge to the range of possible speeches he as learned. Socrates' penultimate declaration about the skillful use of time follows his advisement to "apply this kind of speech in this sort of manner in order to obtain persuasion for this kind of activity":

> [. . .] when he now has all of this, and has also grasped the occasions for speaking and for holding back, and again for speaking concisely and piteously and in an exaggerated fashion, and for all the forms of speeches he may learn, recognizing the right and the wrong time for these, *then* his grasp of the science will be well and completely finished, but not before that. (Plato 272a- 272b)

That Socrates attached his admonishment concerning *kairos* at the end of the speech suggests its penultimate importance; it frames *kairos* as "the capstone that gives meaning to the entire substructure of the art" (Kinneavy 61). When Eric Charles White mentions some of the linguistic derivations of *kairos,* a sense of proportionality and measure may be implied from his descriptions. White's use of *kairos* emphasizes "the right moment" and "the opportune" time, but two of the linguistic roots he mentions can be reinterpreted to fit a sense of balance and proportionality, as well. The Greek word has roots in archery, for it implies "a long tunnel-like aperture through which the archer's arrow has to pass" (White 13). In another linguistic derivation, the word referenced the transient opening available to a weaver who must then pull the yarn through the "gap" (13). Even though White stresses that the first usage requires "power" and the second involves a hole

that must be "driven through" (13), both metaphors also imply precision and balance, for neither the arrow nor the needle can move through their fleetingly open targets if the archer's or weaver's hand moves unnecessarily or unsteadily. When Kinneavy references Aristotle's discussion of style and its association with "right timing to propriety and to the mean" (72), the focus again is on balance and proportionality. For example, Aristotle tells his students that "[f]rigidity of style results from four cases [. . .] the third of which 'is the use of epithets that are either long or *unseasonable* [akairosis] or too crowded'" (qtd. in Kinneavy 72).

This sense of proportionality applies to conceptions of *kairotic* space and improvisation as well. Thomas Rickert investigates *kairos* as a type of space instead of a moment in time, pointing out that the archer's opening emphasizes place (72). He contends that we must think about how the spatial choices that rhetors make contribute to a *kairotic* moment, which "achieves a robust, active sense of harmony" and a sense of "balance" (75). *Kairotic* proportionality also effects the improvisation of the writer. White points out that *kairos* implies an interruption of time, a moment where the rhetorical context is unlike what has come before. In order to respond to this moment of rupture, a rhetor should be able to improvise. As each rhetorical moment is different, so each invocation of *kairos* must be situationally specific: "[u]nderstood as a principle of invention, or a prescription concerning the way thought should encounter reality, one might say that *kairos* therefore counsels thought to act always, as it were, on the spur of the moment" (13). But this requirement to act with improvisation requires a skillful attention to balance and proportion. Finally, since the text and the context are always inevitably in flux, that attention to balance and proportion must necessarily derive from

the speaker him or herself. The effective rhetor must be educated and trained to

"establish, within themselves, a harmony mirroring (and supporting) just relations within

the state; thus, individuals must connect together the many conflicting elements of which

they are made into a state of health or inner harmony" (Sipiora, "Introduction" 5). The

ethical dimensions of *kairos* are "obviously related to the proper measure aspect"

(Kinneavy 62). The dimension of *kairotic* proportionality will be important in an

analysis of the Emergent Church's invocation of a *kairotic* moment, but first I would like

to introduce Paul Tillich's conception of the juxtaposition between the timeless divine

and the lived specific moment.

A less emphasized conception of *kairos* within Rhetoric and Composition

involves the relationship between the timeless divine and the present secular moment.

This juxtaposition of the divine and the secular—introduced by German theologian Paul

Tillich—suggests a connection between everyday mundane choices Christians make

during any historical moment and the overarching Judeo-Christian conception of history.

Tillich's conception of *Kairos* (capitalized because it represents Christ for the German

theologian) rests on the contact zone between a specific historical moment experienced

from a subjective perspective—either that of a person or a society—with a divine

transcendental timeless truth. However, the kairotic moment may only occur when a body

of believers becomes aware that their own historical moment creates the conditions

wherein the divine can reveal itself. Kinneavy provides a helpful synopsis of this

perspective: "[. . .] *kairos* brings timeless ideas down into the human situations of

historical time;" the kairotic moment "imposes values on ideas and forces humans to

make free decisions about these values" (62). This definition of *Kairos* emerges from a

dialectic between *Logos* and *Kairos* when Tillich uses these two Greek terms to

distinguish between two different philosophical traditions, one that has been a dominant

"stream" and one that is an "accompanying stream as yet but little developed, of no great

practical effect, that has often flowed subterraneously" (Tillich 123). The dominant line

of thought, which Tillich associates with *Logos*, includes philosophers such as Rene

Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Sir Francis Bacon, David Hume, and Spinoza (124). What all

of these thinkers have in common is a "methodical self-consciousness, a predominance of

the Greek view of nature and the world" (124). The emphasis on a Greek worldview

belies a more specific set of characteristics that embody these philosophers: their

adherence or deference to scientific knowledge, "the elimination of those elements of the

religious view of life which disturbed the rational consistency world and knowledge,"

and "the will for knowledge of the world as form, element, and law" (125; 128). Tillich

uses the word "static" to describe the epistemological viewpoint of *Logos*, for if one can

understand the "form, element, and law" of any subject, then knowledge about the

universe becomes clear and revealed (128). For instance, we might think of Isaac

Newton's laws of physics; from a Newtonian perspective, if we have sufficient

information about all the matter and energy in the universe at any one moment, then we

can plot out the form and shape of the universe at any given moment. This

epistemological perspective impinges on one's conception of time, for if one presumes

that knowledge is static, then time is seen deterministically petrified; there is an "eternal

form of being" and "time remains insignificant in that static type of thinking" (128).

From a Tillichian perspective, this conception of time leaves little for humans beings to

change or effect, for from an economic, political, material, or religious vantage point,

"history presents only the unfolding of the possibilities and laws of the Gestalt "Man"

(128). This conception of *Logos* functions as a foil to help Tillich introduce his

conception of *Kairos*, which is "the fulfilled moment, the moment of time approaching us

as fate and decision" (129). The *Kairos* is a moment of choice for individuals, wherein

an opportune moment can be used to fulfill a divine mission. The *kairotic* moment

involves the antithesis of the static and unchangeable, and the focus is on the "form-

creating process" that is associated with a catastrophic moment (128). We might compare

this to Patricia Bizzell's description of contact zones (extending of Pratt's definition),

"moments when different groups within the society contend for the power to interpret

what is going on" (483). Only here the contact zone would be between the eternal and a

particular historical moment, where there is an opportunity to interpret the divine through

the tools offered at that specific moment. For instance, from a Tillichian perspective we

might consider any liminal moment in the history of writing—the invention of the

printing press, the typewriter, or the Internet as a *Kairotic* moment that opens up

possibilities for change and revelation. How do these writing tools change the Christian

church? How do these tools, in the eyes of Christians, create an opportunity to access the

divine? From a spiritual perspective, Tillich would consider the Protestant Reformation

as a *Kairotic* moment. Kinneavy also associates this religious conception of the

opportune moment with "Walter Benjamin's notion of the importance of 'now-time,' the

revolutionary possibilities inherent in the moment, the 'state of emergency' in which we

live, and the potentials for change inherent in the historical situation" (64). This

Tillichian conception of time focuses on the potential for fluidity in the moment, the

opportunity for free will, and the belief that the *kairotic* moment is a way of getting at the

more stable *Logos*: "in this dynamic thinking in terms of creation, time is all-decisive, not empty time, pure expiration; not the mere duration either, but rather qualitatively fulfilled time, the moment that is creation and fate," and Bohme, Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche are mentioned as heirs of this *kairotic* epistemological perspective (Tillich 129). The *Kairos* is a way "to reveal rather than conceal the *Logos*" because the *kairotic* moment affords the uninspired believer a window into the divine. This point of crisis for the believer functions as a moment of *cronos* when a believer decides to allow the timeless divine to reveal itself, but "this decision is possible only as a concrete decision, as the fate of the time" (175). The Tillichian concept of *Kairos* involves a moment of crisis that provides a possibility for a connection between human time and divine time, an opportune moment that must be seized upon by attentive Christians. As will be discussed later, many writers within the Emergent church see 21st computer-mediated communication as a contact zone between the divine and the lived everyday experiences of believers.

The Crisis in the Emergent Church

There is a tectonic shift happening underneath Christendom that has created a series of crises occurring within Christian churches in England, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, where statistical trends indicate that "even those who follow the teachings of Christ and are committed to regular prayer, Bible reading, and spiritual direction will in the future be doing so without any formal connection with congregational life" (Drane 3). Several scholars have noted the crisis of faith and membership occurring within Christendom. John Drane, a scholar studying the Emergent Church, believes that within the next thirty years organized Christian religion within

England will have "imploded" and there will "only be a residual Christian presence to speak of" (Drane 3). George Lings writes that this impending "demise of Christendom" occurs alongside a series of other cultural aggravating phenomena including a focus on consumer culture, an acceptance of other faiths, a general distrust of authority figures and hierarchical institutions, and a "burgeoning interest in a whole variety of spiritualities" (105). The rapidly declining numbers of the church occur amidst "an age of anti-institutionalism, distrust of authorities and rejection of meta-narratives" (Jamieson 68). The convergence of these factors means that Christians depart the denominations that they are reared within and instead "choose their congregations based on myriad factors, like the children's ministry or the worship music" (Jones 10). Some Christians are now searching for a way of worshiping that lacks a precise inalterable doctrine, an emphasis on institutions or organizations, or a sense of separation from the secular world around them. Many of the churches to which Christians are flocking have created a movement called "the Emergent Church," which is concentrated especially in The United States, England, New Zealand, and Australia. The Emergent Church seeks to reinvigorate Christianity by redefining it for the 21st Century. If that sounds vague, it is because the movement is only two decades old and its members are uncomfortable with definitions. What all the Emergents have in common is a sense that the ways of doing church in the past are not appropriate for the 21st century. Several scholars have pointed out there are really three different threads of the Emergent movement: those frustrated with stolid antiquated worship styles that do not take advantage of modern day technologies, those who dislike the needless denominationalism that has fragmented the Christian community (mostly in America), and Christians startled by a sense of complacency among organized

religion in a rapidly secularizing world, mostly in the United Kingdom (Drane; Bader-Saye). What ties the three groups together is a common set of responses, one of which includes the use of technology or technological ideas to reinvigorate Christianity. But the frustrations believers feel extends past the style of worship they want, for there's also a belief that the Christianity of the past two centuries needs to be updated to fit a 21ˢᵗ century context. As Alan Jamieson observes, "'emergent' means much more than simply overlaying new cultural forms on an already fixed theology and structure of 'church'" (69). The churches who just try to supplant hymnals and liturgies with PowerPoints, *Facebook*, and rock music are entirely missing the point because the "least interesting, of the churches described as 'emerging' are those that are concerned with cultural and stylistic change to the exclusion of real theological and ecclesial transformation" (Bader-Saye 13). Despite the criticism of using technology as a superficial remedy, Christian reformers within this movement do see a connection between the crisis in their faith and the use of the Internet.

Disaffected Christians who turn to the Emergent movement balk at defining exactly what they want, who they are, or how they would self-describe themselves (Drane; Bader-Saye; Driscoll). The idea of a definition of the Emergent movement is antithetical to its very purpose, and many authors observe that it is far too diverse for an easy definition (Drane; Driscoll; Guest and Taylor; Harrold; Jamieson). It is outside the scope of my argument to try to piece together varied definitions of what it means to be Emergent; instead I would like briefly note two patterns within descriptions of this movement: first, they directly or indirectly employ rhetoric that invokes decentralized technological networks, such as open source coding, the creative commons, the language

of post-Web 2.0, or the wisdom of the crowds; and, second, they describe their

emergence as responding to both a crisis and an opportunity, that is a type of *kairotic*

moment. Drawing from a definition formed by Emergent writer Kester Brewin, Jamieson

writes that "Emergent systems, (and thus emergent churches) are open, adaptable,

learning, have distributed knowledge, and model servant leadership" (68). Their

worshipers engage within "Emergent systems [that] evolve from the bottom up and are

organic in nature" (68). Tony Jones describes the movement as "hard to pin down

because it's fluid, and because it has not developed along the bureaucratic lines of

denominationalism but within the open source structures of the Internet" (Jones 11).

After discussing the long history of a church built to divide the educated and powerful

clergy from the laity, another writer claims that "emergents increasingly find such models

oppressive and offensive, preferring more open-ended, dynamic models of self-

organization" (Shults 433). Mark Driscoll, a pastor who flirted but didn't join the

Emergent movement, describes the evolution of Christendom as a movement from

Church 1.0 to Church. 3.0. The top-down structure of Church 1.0 involves a monologic,

"authority" driven communication structure, where the Church is highly structured and

centralized (88). In this paradigm, the Church enjoys a privileged place at the center of

society (88). Church 2.0 functions as a response to the growing dissatisfaction of that

model and relies on a consumerist emphasis of worship to regain Christianity's lost sense

of privilege and centrality in society. He describes Church 3.0 as existing within a

"postmodern and pluralistic" context, where everyone's experience is localized and

particularized on one level, yet interconnected and globalized on another level, one

consequence of which are "glocal" evangelizing missions (88). Though Driscoll does not

compare his description of the Emergent movement to social networking, when he and

other writers discuss how new church communities are forming between small, organic,

networked groups of friends rather than larger institutions, thoughts of Facebook or

MySpace might appear (Ganiel; Lings). Those thoughts would not be misplaced because

the Emergent church finds its place within "new models of networked communities (via

Internet, cell phones and increased mobility)" (Bader-Saye 16), and one substratum of the

Emergent Church movement is the "alt.worship" movement (short for "alternative

worship," with an obvious nod to url syntax), wherein many of the practitioners rely on

"digital technology" (Drane 7). Much in the same vein as a social networking site, these

alt.worship groups "form an interconnected network throughout the UK, Europe, USA

and the Antipodes" (Guest and Taylor 50). Andrew Perriman, a leader within the

movement, created a website called "Open Source Theology," which hopes to bring the

principals of the secular open source coding movement to the global conversation of

Emergent writers. Perriman asks if we "[c]an use OST [open source theology] to develop

a belief-system—a rationality, a theology, a rhetoric, an ethos, a style—that will give

intelligent, convincing, and powerful expression to the gospel within the

emerging culture?" Another writer, Tim Bednar, theorizes how bloggers can help form

"The Participatory Church"—an overlapping movement of the Emergent Church—

because their "network of blogs exceed the reach of any single pastor" and "as a network,

[they] know more than [their] pastors" (3). In this sense, the Emergent Church has

attempted to engage "the wisdom of the crowds" through the use of social software

(Surowiecki). And websites like EmergingChurch.info use the web to collect individual

stories about this complex religious movement. The stories on the site are largely

autobiographical and context-specific, but that is precisely the point: instead of creating

one singe abstract definition of the Emergent Church they celebrate the decentralization

of their community, and the sponsors see dialogic computer-mediated-communication as

both a symbol and a means to express their values of a networked and dispersed Christian

faith that is relevant to the 21st Century.

But this rhetoric does not just infuse technological language; many writers have

also noted—as hinted before—that the Emergent Church defines this as a moment of

crisis. George Lings perhaps summarizes it best: "[t]he demise of Christendom and the

rise of informal networks have led to a double sense of liminality" because modern-day

Christianity "exists at the edge of society and also in a world that no longer has centres at

all" (105). When a community finds itself on the edge of a plane that has no center,

betwixt utter oblivion and an unfamiliar multitudinous array of new values and practices

(what the Emergent church writers refer to as "post-modern" culture), then a *kairotic*

space opens up—informed by both crisis and opportunity. As John Drane writes:

> In my lifetime, it [the church] has gone from being a vibrant spiritual
>
> community at the centre of civic life to being on the margins, from being
>
> an all-age community to being largely the preserve of old people, and
>
> from being a place of nurture and spiritual growth for children to being a
>
> prison from which they escape as soon as they are old enough to make
>
> their own choices (even supposing they have had any connection with it in
>
> the first place, which itself is an increasingly unlikely circumstance).
>
> There are of course numerous local exceptions, but the future of the
>
> institution as a whole is clearly in jeopardy, and this awareness has opened

up a space for creative contextualisation of Christian belief within the new

cultural matrix. This is the context in which the 'emerging church' has

come to birth, and in which it must be understood. (3-4)

Drane's words help to show how this crisis moment can also be seen as an opportunity,

"a space for creative *contexualisation*" by many within the Emergent movement

(emphasis mine). The problems that the Emergent Church faces are a perfect expression

of both Tillich's sense of *Kairos* and the more classical notion of *kairotic* balance. They

face a crisis that creates an opportune moment to connect the divine to their everyday

lived experiences, and many Emergent writers have decided that their proverbial arrow

must be shot through the opening of computer-mediated communication. But these

Emergent writers also recognize that balance and proportionality must play a role in their

evangelism. To balance their rhetoric about the importance of computer technology they

create a larger landscape to build a *kairotic* space, one that includes offline and online

sites, that makes use of the *kairotic* opening of decentralized networks while not

abandoning the benefits of more traditional authoritarian structures. Many Emergent

scholars have observed how the double-edged sword of decentralized networking can

destroy the very sense of identity the movement seeks to reinvigorate and have called for

a sense of balance (Bader-Saye; Guest and Taylor; Jamieson).

The pews are being rearranged in 21st century Christian culture, at least

metaphorically; they are beginning to face each other rather than the lectern. The

congregants deliver the sermons; the pastors open their ears; the lay ruminate on

theology, while the learned theologians collaborate with the acolytes of the faith. But this

sea-change in Christendom is happening in part because Emergent Church writers are

making use of a particular *kairotic* moment to balance the old with the new and their sense of divine with their everyday lived experiences. Below I analyze how they invoke this *Kairotic* moment (in the Tillichian sense) by making use of and explaining the commonalities between the decentralized architectural design of online networks and the Emergent Church's larger emphasis on decentralized power structures.

Balance and crisis in the emerging church

The website *EmergingChurch.info* functions as an online gathering place for Christians looking to share their faith and their vision in what the site's users refer to as a "postmodern" church. The website's editors explain that even though "the media, when showing any interest in the church at all, generally focuses in on the negatives, there is another side to the story." This competing story consists of the "significant rise in the number of new expressions and experiments" from Christians who are looking for something that more traditional church communities cannot offer. In order to tell the good news of this emerging movement, several Christian organizations created a "forum where stories could be told and reflected upon as well as opportunity being given for people to enter into debate on the issues surrounding these new ways of being church": www.emergingchurch.info. This forum responds to "the statistics on church growth in the UK and Europe [that] make fairly depressing reading" by bringing together Christians who have a new strategy for redeeming the mission of the church and replenishing its membership. The Emergent Church focuses on searching after these lost souls and reinvigorating a faith in crisis. Chris Stoddard, one of the site's authors, frames the Emergent mission as evangelizing to the three groups, the "un-churched," "de-churched" and "non-churched," all who exist on the margins or outside of traditional organized

religion. The "unchurched" are self-described spiritual people who don't look to

organized religion for fulfillment; the "de-churched" are those who "once belonged" to

an organized religion but either left or have been turned off, and the "non-churched"

simply have little connection to organized religion at all.

The site is divided into several different avenues for worship, each of which is

built around community. The three most interactive parts of the website include a

"stories" section, a "reflections" section, and a blogging section. There is also an online

prayer lava lamp, where users can place there supplication inside a bubble and have it

merged into the ether of the web and sent up to God. Another part of the site brings in a

Google search feed that creates a blog roll of the Emergent Church from the web. But

instead of collecting these blogs and sorting through them, the website allows Google to

determine which are most relevant. The site expresses its administrators' faith that the

collective linking of Christians and Non-Christians on the web will divinely define the

Church[5]. The logic holds that the more linked a blog is the more it has been vetted and

approved by Christians on the Internet; therefore, Google acts as a filter, ranking the best

Christian blogs higher on the web. These options enable Christians to share their personal

stories, exegetical thoughts, and definitions of the Emergent Church with others. The

Emergent Church invokes the wisdom of the crowds by aggregating people's stories and

trusting that some spiritual knowledge comes from collective choices. From these efforts

the site wants "to create space for people to share their experiences, successes and

difficulties so that we might more easily discern together what God is saying to and about

---

[5] This use of Google to tacitly define the church is similar to how Tim Bednar, a proponent of the cyberchuch sees Google working to define Christianity (See page 114 of this dissertation).

His church in these days." The story space is especially crucial to the site's purpose since so many of the Emergent Church authors see narrative as a cornerstone to the faith. Their goal is to redefine Christianity by retooling the story of the church to fit a 21st context, and this in part, comes from having each person tell his or her personal story of redemption and how he or she sees the Emergent Church as different[6]. Since the site began in 2003 the scope of the story size is small but growing, and many of the posts are well thought out essays rather than just quick notes jotted down on a message board. The site claims that "over 100 unique stories and reflections" have been added, and they encourage new visitors to "benefit from this site and feel able to contribute to it in whatever way is most appropriate."

In order to define this new spiritual strategy and recruit new participants, the website must invoke a *kairotic* moment that explains why this 21st century moment is the opportune time for the Emergent Church to respond to the crisis of dropping Christian membership. One aspect of this *kairotic* moment involves the prevalence of computer-mediated-communication, especially the use of post-Web 2.0 technologies among our youth. This prevalence means that the forum where religious ideas are exchanged has moved, and we can think of this movement as the arrow's aperture moving or the temporary opening of the yarn changing. The users of *EmergingChurch.info* are well aware that this *kairotic* space now includes online interaction. The spiritually hungry no longer see the church as a physical location or even a necessary, central part of their lives. If the church is going to speak to them, it must find them where they meet their friends:

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[6] Unless otherwise noted, the text quoted from this section of this chapter comes from an abbreviated page of this story space where thirteen of the authors are mentioned: http://www.EmergingChurch.info/guide/index.htm

in chat rooms, on discussion boards, and on blogs. Instead of prayers happening in the

sanctuary, they happen in an online lava lamp. The key is not so much to walk non-

believers through the church door as it is to bring the church to where the lost flock

congregates. The placement of *EmergingChrurch.info* is not simply a practical place to

collect multiple stories, reflections, and discussions but rather a testament to the

Emergent church's firm belief that the online forum is crucial. It is crucial to differentiate

between the website—*EmergingChurch.info*—and the organizations that financially

support it because this difference underscores the rhetorical choice to congregate online.

The five benefactor organizations mentioned are RUN (Reaching the Unchurched

Network), which has now ceased operations, CMS (Church Mission Society); Sheffield

Centre (Church Army); Youth for Christ, and the Group for Evangelisation of Churches

Together in England. These five organizations, all of which exist offline, could have

chosen an offline organizational structure or a more hierarchical web design. By choosing

an interactive site, these different Christian organizations make a statement about their

values, but just as importantly their online stories seize upon the excitement and interest

connected with Internet technologies.

At first, the website might appear to lack any technological discussions at all; the

content matter focuses on the definition of the Emerging Church, why the movement

matters and how it differs from traditional church worship. But an undercurrent of

technological references flows underneath the "constantly evolving collection of

recommended stories and reflections" on the "Guide Page" for beginners. On this guide

page, viewers can read thirteen personal reflections that contribute to a definition of the

Emergent Church. One author, Gareth Williams, mentions the web along with other

mediums helped him to discover more about this spiritual movement: "Now I was starting to buy more books, I would scour the internet for the latest stories of what was happening across the world, blogs became my latest craze and worse still, I started hanging around with people who questioned the institutional church." Rosemary Neave shows how the web has become one of many venues wherein the Emergent Church might congregate: "Some meet regularly on the internet or email, some meet in cafés, some in churches, some in homes." Neave mentions one burgeoning organization called Futurechruch New Zealand (www.futurechurch.org.nz), which is sponsored by the Methodist Church and is "focused on connecting and celebrating these emerging faith communities." These connections are formed through "networking—via the website which has a directory of NZ groups, and a data base of several hundred articles, as well as a quarterly newsletter." In another definition of the Emergent Church, which uses an alphabetical acronym, we are told that "B" stands for "blogging." Through the practice of blogging the Emerging Church members relay stories from which they gather communal wisdom, and through these stories Steve Taylor tells his fellow believers, "[w]e listen, we ask, we grow through the wires of the internet." Other technological connections include the letter "H," which stands for "hyperlinked, and so we are inspired by a worship trick from here and an insight from there." The letter "P" stands for cyberchurch, because "[g]one is the pulpit and in is the discussion. Comments are essential to websites, to teaching, and to preaching." Another author, Steve Collins, uses the metaphorical conceit of comparing the history of computers to the history of the church and by doing so creates the strongest connection between the church and computer-mediated communication:

In computer terms, the local/institutional model of church resembles a mainframe with terminals, in the days before PCs or the internet. The terminals draw their computing power from the centre and don't resource one another directly. The mainframe itself may not be connected to any other. Whereas the network church model resembles the PCs on the internet. Computing power is distributed not centralised, and every machine connects to every other. Big problems are solved collectively not centrally.

From this passage alone it may seem as if Collins' main idea is to connect the church to computer technology and the web in general, but this assumption would be a misperception. In fact, these references to technology are merely one dimension of a more theoretical conception for the Emergent Church. They exist on the margins of the discussion about the Emergent Church, as a very important but peripheral description of what comprises the movement.

The technological references function as a background that sets into relief the foreground: the conception of the Emergent church as a "network" of churches and individuals who interact with each other. The interplay between computerized and face-to-face networks provides "balance" and "propriety" to the Emergent church's use of technology to create a *kairotic* moment. In other words, the Emergent movement recognizes that to move the arrow through the aperture, it must not only respond to a crisis but be measured in its response. To bring that image into focus we will examine more carefully how Collins and others describe the Emergent church as a network.   It is what Rosemary Neave means when she writes that the Futurechuch is "focused primarily

on networking—via the website." Several of the above authors mention networking as well. Each of the passages below invokes a sense of networking that includes but is not limited to Internet technology:

- "If there's one single thing that characterises emerging forms of church across the western world it's that they are networked. There is no one leader or format or theology, nor is there likely to be. Instead there is a thriving mess of cross-linkage without regard for conventional church structures or channels of communication. It's the context and lifeblood of the emerging church, the arteries of the Body so to speak, and yet it's largely invisible to the existing institutional forms of church." – Steve Collins

- "The repercussions of such an approach to our way of being will be enormous. Like a brain, we will see centralised knowledge devolved into networked intelligence. Like a city, we will see strong, centralised leadership become less visible and less powerful, exerting less control but existing simply to resource those involved in communities, economic activity and industry on the ground. And like every one of us, we will see the body of Christ accepting its need to sleep, to wait for things, to dream. As Descartes proposed, if we are to be, we must think. But more than just existing, if we are to evolve, we must dream." – Kester Brewin

- "To serve a diverse mission context, fresh expressions of church are correspondingly varied. A significant difference in one stream of emerging church is the targeting of a network rather than a neighbourhood for mission; some people (network churches) identify more with where they work and socialise than

where they sleep. Another stream is defined by its use of small-group as the

context for church (base communities, cell church). Other streams have kept

congregation size but have changed where it gathers, when it gathers and what

takes place (alternative worship, café church, midweek church, youth

congregations). Further still, some emerging churches are embarking on

community development where any expression of their worshipping life is low-

key and still evolving. Some churches will draw on more than one of these

differences as appropriate." – George Lings

The idea of "network" in these quotations has more to do with an attitude or approach

than with a specifically computerized network, for each author describes that network as

something that occurs offline as well as online. The network's importance is inextricably

tied into a decentralization of power and organization. Maynard, one of the site's featured

reflectors, reminds his readers that "[p]ower corrupts, which is a danger in the church as

anywhere else… and a hierarchical structure is the breeding-ground for the corruption of

church leaders." These long-established church hierarchies create "the necessity for

decentralization so that the structures can be interrelated but independently manageable

in smaller sizes." Even though preventing corruption from Maynard's perspective is

crucial, many of the authors speak highly of a decentralized approach because it creates a

more nimble amorphous organization that can respond to the needs of non-believers and

fit easily into any cultural context. That's why Lings claims that "[t]o serve a direct

missions context, fresh expressions of church are correspondingly varied"; it is what

Collins means when he writes about "the context and lifeblood of the emerging church,"

and why Brewin wants to "see centralised knowledge devolved into networked

intelligence" in order "to resource those involved in communities, economic activity and industry on the ground." But even though the idea of network extends beyond technology, it is technological language that serves as a catalytic metaphor. The language of "wisdom of the crowds," "networked intelligence," and "decentralized intelligence and power" informs and is informed by post-Web 2.0 technologies, and this language and these technologies open up a *kairotic* space that these Emergent believers take advantage of.

The Emergent Church members practice balance within their invocation of a *kairotic* moment through an attention to improvisation in response to continually changing circumstances. The words the church uses to define this sense of kairotic improvisation are "missional" and "incarnational," but rhetoricians would put it differently:

> Since the circumstances enabling success may change at any time, *kairos* implies that there can never be more than a contingent and provisional management of the present opportunity. Success depends, in other words, on adaptation to an always mutating situation. (White 13)

To be a skillful rhetorician one must be able to notice when the exigent circumstances surrounding one's argument imperceptibly change, how one's message can best reach one's audience, especially in terms of place. If *kairos* is in part an attention to place, as Rickert argues, then as that place moves, the rhetor's sense of the appropriate *kairotic* space must shift as well. For the Emergent Church this means meeting people in their network, whether that be online or face-to-face, and the words "missions" and "incarnational" point to their sophisticated sense of place in a decentralized network. By

incarnational, these authors mean that the church must manifest itself in a form that each person or cultural group would find most relevant. When Chris Stoddard writes that "the 'come to us and we'll evangelise you' model" fails to convert people anymore, he's calling for an "incarnational edge" to ministry; he's saying that the gospel must be calibrated to fit "the heart of the culture of the day." This incarnational message has its Biblical roots in Paul the Apostle's exclamation that "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (NIV I Cor. 9:22). The network, then, is notoriously hard to define because its purpose is to adapt and evolve as needed in each particular context. One reason why the Emergent Church is so hard to define is because of the network's adaptability. Brewin says that the ideal church should be "adaptable, resilient and evolving" and that these characteristics can only happen when "bottom-up, networked processes" are chosen over "top-down, hardwired ones." When Taylor discusses the "intuitive" nature of the Emergent Church, he claims that "it is a journey and it will embrace mystery and contingency"; this language resonates with the complexity of the Emergent Church and explains why Taylor also claims, "[w]e don't want to define ourselves. We're not even sure we are a movement. Let's keep things . . . open." Just as Paul wanted to be "all things to all people" so that he could reach the disaffected and marginalized, the emphasis on decentralization in the Emergent Church stems partly from a concern with those who have felt marginalized from traditional church structures. The network means forming congregations based on where one spends leisure time, where one works, where one lives, instead of simply meeting at a particular church sanctioned by a church body. For instance, we are told of the "B1 Church in central Birmingham [that] meets for worship service mid-week and in a function room of

one of the most popular city centre nightspots for an outreach style event bi-monthly on Sunday nights" (Stoddard). By incarnational they mean transforming the message of Christ into the culture that non-believers are most comfortable with. This emphasis on incarnational evangalism means considering how technology impinges upon what people listen to or read. For Stoddard, who asks the question, "If the church has been pushed to the margins, what has taken central stage?" the answer is that "today communication is everything" and suggests that if others "[t]ry depriving a young person of their mobile phone or internet facility," then the importance of these digital technologies as a central space will become clear. What's most important is that "[t]he church has to learn how to communicate clearly from the margins, just as the New Testament Church did." The attention to a changing sense of *kairotic* space is perhaps best expressed by Stoddard: "How to share a never-changing message in an ever-changing world is a challenge we cannot ignore."

But even though technology and place have taken central stage for the surrounding culture, what's most important is "that church is more about who we are than where we are" (Stoddard). Through the decentralization of power, new theological connections may emerge in ways church leaders had not thought of. Brewster compares the networked church to a Freudian dream state, for "[o]ur ability to dream, then, has been key to our evolution, to our ability to adapt and change, because it has allowed bottom-up, networked processes to take the lead over top-down, hardwired ones." From Steve Taylor's perspective, The "G" in the church alphabet stands for "global" because "we link from the US to the UK, we click from Canada to Kiwi, with a nod to Australian friends and partners." What's important to note here is that the language of the network

both functions as a metaphor but also as a practical part of their larger effort to evangelize

offline as well as online. The network functions metaphorically to show how the

Emergent Church uses the Internet to communicate with each other. On one level, they

see itself as inextricably tied to the computer-mediated-technology that allows them to

circumvent hierarchical church institutions and evangelize out to the community. Online

spaces are an "incarnational" new place for evangelism. Cyberspace is a place where

connections can be formed unlimited by geography, preexisting institutions or buildings,

a place available to many yet invisible to the "traditional" church. But the goal is not to

build an online church. Rather it is too create, as Rosemary Neave puts it, a community

of believers who have a "desire to live a faith that is relevant and connected to their lives

and engages with and helps make sense of the world around them." The mission of the

Emergent Church then is to create a decentralized, networked community that reaches out

to those turned off by traditional church worship practices and highly structured

administrative control. The movement finds inspiration and practical functionality

through the use of post-Web 2.0 dialogic technologies, but does not see itself as operating

exclusively within them. Instead, Emergent members use these tools as a *kairotic*

moment without letting the tools define their movement; the website's attention to

balance and a harmonious use of space makes their evangelical mission all the more

rhetorically effective. The tools provide an added impetus for the movement to begin.

They help to define the *kairotic* moment for something that exists beyond the

technological concerns.

Collins has the most sophisticated metaphor outlining the relationship between

technology, the "network," and the *kairotic* moment of the Emergent church. He seizes

upon discussions of "networks" that are emerging within our culture to create a *kairotic*

moment. Those discussions are his opening through which he will shoot his arrow of

evangelism, but he does not allow this *kairotic* space to undermine his sense of space.

Rather he argues for a balance between what he calls the "networked church" and the

"institutional church." From his perspective, Christians should conceive of balance as a

"way of looking to the situation itself as a guide to navigating different positions and

finding the correct one" (75). In his essay, Collins distinguishes between the

"local/institutional model" and the Emerging Church, two church bodies he sees as

overlapping. The institutional church is characterized by a specific location, a clear sense

of hierarchy, and a conservative approach to change. It refers to "an organisational unit of

operating in a particular locality," whereas the Emergent groups think of "church as a

verb not noun," a way of doing or being. The Emergent Church has "no one leader or

format or theology, nor is there likely to be." Collins explains through a series of visuals

(see to the left, for example) how the Emergent Church is connected to the institutional

church but still separated from it.

At times, these Emerging churches may be attached or exist within an institutional

system; they might exist alongside one another or completely separately. The groups

"appear small and anomalous within their local church context, whereas from 'inside'

they appear as parts of a global movement." The Emergent Church is invisible to the

institutional church because much of this networking happens online, something for

which the traditional church has "technology blindness." This focus on the Internet

creates a distinction between the ways of doing church, whether it be "a prevailing model

of the church as local and institutional" grouping that relies on structures and places

rather than "individual or group-to-group contact." These two models create two widely

different perspectives on whether the Emergent movement is a useful aspect of the larger

Christian Church. When Christians focus more on Emergent practices than on traditional

church services, they may appear disconnected, aloof, alone, and perhaps joining some

type of cult, like a "renegade homegroup" that are "few and isolated." In contrast, from

the perspective of the networked churches, those attending the "local/institutional

church" are unplugged, disconnected because they do not "network outside [their]

institutional structure or give and take resources from the wider network." From this

perspective, we are invited to see how "the local/institutional model of church resembles

a mainframe with terminals, in the days before PCs or the internet." The author depicts an

image of a highly structured, rigid, top-down command structure, whether that be the

difference between laity and clergy or between a mainframe and several weaker and

peripheral churches. The computers only have one centralized path for connecting

together or exchanging information, and that information is largely directed one way. In

this bygone era, we are reminded that "terminals draw their computing power from the

centre and don't resource one another directly." In contrast to this outworn historical

relationship, "the network church model resembles PCs on the internet" because

"[c]omputing power is distributed not centralised, and every machine connects to every

other." The relationship between the networked church and the institutional church is

symbiotic: the networked church forms connections between institutional churches and

brings in people who would otherwise not worship, and the networked church offers

more traditional worship spaces for those uncomfortable with the network: "These

[traditional churches] appear as concentrations or nodes that are not as self-sufficient as they imagine. They are not the only places 'church' happens."

Kairos through the cyberchurch

Tim Bednar, a Christian blogger, also writes about a "networked" church that emerges during a fitting rhetorical moment; the network brings believers together into an invisible community of the world's Christian bloggers, a community that will "know more than our pastors," "exceed the reach of any single pastor," and redefine the power relationships between the clergy and laity in the church (3). Though this redefinition of Christian community happens through computer-mediated-communication in what he terms the cyberchruch, he sees the web as merely a prelude to a realignment of the relationship between laity and clergy offline. He wants all of Christendom to become "the Participatory church," offline and online, and the cyberchurch is merely an extension of that. In his self-published paper, "We Know More than Our Pastors," he introduces the idea that post-Web 2.0 technologies and, more specifically, blogging provide Christians with a *kairotic* opportunity "to co-create the church" (3). Bednar does not identify himself as part of the Emergent Church but does refer to himself as part of the Participatory church, which in many ways overlaps the Emergent Church movement. Bednar's vision is just as theoretical as it is practical, and even though he draws upon Emerging scholarship—of which he expresses skepticism—the cyberchurch seeks to affect every type of Christian organization: "I suspect that blogging propagates not only the cyberchurch, but is the vanguard of the church (whether Catholic or Southern Baptist or the so-called Emerging Church)" (22).

What interests me here is how Bednar frames the exigent circumstances that surround the Participatory church, for he writes about it as both a return to biblical foundational values and an embrace of new web technologies. By doing so, he skillfully invokes a *kairotic* moment that merges the past values of prophets and theologians with the present experiences of Christians. He creates a *kairotic* space where the divine can manifest itself within our everyday 21st digital world, just a Tillich describes, and thus, his argument resembles a practical application of Tillich's notion of *Kairos.* Bednar folds together the stories of historical Christians along with modern day stories of technological revelation to create "that time when timeless values are catalyzed into qualities of human experience within contextualized circumstances" (Sipiora, "Rhetoric of Time and Timing" 125). This conception of *kairos* informs Bednar's argument as he folds two historical moments together: first, Protestant and Biblical calls for participation, and, second, the opportunities afforded by dialogic computer-mediated-communication. Second, Tillich's description of *Logos* as a static epistemology and of *Kairos* as a type of kinetic chaotic epistemology mirror Bednar's outlining of the traditional static church and the revolutionary Participatory church.

One invocation of time references the fifteenth century Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther. Bednar frames the cyberchurch as an extreme version of Protestant individualism, where everyone is a priest but there is no clear doctrine, structure, or body of believers. This reference to the fifteenth-century reformer functions much more subtly than simply a reference to a historical Christian pioneer. By invoking Luther's name, he subtly immerses blogging technology in a specific Christian narrative extending as far back as Paul the Apostle. To understand how this subtle connection occurs, we first

should first analyze Bednar's use of cathedral and bazaar imagery and his reference to

Eric Raymond, a scholar who writes about open source software. Raymond, whose article

appeared in the academic journal *Knowledge, Technology, and Power* in 1999, uses the

metaphor of bazaar and cathedral to discuss the differences between closed source and

open source technologies. When he reminisces that he "had been preaching the Unix

gospel of small tools, rapid prototyping, and evolutionary programming for years," he

introduces religious connotations into his argument—which is framed as a personal

story—about the advantages of open source (23). With the next sentence, he indicates

that his faith in open source had been insufficient because "there was a certain critical

complexity above which a more centralized, *a priori* approach was required": in other

words, a closed source system would be needed (23-24). For smaller or less important

projects, provisional open source would do, but when an application had to be absolutely

reliable, then users needed "cathedrals, carefully crafted by individual wizards or small

bands of mages working in splendid isolation, with no beta to be released before its time"

(24). However, then he encountered a "subversive" way of doing things that "shocked"

him, and with the enthusiasm of a convert he writes, "Linux overturned much of what I

thought I knew" (24). From that point forward, the convert wanted to understand the truth

about how Linux can "go from strength to strength at a speed barely imaginable to

cathedral-builders" (24).

Table 2: The Folding of Kairos and Logos in Tim Bednar's "We Know More Than Our
Pastors: Why Blogging is at the Vanguard of the Participatory Church"

The Convert	The Tillichian *Logos*	"The Moment of Crisis"	The Tillichian *Kairos*
Martin Luther	The Law	Luther's Tower Experience	"The Priesthood of All Believers" and Grace over Law
Paul the Apostle	The Law	Paul's Road to Damascus	Paul's Understanding of Grace and Egalitarianism
Eric Raymond	The Limited Use of Open Source and the Cathedral	Raymond's Experience with Linux	The Internet (and Open Source Software) as the Bazaar
Tim Bednar	Static , Monologic Websites	Bednar's Meeting with Lature	"The Priesthood of All Bloggers" and the Participatory Church as a Bazaar

Drawing on Raymond's story, Bednar writes that "[t]he blogging cyberchurch is
not a cathedral with set rules, processes or content, rather it is a bazaar that bloggers
wonder around attempting to create order using hypertext" (21). The cathedral represents
a top-down structure, one that relies on power, authority, and tradition to determine what
is acceptable theology. In contrast to the cathedral, the bazaar induces bloggers to
"discover their own truth in public where they take responsibility for their beliefs" (21).
The cathedral is positioned by Bednar as the technological church where one's beliefs
and salvation are determined by others, whereas the bazaar is about personal ownership.
His use of Raymond creates two juxtapositions that he will use again when talking about
himself, Martin Luther, and Paul the Apostle. The first juxtaposition is between dialogic
and monologic structures—the bazaar and the cathedral. The second juxtaposition is a
conversion narrative about someone who transitions from believing in the cathedral to the

bazaar. A few pages later he introduces his section on "The Priesthood of All Bloggers," which is a playful adaption of Luther's assertion that all Christians are part of a "priesthood of all believers" (itself a point of divergence between Catholics and Protestants) (22). At the beginning of this section, there is a skillful juxtaposition of Raymond and Luther: "The bazaar of the blogging cyberchurch is naturally susceptible to excesses, untruths, syncretism or blatant heresy. It is not a homogeneous, well-ordered or accurately labeled universe" (Bednar 22). Instead of seeing this as a weakness, the amorphous nature of blogs are as a strength because with "no pastor to shepherd it or denomination handing out credentials," the cyberchurch is free to "take Martin Luther's concept of the priesthood of all believers to its extreme conclusion" (22). He continually invokes the language of the Protestant Reformation by claiming that "as we blog, we push the boundaries of what Martin Luther meant when he wrote about the 'priesthood of all believers'" (3). The backdrop to all of this is Luther's own expression of the dispersion of ecclesiastical power that he sees as central to Protestantism [7]. The juxtaposition of Luther and Raymond's conversion impinges new meaning on the

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[7]   The idea that any Christian is by virtue of his or her faith a priest in the Church is a central tenet for many Protestants. This tenet is relevant for my argument because Bednar sees a connection between that egalitarian sense of "priesthood" and the democratizing power of blogs. The former is the "timeless divine" and the later is the manifestation of that divinity in the particular moment. And as Luther makes clear in his own writing, this "timeless" principle originates ultimately from biblical scripture: "For whoever comes out of the water of baptism can boast that he is already a consecrated priest, bishop, and pope, although of course it is not seemly that just anybody should exercise such office [. . .] It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular [. . .]" (Luther's Works 44: 129). The "wisdom of the crowds" that accompanies 21st century discussions of dialogic computer-mediated communication perfectly coincides with Protestant ideology, and Bednar uses that parallelism to invoke a Tillichian *kairotic* moment.

spiritual importance of the blogosphere because it creates a pattern where scholars face a crisis moment that affords the opportune moment to choose the Participatory church (whether it be 15th century religious practices or 21st century blogging practices) over the static old structure.

Of course, with the exception of religious imagery, Raymond's focus was on non-religious usage of open-source software. To connect the past pursuit of religious freedom with the current enthusiasm with blogging, Bednar discusses his own conversion narrative. It begins with his experimentations with a website he created called "e-church," a website that would supplement his Sunday-school teaching. He tried several different versions of the site, but "each variation—magazine, classroom, and curriculum publisher—unequivocally missed the mark" (6). He had "arrogantly sought to establish [his] web site as 'the' cyberchurch created by bloggers" (7). The consequences for his lack of vision were that few people visited his site, and he spent most of his time recreating the layout of his site at the expense of adding edifying material. A moment of crisis had appeared for him, and he at first abandoned his site. Then he discovered the "magical" world and instantly knew that this genre was what he had been searching for (6). As soon as he began blogging, he "experienced community" and realized that his plan to create a "web site after a traditional church" and have his viewers "follow a certain, predetermined program" had been folly[8] (6). But his conversion story is not over because

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[8]   Luther's description of the "Priesthood of All Believers" isn't the only way in which Bednar folds different historical moments together. Luther's tower experience—his own moment of Pauline conversion—is best described in "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings." The connection is relevant for this discussion because Luther's expression of his moment of conversion sounds very similar to Paul and Bednar's conversion stories (and not unlike Raymond's): "Thus, I raged with a fierce and

he then describes his own Pauline conversion where the scales were removed from his

eyes (NIV, Acts 9:18):

> Then one morning my cell rang and fellow blogger Dale Lature said,
>
> "Hello." I never met Dale except through his blog, now we were talking. I
>
> knew that he was going through a rough patch of unemployment. It was a
>
> remarkable moment, but an awkward one (I am an introvert and was
>
> caught off guard).
>
> I got off the phone and it happened.
>
> I opened my eyes and found myself in the midst of what can only be
>
> called the cyberchurch. I was interacting on a spiritual level with other
>
> believers scattered across the world. We shared ideas, but also extended
>
> concern and caring to one another. (7)

When he declares, "I opened my eyes and found myself in the midst of what can only be

called the cyberchurch," he's making a direct reference to Paul's conversion story of his

road to Damascus where the scales were lifted from his own eyes (NIV Acts 9: 1-31). It

is no coincidence that in the middle of the Bednar's conversion story he quotes Paul

speaking about the church:

> "What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone
>
> has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an

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troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most
ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted. At last, by the mercy of God, meditating
day and night [. . .] I began to understand [. . .]" and "a totally other face of the entire
Scripture showed itself to me" (Luther's Works 34: 337).

interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the

church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should

speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret." (NIV, 1 Cor. 14: 26)

His conversation with Dale Lature, a fellow blogger, who he had never met before, and

the rest of his story is reminiscent of a Pauline conversion, and it characterizes a moment

where a Christian had to choose between the Participatory church and the static church.

Here the notion of the bazaar is invoked once again through Paul's words. Bednar

describes this loosely enjoined community by quoting Raymond who writes of "a great

babbling bazaar of differing agendas and approaches [. . .] out of which a coherent and

stable system could seemingly emerge only by a succession of miracles" (Raymond 24).

In a section of his paper entitled "Cyberchurch Pilgrimage," Bednar explains that his new

understanding of the Cyberchurch is that "no one created her—she manifests in the

interaction of believers who use Internet technology" (7). The weaving of secular and

religious ideas now occurs fast and furiously as Bednar describes the cyberchurch as a

community created through the links between sites, the network of sites rather than any

single blog or webpage no matter how sophisticated. By doing so, he recognizes the

balance and proportionality that his own contributions must have to the larger

cyberchurch: "after a year of blogging, I no longer seek to be 'the' cyberchurch, as the

name e-church implies, rather I participate with bloggers who collectively link the

cyberchurch into existence" (8).

　　　If one considers Christian bloggers as the nodes in the cyberchurch, then Bednar's

claim is that the manifestation of the church exists in the connections between these

nodes. In this section he argues that "thousands of bloggers circumvent established

hierarchies and relate unmediated with one another" (3). The word "unmediated"

references the immediacy of the web, since one can instantly publish and reach a world-

wide audience; but it also references the absence of clergy who act as an intermediary

between believers or between believers and God. In this cyberchurch, no one individual

is in charge of administering the discussions, deciding who speaks for the church, or

deciding what the church's doctrine is. To have someone make that choice would require

a church hierarchy. The double meaning of the word "unmediated" reveals Bednar's

identification with both the digital and religious narratives. It is the Priesthood of

Bloggers and Believers. The first narrative connects the cyberchurch as an heir to the

Protestantism Reformation. But he also sees the cyberchurch movement as a thread in the

history of post-Web 2.0 emergence: "We are part of a cyberchurch phenomenon that is

impacting mass media, technology, education, entertainment, politics, journalism, and

business" (3). Instead of these two narratives operating alongside each other, so that

blogging is seen as an avenue for creating a more egalitarian Church, the two overlap,

which leads to blogs "redefining the scope of Martin Luther's 'the priesthood of the

believer,'" while also being the fulfillment of Paul's vision of a church where everyone

contributed (3). He is folding the divine into the particular historical moment to create a

Tillichian *kairotic* moment.

The culmination of this synthesis is the belief that the web—and more specifically

"Google"—functions on behalf of God. The wisdom of the cyberchurch—the choice

about who is listened to—comes from a "filtering" process that combines tacit knowledge

networking with the will of God (44). (Reconsider the logic of *EmergingChurch.info*'s

Google-populated blog roll in light of this idea: from this perspective, their abdication of

the synthesis of blogs to Google may be faith that the Emerging church arises from the

tacit knowledge of the web). The cyberchurch becomes a "governing authority" where no

single blogger is in charge but all link to those peers who are moving to the centre—

becoming more Christ-like—and the summation of these links collectively decide who

shall lead the church and speak the truth (25). This structure at arriving at the truth is not

a democratic decision making process because the votes are not so much counted as they

are calculated into a complex set of algorithms by Internet search engines, a process

which Bednar takes great comfort in. When he writes, "We link to what is good, Google

or Popdex aggregates these links, and over time the network distills that information to

produce the truest truth," he takes the decision about who decides what counts as truth

out of the hands of the bloggers and into the hands of a software company (25). It is

Google—presumably acting as God's agent—that discovers the "truest truth," and

because of this inherent structure the Internet can be "the map of the soul" (7). To explain

how this process works, Bednar quotes Steve Collins who distinguishes between closed

set systems and open set systems. Closed set systems have boundaries, are static, and

there is a clear distinction between what belongs to and is excluded from the system. An

open set system has "'no territorial boundary, but is defined by relationship with a

centre," and the Christian church "appears as a fluid network of relationships" that

"changes constantly as components move and connections change" (qtd. in Bednar 24).

In the open set, every node is still defined by its relationship to the centre—God. He

extends Collins' open set metaphor by explaining how the Cyberchruch works to

"unsystematically" cull out the ungodly bloggers and reveal those that move to the centre

(23).

What's conspicuously missing from Bednar's discussion that was so central to the narratives in *EmergingChurch.info* is a sense of proportionality and balance, which ultimately hinders his argument because it doesn't allow for a space for offline Christians. When he writes that "[w]e feel we have every right to participate," the "we" includes bloggers but not luddite Christians (39). But not every Christian is on the vanguard of technology. For Bednar's argument to apply to a broader Christian audience, he needs to explain how the Participatory church can be located in offline sites. One key difference between his essay and the writing on *EmergingChurch.info* is attention to the broadening of the *kairotic* space though balance and proportion.

Open source theology

Another offshoot of the Emergent church is a movement dedicated to "open source theology." Proponents of open source theology believe that Christianity needs a new paradigm, one that is dialogic, that relies on the wisdom of the crowds, and that sees theology as undergoing a continual evolution, whereby the bad code (antiquated religious ideas) is ferreted out and new religious ideas take their place. Andrew Perriman, an English evangelical minister and self-published author, has helped to lead the open source Emergent movement with his website, http://www.opensourcetheology.net.[9] Perriman describes his website as "a model for doing community-based 'theology' [that] makes use of drupal, a flexible and increasingly popular open-source (appropriately!)

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9   The site fell out of usage in 2010. In 2008, Perriman decided to comment less on this site himself and assume only an editorial role. His fear that "Open Source Theology will wither as a result" was an astute observation. Nevertheless, the site serves as an example of the creative *kairotic* moments of the Emergent Church.

content management system" (Perriman). The website functions as a discussion forum

where different threads are hosted; Perriman moderates these discussions and decides

which posts are featured as key discussions and which are marginalized to the sidelines.

Much like *EmergingChurch.info*, this site is designed to form a definition of the

Emergent Church inductively through the stories of those who post. Despite Perriman's

use of Drupal, his site does not adhere to two of the basic tenets of open source

management, the ability for users to alter the architectural structure of the website and the

self-management of users on his website. Instead, Perriman acts like a benevolent dictator

of his site—or a maitre d' in a restaurant, welcoming people and placing them in the most

relevant discussion thread.

Nevertheless, he seems acutely aware of how the spirit of the open source

movement can be used to clarify and advance the mission of the Emergent Church. His

use of open source terminology expresses a narrative connection with the technological

movement rather than an adherence to source code itself. The use of open source

terminology is yet another example of how the Emergent movement takes advantage of a

Tillichian *kairotic* moment. As a pastor within the Emergent Church, Perriman wants to

be relevant to new cultural trends, responsive to young people, and to fit within the

"context" of what he sees as a rapidly changing technological world around him.

Consequently, open source draws on the mythological contrast between the "evil"

Microsoft Corporation, which sells commercial software and tries to destroy all

competition and the "good guys," who are "quirky, generous, iconoclastic heroes"

promoting open source culture and products (Perriman). Much like these iconoclastic

heroes, he sees himself fighting hierarchical and stodgy forms of religion.

Perriman has two goals, one very practical and the other more theoretical. His first goal is to see how open source software can help the Emergent church evangelize to others. Second, he wants to explore whether this approach is a "viable method for developing an applied, contextualized theology," and if so, "[w]hat sort of rules would be needed?" By doing so he hopes to compare open source theology and see "[h]ow it relate[s] to other forms of doing theology" (Perriman). He makes it clear that open source theology is not superior to other forms of practicing Christianity, nor should one assume that OST exists purely online. It also exists offline, in churches, worship centers, Bible studies, believers' homes, and anywhere the Christian faith is practiced. This inclusiveness exemplifies the same sort of balance and proportionality that is at the heart of *EmergingChurch.info* and that is absent from Bednar's blogging narrative. At the heart of his website is a collaborative atmosphere, one that tries to merge Christian discourse across many different dividing lines, including those that separate clergy and layman, conservative and liberal thinkers, and offline open source models of thinking about church. He writes that, "[a]n open-source theology should be integrated not only horizontally, across a community, but also vertically, so that it draws together both informed and uninformed opinion" (Perriman). In other words, open source theology "makes theological reflection community activity" and responds "to the circumstances of ordinary believers" (Perriman).

Conclusion

These examples of the Emergent church invoke a Tillichian sense of *Kairos* to show how the timeless divine can be applied to a specific lived experience. In each case, the specific experience involves the redefinition of Christendom as an emerging network

of believers that connect with each other both offline and online. What these three sites do so well is use the language of dialogic computer-mediated-communication—open source software, blogging, especially—to invoke a sense of exigent urgency that is nevertheless connected with their long held faith. This means that Bednar must show how he had the same revelation as Paul the Apostle and Martin Luther and how their three religious revelations were connected to Eric Raymond's secular technological one. He must fold together four personal narratives into one in order to show a larger Christian religious narrative. The website, *EmergingChurch.info*, invokes the rhetoric of post-Web 2.0 by allowing each user to tell his or her own personal story, weaving them together online to create a bottom-up definition of the Church. The site also uses Google to synthesize blogs and an online prayer site to reinforce a sense of community. And for Andrew Perriman, it means experimenting with the idea of open source theology through a blogging site that brought together the stories of multiple Christians.

But let's take another look at Tillich's sense of the divine and the experiential human moment. If we were to secularize these terms, we could substitute them with the terms, "principles" and "objectives" and "opportunity" and "circumstances." In other words, from a secular perspective, we confront Tillichian *kairotic* notions all the time, and this is especially true of teachers who use computers in the classroom. For instance, in my life as a teacher-researcher, one maxim that I have heard often repeated is that one's pedagogical techniques in the classroom (everyday lived experience) must always reinforce one's learning objectives for the class (the divine). The connection between pedagogy and classroom practice is especially important when one introduces new or innovative techniques into the classroom because experimental teaching forces us to

reflect on our objectives and our goals. We must remember not to stray from the syllabus's learning objectives when using new teaching techniques or new technologies in the classroom. I am suggesting that *kairos* as defined by Tillich can help us talk about the secular world too, including Computers and Writing. More broadly, we can use Tillich's sense of *Kairos* as a new lens to understand both religious and secular moments of *kairotic* space.

Chapter Four:

I-Thou and You Tube.

In this chapter, I make a speculative argument about the unrealized potential and currently overhyped collaborative uses of one the world's most popular websites: *YouTube*. I begin by reviewing the foundational assumption in the field of Rhetoric and Composition that knowledge is a collaborative venture, that it is socially constructed. Using the work of Karen LeFevre and Martin Buber, I then make the argument that at the heart of a collaborative atmosphere is a spirit of intimacy and empathy. Techno-rhetoricians should study how new computer spaces, such as *YouTube*, have the potential to create opportunities for intimacy. I then transition to how this immensely popular website fails to offer any form of intimacy due to its architectural structure. Scholars such as Ruikie Zhao correctly assert that "[t]hrough sharing *YouTube* videos with students, instructors who practice student-centered pedagogy potentially empower students to participate in social dialogues that engage diverse voices." But for all the sites' widespread use in the classroom and in our culture, the website lacks a sense of intimacy that prevents it from creating a truly collaborative atmosphere. By viewing *YouTube* through the lens of Martin Buber's I-Thou and I-It relationships and comparing it to *GodTube*, an alternative video website, I suggest ways of rethinking how future iterations of *YouTube* could be designed.

Intimacy and the "Conversation of Mankind"

Scholars in the field of Rhetoric and Composition have long assumed that writers construct knowledge through collaborative processes with others rather than by working in isolation. As students, scholars, and online contributors, we "invent" ourselves on campus, we socially construct knowledge among small groups, and we facilitate the "conversation of mankind" by collaborating with the larger culture (Bartholomae, LeFevre, and Bruffee). In the beginning of her book, *Invention as a Social Act*, Karen LeFevre claims that "we inherit from the Greeks a paradoxical view of rhetorical invention," one that has traditionally viewed "the individual alone in the search for truth" (10). But over the last two decades rhetoricians have agreed that "what we experience as reflective thought is related causally to social conversation (we learn one from another);" furthermore, interpersonal and internal conversations are "functionally" connected (Bruffee 420). If we assume that "thought is internalized conversation," then the affordances or detractions of different types of interpersonal communication (lectures, small group discussion, computer-mediated-communication) seep into our internal cognitive dialogues. I am drawing here from Bruffee's assumption that the act of thinking is "an *artifact* created by social interaction," that "[w]e think because we can talk, and we think in ways we have learned to talk" (420, emphasis mine). Bruffee's use of the word "artifact" has in many ways become a key term over the past two and a half decades for Computers and Writing scholars. From blogging, to discussion boards, to computers in the classroom, technorhetoricians have long been interested in how community-formation occurs through computer-mediated communication (Butler and Kinneavy; Essid and Hickey; Honda; Howard; Howard and Benson; Krause). The artifacts of our

conversations are becoming the computer technologies with which we talk to each other either as students and teachers in the classroom or in some other capacity outside of school. The centrality of computer technology in understanding collaboration is a foundational premise in Computers and Writing scholarship, but with each new technology, we as rhetoricians need to rethink if those tools encourage critical thinking, a spirit of inquiry, and (I will argue) empathy for one another, for if "my talk is narrow, superficial, biased, and confined to clichés, my thinking is likely to be so too" (Bruffee 420). We should think about the ways in which different communication technologies create a favorable environment for collaboration in the writing classroom.

What I think is new to Bruffee's work—or at least of added importance—is the question of how the "artifacts" of our collaboration impinge upon the intimacy that occurs between collaborators. Sherry Turkle, in her book *Alone Together*, writes about how computer-mediated communication, whether in the form of texting, social networking, or gaming, can substitute the empty veneer of meaningful relationships for actual intimacy:

> We build a following on Facebook or MySpace and wonder to what
> degree our followers are friends. We recreate ourselves as online personae
> and give ourselves new bodies, homes, jobs, and romances. Yet, suddenly,
> in the half-light of virtual community, we may feel utterly alone. As we
> distribute ourselves, we may abandon ourselves. [. . .] In all of this, there
> is a nagging question: Does virtual intimacy degrade our experience of the
> other kind and, indeed, of all encounters, of any kind? (12)

I do not share the pessimism of this passage about all forms of virtual intimacy, nor do I intend to explore the distinction between virtual and face-to-face forms of intimacy in this chapter. But I do think Turkle's exploration of the potential for deep intimate connections online speaks to our field's ongoing concerns about collaboration and the social construction of knowledge. LeFevre writes about how "the fruitful association of a group of writers in a given time and place has been chronicled in studies of twentieth century literary figures in Paris who gathered at Sylvia Beach's shop, Shakespeare and Company, or at Gertrude Stein's studio at 27, rue de Fleures" (77). LeFevre does not speak to the degree to which these writers joined in "lasting or transient" friendships, but one could surmise that more lasting connections may have had a fortuitous effect on their collaborations. More importantly, LeFevre repeatedly connects the work of philosopher Martin Buber to composition studies by comparing his description of the I-Thou relationship to that between "Socrates' I and his damonion" with the interaction between teachers—the ("Thou") and student-writers (the "I") and to the work of scholars such as Andrea Lunsford, Lisa Ede, and Donald Murray (10; 67-69). She emphasizes how the I-Thou collaborative relationship affects the process of invention, but one can just as easily note that student-teacher or tutor-client relationships successfully generate knowledge through the intimacy fostered between the two individuals. On a personal level, as a teacher and tutor for several years, I have found that establishing a mutual emotional or empathic connection between students and myself alters invariably for the better our efforts to learn from one another. My efforts as a teacher and tutor to create a level of intimacy are informed by the architecture of the classroom or tutoring environment wherein I meet the students. What surrounds the tutoring table? Are the desks movable?

How enclosed or open is the space? How do these artifacts help to forge an empathetic connection between me and the students in my class, and how can I use that empathetic connection to improve our collaboration? When the environment that I teach in occurs online, then the questions just mentioned inevitably change to help me understand the architecture of the web spaces my students and I are working in. I propose that we, as rhetoricians, should increase our focus on the role intimacy plays as a necessary pillar to building a collaborative atmosphere.

Deep and Shallow Connections on the Web

In order to illustrate the importance of intimacy when creating a collaborative atmosphere, I will review the differences between two websites, *YouTube* and a much less popular variation of that site, *GodTube*. By reviewing the differences between these two sites, I will illustrate some of the features missing from *YouTube* that, if present, would make it a more collaborative atmosphere. But to prepare that discussion, I would like to make an arbitrary but nevertheless useful distinction between websites that encourage deep connections and those promote shallow connections. By shallow connections, I mean anything ranging from the simple amalgamation of individuals in one particular place to people whose online relationship consists of a singular fleeting purpose. An example of an amalgamated connection would be extremely popular videos on *YouTube*, those that garner tens or hundreds of millions of views. When one views "Charlie Bit My Finger" (over 300 million views) or "JK Wedding Entrance Dance" (over 65 million views), the experience is the 21st century analog to watching the last episode of a popular television show, such as *MASH*, *Cheers*, or *The Tonight Show* (*YouTube*). When one experiences an amalgamated connection, one may feel an electric

vibe flowing through the air, the feeling that one is witnessing some widespread phenomenon across the country or even globe; but the feeling is an inauthentic substitute for more personal deeper interpersonal relationships. One study conducted found that people who watch a television show regularly start to feel about the characters as if they were friends and family, but the sense of human connection only carries so far (Lather and Moyer-Guse). Other shallow connections occur between people with fleeting connections based on a similar interest or product that they have purchased. On websites like *Ebay*, *Amazon*, *Digg* and *Wikipedia*, the communities that form are not based on people getting to know each other but rather on the convergence of human intellect and interest to build knowledge about a similar topic. Users may work on the same site, but their connection with each other is mediated through a shared interest rather than a desire to connect with each other. Users of *Amazon* would connect on discussion boards about the quality of a product; on *Ebay* they would share reviews of buyers or sellers reliability, and on *Digg* it would be the aggregation of their votes to promote especially interesting news articles. The similar connection on *Wikipedia* would be the articles on which editors collaborate. On some of these sites, such as *Ebay*, users have their identities transferred into a number, and relationships are formed based in large part on that number. For instance, on *Ebay* one's chances of selling a product are heavily influenced by one's "feedback score." Outside of the product itself, the feedback score is the most important connection between users and sellers. Though the Internet is awash in these fleeting or imagined connections between people, another type of interaction is possible, those of deep connections. By deep connections, I mean those where the relationship is either unmediated by a secondary interest or one where the users transcend that interest and

become interested in each other. Social networking sites like *Facebook* or *MySpace* are the best examples of these sites because the primary goal is to connect with others rather than to contribute alongside others to a third interest. Though shallow connections certainly have useful purposes, deep connection websites afford users the opportunity to create closer bonds, which can be useful in collaborative learning environments.

Martin Buber and Deep Connections

Another way of looking at the distinction between deep connections and shallow connections is through Martin Buber's organization of interpersonal relationships into an I-You and I-It paradigm. There is no shortage of research concerning Buber's interest in thinking about and promoting meaningful community and dialogue. As Maurice Friedman writes, "precisely the values which Martin Buber espoused—dialogue, reciprocity, openness, experiencing the other side of the relationship, concern for relationship, and the 'between'—seem to many a luxury that they can no longer afford" since the time of his death (xiii). The fact that LeFevre begins her treatise with a comparison between Buber and Socrates speaks to the efficacy of using the work of the German theologian as a lens to understand the collaborative connections that people can make.

The I-It relationship refers to the any connection where one person views another person or an object in purely functional terms. Instead of relating to the whole person and viewing him or her as an individual of immeasurable worth, the "I" analyzes and breaks apart the other person into discrete units. In the I-It relationship, the "I" perceives the "It" as a "He or She, an aggregate of qualities, a quantum with a shape," instead of being a whole person, someone "unique and devoid of qualities" (69). The moment a person can

begin to "abstract from him the color of his hair, of his speech, of his graciousness," then

that "he" is dehumanized and becomes an "It" (69). Buber speaks of the difference

between "experiencing" and having a "relation" to the world in order to differentiate the

I-It and I-Thou ways of being, respectively. When one "experiences" the world, he or she

"goes over the surfaces of things" and "brings back from them some knowledge of their

condition" (55). To illustrate his definition of the "I-It" relationship, Buber discusses

different approaches one might have to a tree, and almost all of these approaches lead one

to perceive the tree as an It (57). When one observes a tree, that person can "accept it as a

picture," "feel it as a movement," "assign it to a species," abstract its qualities into an

"expression of the law," or "dissolve it into a number," but under all these experiences,

the tree is merely an "It" (57-58). For the It to become a You, the person contemplating

does not need to ignore analytic knowledge that comes from assigning or abstracting the

tree. Rather, the person needs to enter into a dialogic relationship with the tree rather than

objectify it. Dialogism is the catalyzing force that transforms the I-It experience into an I-

Thou relationship, a claim Buber makes repeatedly: "One should not try to dilute the

meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity" (58). It is irrelevant if the It is a person

because the I-It relationship always objectifies whatever is contemplated.

The manner in which Buber describes the I-It relationship carries an unintended

subtext that resonates with the language of the world wide web. He points out that the

quality, quantity, and relative privacy of the information is immaterial to the It-ness: "O

piling up of information! It, it, it" (56). The reader may be reminded of online surfing

when Buber writes, "Man goes over the surface of things and experiences them. He

brings back from them some knowledge of their condition—an experience" (55). The "It"

world, like the information highway, is a place awash in a "multitude of 'contents'" and "nothing but objects" (64). If we define shallow online connections as those where people relate by fleeting personal interests, then a strong resemblance to the I-It relationship can be seen. For instance, Buber discussed how I-It relationships are mediated always through something else, whereas the I-You relationship is unmediated (68). This mediation may be viewed as a fleeting interest. In the following passage, Buber describes a human's relation to the "world":

> There it stands—right next to your skin if you think of it that way, or nestled in your soul if you prefer that: it is your object and remains that, according to your pleasure—and remains primarily alien both outside and inside you. You perceive it and take it for your "truth"; it permits itself to be taken by you, but it does not give itself to you. It is only *about* it that you can come to an understanding with others; although it takes a somewhat different form for everybody, it is prepared to be a common object for you; but you cannot encounter others in it. (82-83)

In this description of the I-It relationship, we do not directly engage with others but only engage things. When he writes that it "is only *about* it that you can come to an understanding with others," the implication is that the focus of the relationship is on a mutual object perceived by the "I" and "It" rather than direct interaction between an "I" and "You." The other party—the other person—may be an object, a commodity to be consumed, a video to be watched, to be played and replayed and shared with others.

The I-You relationship differs from the I-It connection in that the former is an unmediated, divine, and holistic experience. When one becomes part of an I-You

relationship, the You is seen not just as a whole being but as connected to everything

else. By relating to the You, one is actually forming a bond with the totality of existence:

"in each we perceive the breath of it; in every You we address the eternal You, in every

sphere according to its manner" (57). We can see overtones of the deep community

described above when Buber writes, "When I confront a human being as my You and

speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things, nor does he consist

of things" (59). Instead of looking at something alongside someone else, instead of

experiencing someone, one relates directly to that person. It is not the video that a person

sees or even the video editor. Rather, it is the human being that made the video, or

another one who watched it and who has something to say about the video. We can hear

echoes of Brufee, LeFevre, and Bartholomae when Buber writes,

> Relation is reciprocity. My You acts on me as I act on it. Our students
>
> teach us, our works form us. The wicked become a revelation when they
>
> are touched by the sacred basic word. How we are educated by children,
>
> by animals! Inscrutably involved, we live in the current of universal
>
> reciprocity. (67)

Admittedly, Buber's descriptions of the I-You and I-It relationships are not

perfectly analogous to my description of deep and shallow connections because I-You

relationships are indescribable, partially unpredictable, and impermanent. According to

Buber, one can prepare and elicit an I-You relationship by opening one's self to the

divine, to the possibility of reciprocity with another being, but encountering the divine is

unpredictable because the "You encounters me by grace—it cannot be found seeking"

(62). The impermanence of the I-You relationship results from humanity's predilection of

objectifying and analyzing people and objects rather than engaging in relationships with them. Every You exists, at best, "in the alteration of actuality and latency" before descending down to becoming an It (69). Finally, the I-You relationship cannot be analyzed; it is a way of being rather than something to be understood from afar, for it is "not a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities" (59). Despite the differences between Buber's philosophy and my description of deep and shallow connections, his philosophy still functions as a useful lens because the pathways of his thought are placed at the crossroads of rhetoric and religion and run alongside studies about computer-mediated communication.

YouTube and the I-It Relationship

The distinction between shallow and deep connections will help us understand *YouTube*, one of the most popular websites in the world. In the last five years, *YouTube* has become the most popular repository of online videos in the world. In 2010, over 13 million videos were shared, and there were over 700 billion views to the site's videos ("Statistics"). The amount of the video footage uploaded was equal to "150,000+ full-length movies in theatres each week" ("Statistics"). Based on information from the website, the intended audience demographic for this site includes people from 18-54 years of age, and "[m]ore video is uploaded to *YouTube* in 60 days than the 3 major US networks created in 60 years" ("Statistics"). The site is without question the undisputed leader in web traffic for videos, at least within the United States, and the site garners a tremendous worldwide audience. The democratic potential of the site has been cited by scholars (Zhao; Bugess and Green) and the popular press ("Grossman") because the site offers documentarians, politicians, and anyone with a message the opportunity to voice

their opinion in the public square. Entertainment careers have been created because of

this site, political careers ruined, memes started, and fortunes made. If one has any doubt

about the power that *YouTube* offers to affect change, one merely need ask former

Virginia Senator George Allen about its possibility to change one's image overnight

("Craig and Shear"). Presidential debates have drawn upon questions uploaded for

candidates, campaign commercials have been posted and spread virally, and the potential

for any political gaffe or creative video to become the next widely discussed meme. A

recent book has justifiably hyped the participatory culture that surrounds the website

(Burgess and Green). The site even has its own awards ceremony now (Coyle).

The site has begun to transform teacher-student interaction in college

environments as well. As Jeffery Young writes in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*,

"What's more, Web video opens a new form of public intellectualism to scholars looking

to participate in an increasingly visual culture" ("Thanks to *YouTube*"). Young reveals

how universities and *YouTube* are uploading taped interviews and lectures in order "to

connect people with the professors and topics that most interest them." In the field of

Rhetoric and Composition, Ruijie Zhao has claimed that *YouTube*'s immense popularity

has lead it to be a "a site of heterogeneous content, various narrative strategies, and

diverse styles." From Zhao's perspective, this site offers tremendous opportunities to

teach invention in the classroom by using the videos in order to engage students in

classroom discussion. If students need to problematize a topic before they begin writing,

then a *YouTube* video can have the potential to help students "uncover what they have

already known, enlighten them about what they do not know, and inspire them to know

more about the subject." Teachers can use *YouTube* to generate classroom discussion and

catalyze student-thought about a paper topic through peer-engagement (Zhao). Zhao's

argument implies that *YouTube* can foster conversation between students in the

classroom, which in turn will help them to dig up memories and make connections

between their own lives and the visual representations of research they see on the screen:

> The instructor, as the person who chooses and shows this video to
>
> students, can encourage dialogue among students. When students view the
>
> video, they dialogue with themselves and the video. While they work in
>
> groups to brainstorm, they can share the internal dialogues they have with
>
> themselves and with the video. By communicating these dialogues to
>
> peers, they become more aware of the knowledge that they have regarding
>
> the topic of sleep. During the process of conversing with peers, students
>
> will be delighted to see how their peers' knowledge adds to what they
>
> know, and the interaction among them helps them generate ideas,
>
> brainstorm topics, and build their confidence as writers.

When Zhao discusses how "the process of conversing with peers" will create synergistic

knowledge in the classroom, one can clearly see how *YouTube* could create a

collaborative atmosphere. The collaboration even extends back to *YouTube* because the

students "dialogue with themselves and the video." As Zhao describes the collaborative

connections that can happen in a classroom with *YouTube* invention strategies, one feels a

sense of trust and mutual understanding is possible among students, and that connection

could strengthen the sense of community felt in the classroom.

But that potential sense of community happens in the classroom rather than

online, and the dialogue that occurs on *YouTube* is really just an extension of the

classroom environment. As Zhao observes, "*YouTube* itself is not a promise of engaging and productive collaborative dialogue"; the teacher must facilitate this discussion. *YouTube* itself is like a palette from which the pedagogical artistry of collaboration can be constructed. Zhao might disagree with this point because he sees the online resources "as a heterogeneous site that assimilates different voices, represents the interests of different groups [. . .] allows people from different ethnic groups, cultural and political backgrounds to share their knowledge, attitudes, and opinions through dialogues." But I would argue that these dialogues leave much to be desired, that they are, at best, a shallow rather than deep connection. The pedagogical opportunities that Zhao discusses offer only a veneer of dialogic communication because they exclude the possibility for deep connections between viewers and posters onto the website. Viewers can express their opinion about videos through a discussion board, and over half of all videos on *YouTube* have been commented on ("Statistics"); there are channels on *YouTube* where people of similar interest can subscribe to videos, thus creating a sense of amalgamated connection. Anyone can make a video for the world to see with just rudimentary camera equipment, a high speech Internet connection, and a computer. But the appearance of community is deceptive in many ways. As one popular magazine noted, simply because people are uploading videos does not mean others are listening; the chances of one's video becoming even minimally popular are minuscule (Wilson). Chris Wilson collected 10,000 videos that were uploaded to *YouTube* on the same day and after one month, only "25, 0.3 percent, had more than 10,000 views" and approximately two-thirds of all the selected videos received fewer than 50 views (Wilson). And even if one does receive a mass audience, the site's architecture offers few opportunities for meaningful

interpersonal communication. Users upload videos and may never return to see the

comments. People can respond to videos with their own videos, but the response is often

intended for a general audience rather than directed toward the original poster. Those

who post comments may respond to others, but most dialogues do not sustain themselves

for long. Part of the reason for the failure of sustained conversation on the discussion

boards is due to the fact that the comments are organized chronologically rather than

topically. As a result, users may find it cumbersome to read through past comments that

either respond only to the video itself or to the immediately preceding comments. The

discussion board organization makes a sustained conversation almost impossible to

develop and means that each comment most likely responds to the video rather than to

other comments. In other words, to borrow Buber's words once more, the architecture of

the commentary boards means, "[i]t is only *about* [the video] that you can come to an

understanding with others"; rather than relating to others directly, the emphasis is always

on the video itself (83). The connection viewers have is to the video itself rather than to

the person posting the video or to other commentators. Whereas readers might interact

with an author, the design of *YouTube* means that viewers engage with the video rather

than its author. Though *YouTube* is designed as a "many to many" form of expression,

the structure of the site does not encourage dialogic communication. Though website is a

reservoir of video, the connection between users is still shallow. Instead, we might

describe the commentary function on *YouTube* the same way Newton M. Minow, former

Chariman of the Federal Communications Commission described television during the

1950s, as a "vast wasteland" of empty compliments, vile comments, and unconstructive

disagreements. If we read the comments on many of the videos, we find "many

screaming, cajoling, and offending" posts, and even though we may find the occasional

meaningful interpersonal conversation, "they will be very, very few" (Minow). The lack

of a deep community marks something conspicuously missing from *YouTube*. But can we

as technorhetoricians conceive of *YouTube* in a different way, as not simply a tool for

self-expression but a place for fostering a deeper more intimate connection between

members of this online community? In what ways would the purpose of the website

change? How would the architecture of the site change? What affordances would this

new website provide for users?

What makes Buber so helpful when talking about *YouTube* is the way he

described I-Thou relationships as "relational," whereas I-It relationships resulted in both

parties becoming objectified. Though *YouTube* may not first appear to objectify its

viewers or users, the inability to talk-back or create a sustained conversation either

through video or text means that a level of dialogic interaction is not possible. We

experience and send and replay videos; we consume them, and the "world as experience

belongs to the basic word "I-It" (Buber 56). But if we were able to communicate and

interact with others in meaningful dialogue on the site, then we could use the word I-You,

for that word "establishes the world of relation" (Buber 56).

GodTube and the Possibility for I-Thou Relationships

GodTube, a Christian video website, provides an alternative to *YouTube*; it is

more than simply *YouTube* with a Christian spin. If that were the totality of the site's

contribution, it would be of little note. Before discussing the innovative strengths that

create a community of empathy on *GodTube*, it would be helpful to outline the site's

basic design and purpose and by doing so account for some other factors that create an

empathetic community. The majority of *GodTube*'s content consists of videos focusing on music, ministry, films, inspiration, comedy, and humor (or "cute") content. The website's commercial purpose and top-down structure promote a more authoritative tone than the wikis or blogging sites mentioned in the previous chapters. The site is a for-profit venture hosted by the Salem Web Network, which is a subsidiary of Salem Communications, a company that advertises itself as "Christian Radio, Conservative Talk, News Talk." Unlike the wiki websites in Chapter Two or the Emergent Village and Open Source Theology sites in Chapter Three, *GodTube*'s relationship with the Christian faith seems to be primarily about business and only secondarily about promoting the Christianity. With the blogging and wikis sites, there was much less advertising on the pages, and the sponsoring organizations were all non-profit entities. In contrast, virtually everything linked or designed on *GodTube* has a commercial benefit to either Salem Communications or to someone else. At the bottom of the page, a resources links list refers visitors to other interactive websites, each of which is owned by Salem Communications. There is a resource where one can read the Bible (http://www.biblestudytools.com/) and another where one can visit a "Prayer Wall," consisting of a discussion board where users can post and respond to prayer requests; there is also a Christian online forum (http://forums.crosswalk.com). At the top of the front page, a daily devotional link shares inspirational words and a video to which readers are invited to think and respond. But most of these devotionals "feature" professional artists, bloggers, preachers, or actors who often have movies and music to sell. Such devotionals feature such celebrities as actor Wes Bently, Christian musician Johnny Diaz, Bethany Hamilton, who lost an arm while surfing and about whom a film was released in

April 2010, evangelist talk show host Sheila Walsh, and, yes, Pattie Mallette, Justin

Bieber's mother.

The terms of service policies page reinforces the site's top-down corporate

structure with a long list of precise directives about what can be shared or written on the

site.[10] Users are not allowed to write "slang terms" like "crap, screwed, and screwing

around"; they can be banned for "[a]ttacking the character or motives of someone who

differs with your view or denying that he or she is a Christian," and administrators feel

that it is unhelpful to provide "unwelcome spiritual counsel" or partake in "debating

doctrinal issues." The terms of service teeter on the edge of micromanagement with a

prohibition of "all caps, unnecessarily long messages, or meaningless text" and a warning

not to transit "PMs ("Private" Messages) telling [other users] to come check out your new

website or community." There are even rules about how one behaves when operating

outside the site because "unauthorized framing of or linking to the Site is not permitted."

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[10]   The website is part of the "open web" in that much of its content is not password
protected. It is as easily viewable as *YouTube*. However the site also has a policy
statement that only registered members are permitted in "community areas"; we are told
that "[c]hat, forums, videos, blogs, article comments, profile comments, and the prayer
wall are all considered 'community areas.'" Of course, that means that the entire website
is considered off limits to outside viewership, while simultaneously being part of the
open web.
        The permissibility of viewing and researching this website can best be informed
by Heidi McKee and James Porter's article, "The Ethics of Digital Writing Research: A
Rhetorical Approach." McKee and Porter call for "a casuistic-heuristic approach—useful
for making tough ethical decisions" when the distinctions between public and private
spaces fall apart online. They recommend triangulating the expectations of one's research
community, the web community being studied, and outside institutions. With that in
mind, I have avoided quoting from prayer requests or discussion forums where personal
information was displayed; but I have quoted from video discussion comments or text
and video which is intended for a larger audience (and in some cases posted on other
websites as well). Unlike in the previous chapters, I avoid using people's usernames in
order to protect their privacy.

The policy agreement could at best be seen as a misguided attempt to avoid the vast wasteland on meaningless and vulgar commentary found on *YouTube*; at worst the site's rules intimidate readers with impenetrable complexity and sacrifice the rawness of real human interaction that is sometimes accompanied by conflict, anger, and presumption. This sacrifice may be seen as a Pyrrhic victory that attempts to eradicate meaningless comments in order to create a more supportive community. The presence of these policies and the commercial nature of the site might undermine site's ability to facilitate deep connections between users, but several other design features of *GodTube* are useful in this regard.

The digital features that surround the site establish a context around the videos that helps to foster a more intimate relationship between the user/reader/viewer and the content. For instance, the site has a daily devotional site linked prominently at the top of the page, where excerpts from published texts are located. One such devotional occurred on April 6th, 2011. Johnny Diaz, who is a Christian music pop artist, discussed the context of his song both through a short text and through a short video. His devotional is specifically timed for the preparation of Easter. The devotional consists of a Bible citation followed by a 330 word message about the oddity of celebrating a execution device as painful as a cross. Beneath the 330 word message is a short 81 second video of Diaz sitting with a guitar, presumably preparing to perform "a song on [his] new record called, 'The Beauty of the Cross.'" The video message ends with an invocation from Diaz to each of his readers about how to change their spiritual mindset: "So this Easter, please keep that in mind, and I'll do my best as well, to remember that without the cross, nothing is beautiful, nothing is clean, nothing is pure, nothing is even worth it. That is

why the cross is beautiful—hope you enjoy my song 'beauty of the cross.'" The passage

above the video incorporates a Bible verse that resonates with Easter by discussing how

"Jesus was raised from the dead" and as a result all Christians have "been given a brand-

new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven" (1 Peter 1:3). The

text written below the verse encourages the reader to rethink well-worn verses:

> There is a song on my new record called, "The Beauty of the Cross." This
>
> title may not sound very strange or contradictory to you. After all, we've
>
> been singing songs such as "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," and
>
> "How Beautiful the Cross" for decades. However, if you step back and
>
> check this out from a non-churched perspective, you have to admit that it
>
> seems a little, well . . . weird!

The effect is to turn the video into more than simply an object to be viewed, more than

simply an "It" that "I" analyze or consume: it makes the page a contemplative space, one

where people do not simply visit a site but interact with it. The writer/speaker (Diaz)

approaches his viewers on a much more personal level than simply as potential viewers

or the aggregation of impersonal clicks; they are fellow Christians. The invocation from

Diaz adjusts the audience's relationship with him as well. His devotional reframes him

from a celebrity or performer into a person, someone worshiping alongside Christians.

Some of the devotionals are even more interactive and make use of hyperlinking

to bring in commentary and opinions from viewers. For instance, the April 1st devotional

of 2011 references an upcoming film, *There Be Dragons*. The devotional itself stresses

the importance of connecting with others. The devotional describes two of the main

characters in the film and frames the story as a choice between facing one's problems—

or "dragons"—alone and embracing the help of others to struggle through them. The biblical verse referenced in the devotional refers to Ruth's decision to stay with Naomi: "But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay'" (NIV Ruth 1: 16-18). When describing the film, there is a distinction made between the character Josemaria, who is "always connecting with the people around him," and Manolo, who rejects help from others and prefers to be alone. Manolo is the character played by Wes Bentley, an actor who is a son of a Methodist minister and who has struggled with alcoholism. Bentley describes his connection with Manolo in the video by focusing on how human relationships brought him closer to God:

> I can knit Manolo and me together, I think, very easily. Who the man is, um, really rang true. He did so many things wrong . . . I actually got sober on this movie, on *There Be Dragons*. It's not easy to do it yourself; in fact, I think—I personally think—it's impossible to do it by yourself. I was lucky to meet someone on the film who's very inspirational without trying to be. He was two years sober. I had to go to him and tell him, "look, I've got a problem, and you look like you could help me." So I got sober that day and went to the 12 step meetings and all of that. And that happened while we were filming *There Be Dragons*. I was counting my days while we were shooting that film, and it was for me the most beautiful experience. It set me free. If my soul can heal, I can move on with my life. I can be a dad; I can be a good brother, I can be a good person in society; I can be a great actor.

All of Bentley's reflections speak to the importance of empathy and connectivity between people. It was only through mutual empathy with another person on the set that Bentley was able to do what would otherwise be "impossible." It was only through that connection that he could form relationships with others at work, with his brother, with his children, and with society. He even "knits" a connection between him and his character. The actor's reflections appear especially fitting given Roland Joffe's description of why he directed the film, which has a slightly different focus: "I wanted to make a story that is about bringing love to the world, about the absence of love in the world and what that does because when love goes it leaves a vacuum, and that vacuum can fill with very, very, very, unpleasant things." But the context of the video on the webpage speaks more to how it encourages a deep connection with audiences. Embedded between the Bible verse and the video is a study guide that focuses on questions that implore readers to begin actively engaging with the text rather than simply absorbing the material. One of the questions directly addresses the importance of relationships by encouraging readers to think about "the advantages of running ideas by friends" rather than making "mistakes by deciding things all by yourself." The next question focuses on the proclivity of people to become "overly attached to celebrities and sports heroes," a habit that can form "a poor substitute for real relationships." The question about celebrity worship comes right before the video of Bentley and, therefore, whether intended or not subtly implies that the viewer should view Bentley as a person with the frailties of alcoholism rather than a celebrity. He is a "Thou" rather than an "It," a fellow Christian who has fallen and been redeemed rather than celebrity to be analyzed or an entertainment clip to be focused on. The final intertitle on the video asks the viewer, "What are your dragons?" and then

"How do you face them?" The final inter-title invites viewers to "share your story" with a link to the official "There Be Dragons" page. On that page users are encouraged to "Share a dragon in your life (a problem, weakness, or challenge) so others can offer advice," and are reminded that "your struggle can inspire others." Each of the posts begins with an automated beginning that states, "My Secret Struggle is" and is followed with comments like "choosing between staying here and find a job or going back to my hometown," or "Eating way too much at times." There is also an option to "comment" on posts others have made. The overall effect on the original page is to transform a simple video into an experience where people can relate with each other rather than simply consume an experience.

The site has a link to the Prayer Wall as well, on which people post their problems and ask others for assistance calling upon help from God. People use this wall not just to share their troubles with each other but to post their supplications to God. The typical prayer wall will begin with someone writing about a need in his or her life: a car that is malfunctioning, a test that they are taking, a disease or illness, or monetary problems. Sometimes, the prayers are for a third party: caregivers, family, and friends. The typical response by others is not direct empathy but a prayer to God on the discussion board, either in the first person plural or first person singular. At times, the prayer wall will focus on discussing scripture: for instance, one discussion chain focused around meditating on the most meaningful prayer scriptures. But whether the discussion threads are prayers or merely discussions, the users of the site appear genuinely interested in each other's problems, maintain the main idea of the discussion thread, and provide encouragement to each other. It is not simply an anonymous place to share one's

viewpoints, because each prayer request is connected to a username with an embedded link to that user's profile information. By fostering a relationship between Christians in need of prayer and others who are empathetic, the prayer wall helps to foster a triangular relationship between believers and the God in whom they believe. What's important for my argument is that the intimacy of this Prayer Wall subtly changes the tone of *GodTube* from one of merely entertainment to one of more focused interpersonal communication.

Another feature on the website—"The 30 Days of GodTube" challenge—creates opportunities for interactivity that could, in turn, create more intimate relationships. The website's challenge is meant to garner interest and awareness in the site. Each of the challenges provides a contest where users must search *GodTube* videos, write on the site's *Facebook* fan page, discuss what the site means to them, create a video or tell others about the video. One of the challenges calls for users to "search for a term on GodTube.com and search the same term on *YouTube*," with the assurance that "the results you receive on GodTube.com will be family friendly." After making a comparison between *YouTube* comments and *GodTube* comments, users are asked to reflect on their observations on the *GodTube* Facebook page. Another challenge asks users to create a "prayer flash mob" by bringing "a group together—a youth group, choir, dance group or just a group of friends." Certainly, some of the efforts at promoting *GodTube* do less to promote deep connections between users; for instance, another challenge calls for participants to engage in a scavenger hunt where they find a logo placed on a random video; after they find the video they should post a comment with the signature VSH (for "video scavenger hunt"). Even though the scavenger hunt challenge may successfully generate interest in the site, it reduces human interaction by replacing names with

monikers. The commentary is merely a marker meant to signify someone has seen a video; the content of the video less important than the opportunity to "win $50 in cash each day." Then there's a video Mad Libs effort where Bob Smiley invites users to participate in a collaborative video project. He gives viewers a list of words—for instance, an exclamatory phrase, a verb, an occupation, an object, a drink, and a (clean) body part—and asks that people film themselves speaking the words and post the video on the site under the title of "Mad Libs." While this activity sounds very entertaining, it does not forge the type of deep connections I have written about. Nevertheless, we can see how many of the *GodTube* challenges illustrate ways to turn videos into more than simply an "experience," where an "I" observes an "It"; some of the challenges illustrate the possibility for more intimate "I-Thou" relationships.

All of the ministry and challenge videos represented above along with the prayer wall are the periphery features of the site, and these periphery features represent the main strategies *GodTube* uses to create a sense of meaningful community. The main database of videos on *GodTube*, however, have the potential to engender a sense of community both in terms of content and the posted commentary on the discussion boards below. On the front page, there is a list of the most popular videos on the site. A satirical video posted on the site exemplifies the potential for more meaningful interactive relationships. The video is a mock advertisement for an openly shallow Bible Study group; the mock video expresses the danger of small study groups to shy away from meaningful conversations and toward the more superficial daily minutia of life. The title of the video was plainly comical: "Uncomfortable at Bible Study? Try the Shallow Small Group! :),"

The video begins with a adult male introducing us to his Bible study group in plainly

satirical language:

> Are you tired of small groups always getting into your business, trying to
> get you to share your feelings, discuss your past, confess your sins. Are
> you just looking for a place just to kick it, network, maybe get some free
> grub. Me too. That's why I created what I believe to be the world's first
> openly shallow small group. We're not here to deal with messy stuff like
> feelings and emotions. You got problems? You deal with it. You're an
> adult. Life ain't easy, so stop the pity party. We all have our issues. We
> don't really want to do life together. Frankly at shallow small group, we
> try not to do anything at all. You'll never hear us use the term "unpack
> that thought." We're sure it's packed away for a really good reason.

The video is not exclusive to *GodTube* (it can be found on *YouTube* as well, for instance),

but its placement on the site and the discussion comments illustrate an attention to

empathy on the site. In terms of content, this video speaks to the heart of the I-Thou

relationship as it satirizes the tendency of some Bible study groups to avoid interpersonal

relationships and only address people on a superficial level. Many of the comment posts

on this video respond that this video strikes a chord with viewers. In sixteen of the

seventy-one comments on the discussion board, responders conveyed a similar sense of

superficiality in Bible study groups they had experienced.

What's interesting is that many of the comments on the site move beyond

discussing just the video and mention how the subject matter relates to people's own

lives. One writer explains that he thought the video was humorous because he "had

experiences much like this." Another says that the video is a "[p]erfect example of what we all should avoid in our small groups." That user continues by writing, "yeah it's sarcastic and sad, it reflects our secret and egocentric lifestyles. Everyone needs to grow biblically all together, not like the world shows us today." Supporting words are offered from another user who writes, "Good video! I liked how it points out exactly what small groups have issues with. (At least mine!) Such as being REAL. You guys always do a good job of using humor to help people see what needs to be changed! Keep it up." One commenter agrees with this person by writing,

> Totally agree with you on this. My small group at church is painfully superficial, making me uncomfortable because I can imagine all the great things we could be doing with the time, and discussing spiritual matters can be enjoyable as well! I think the point is that we need to discover the balance between having a good time fellowshiping and doing what we are called to do and be as Christians [. . .]"

But it is also important to note how the users deal with conflict on this video posting. None of the comments posted were vulgar, and those that were negative maintained a mostly constructive attitude. Many of the posters fail to catch the sarcasm of the video and express shock that such a group exists. They chide the website for putting that type of video on the website. One such objection states, "Done in poor taste. Not sure what the purpose of this video was. It doesn't honor Christ in any way. Sorry it found it's [sic] way to my desktop. I thought I had marked that as spam?!" To which another user responds, "Have you ever heard of sarcasm or seen parodies? This video is demonstrating what small groups should avoid. This is by no means trying to be serious. It's just a parody. Lighten up." Without question, there is a conflict between those who liked the video and

those who find it offensive, but the absence of any malice of vulgarity is noteworthy, even considering the rather strict commentary rules on the website previously mentioned. The negativity of the comments are by and large focused on the video while the large positive comments move beyond the textual into the interpersonal, where people comment on their own experiences or respond to the experiences of others.

Conclusion

In space, they say no one can hear you scream; on *YouTube*, you just have the false impression they can. But it does not need to be that way. *YouTube* does offer numerous advantages to teachers and students in the classroom, and the website clearly has the potential to be a democractizing force, allowing more people to share their opinions as part of the public discourse. As Zhao explains, the site does offer teachers excellent opportunities to help students work their way through the invention process. But *YouTube* is only superficially a many-to-many form of communication because the site does not allow for any kind of intimate connections between those who upload and those who watch videos. The comment features, channel structures, and respond-with-video options offer not so much a community or a place to engage in sustained conversation as they do a space to air random thoughts. Of course, one could reply that people do not visit *YouTube* for sustained conversations, but if such a site were built, would people come to discuss and collaborate, instead of simply to consume? *GodTube* has its failures and the sizable policy statement about what can and cannot be said on the site is either, at best, misguided or, at worst, paternalistic. But the policy statement does help to create a tone of civility that might contribute to a more intimate atmosphere. More importantly, by framing the videos around contemplative study guides, interactive

contests, and links to other more interactive sites, *GodTube* creates a video site that endeavors to create a meaningful intimate atmosphere rather than simply an assortment of loosely connected videos. My argument is not meant to criticize *YouTube* for failing to create an intimate atmosphere, for that is not the function of the site. Rather, it is to critique the implications of the absence of intimacy from *YouTube* and suggest that technorhetoricians should begin thinking of new ways of using that website or creating similar sites. If intimacy matters to collaboration and idea invention, then what are we missing by simply using *YouTube*? If an educational version of *YouTube* were to be created (one already has: http://bigthink.com/), then how could we learn from the lessons of *GodTube* to create a more intimate atmosphere? *GodTube* is aimed toward a Christian community, a community that is, at least in theory, dedicated to developing I-Thou relationships. But I-Thou relationships are at the heart of a humanistic education as well, so is it so unlikely that we might be able to learn from their construction of a video website? When we watch videos on *YouTube*, does it ever extend beyond the I-It relationship, and what kind of collaborative communities could develop if it did?

Chapter Five:

Pedagogical Applications to the Composition Classroom

In this chapter, I review the arguments of Chapters Two and Three and speculate on ways in which the conclusions in those chapters can be applied to the writing classroom or to the experiences of writing teacher/researchers. In the first half of this chapter, I briefly review my definition of *genesis-ethos* and how it functions within religious wikis. I then use current scholarship on wikis to show how *genesis-ethos* could apply to other types of collaborative wiki writing, including on *Wikipedia*. Using Mark Phillipson's description of "simulation wikis" and Ian Bogost's analysis of procedural rhetoric, I speculate on specific classroom exercises that could be used. In the second half of this final chapter, I use the similarities between the crisis facing the Emergent Church and the "Crisis in the Humanities." I look at ways in which scholars in the field of Computers and Composition are continually asked to explain their work and negotiate with instructors, administrators, foundations, and other academic disciplines in an effort to teach writing. What our discipline needs is a careful examination of the capable and ineffective rhetoric used to represent our field to others. I conclude that a Tillichian concept of *Kairos* would be a useful lens to understand how the Emergent Church represents itself and transforms a crisis into an opportunity. I conclude with three rhetorical techniques that the Emergent Church uses to cultivate a Tillichian *kairotic* moment that we, as Computers and Writing scholars, could adopt for our own field.

I have hinted at ways in which we can apply online Christian practices to the field of digital humanities in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. For instance, I have looked at the way in which composed and genesis-*ethos* force people to think about how an online community represents authority. I have examined how a Tillichian concept of *Kairos* can give us new language to talk about how timeless values meet new technological opportunities, and I have explored how *YouTube*'s design encourages I-It relationships, whereas *GodTube* shows ways of developing I-You relationships. But what is needed is a more detailed look at how these concepts can be applied to the more daily work of Computers and Writing specialists. In this chapter, I would like to find intersections between the use of genesis-*ethos* and the rhetoric of the Emergent Church to the way writing teachers/scholars represent and practice their pedagogy in and out of the classroom. Since the connection to Rhetoric and Composition may seem especially tenuous for Chapters Two and Three, I will focus on those. The conclusion to Chapter Four has already explained how the affordances of an I-Thou video website can be practiced in the classroom.

Genesis-Ethos in the Classroom

The negotiation of genesis and composed-*ethos* on the websites, *Theopedia, ChristianWiki, and OrthodoxWiki* complicate previous scholarship about how to use wikis in the classroom. By reinterpreting previous scholarship in the field of Rhetoric and Composition about wikis, writing teachers can begin to explore ways that composed and genesis-*ethos* can be pedagogically significant. Matt Barton asserts that "the most successful wikis are encyclopedic in format" ("Is There a Wiki" 181) because collaborative writing among a large community of writers inevitably brings together

mutually exclusive viewpoints and perspectives. Barton is without question correct that

Wikipedia and other encyclopedic websites have had the most success in terms of

content, contributors, and readers. But he is not right to so quickly dismiss argumentative

or point-of-view wikis, nor should we assume that encyclopedic wikis are necessarily

non-point-of-view in approach. Before explaining the blind spot in Barton's assumptions,

it will be helpful to review his argument about the inefficacy of argumentative wikis. If a

group of strangers try to write about President Roosevelt's New Deal legislation,

Christianity, or even the New York Yankees, then the combination of each writer's

opinion will create conflict; given the fact that the writers may never have met and that

they work asynchronously with each other (over a period of years, perhaps), these

differences of opinion would lead to a chaotic wiki text. From this perspective, a wiki

arranged around an argumentative agenda will dissolve "into anarchy, as individuals

gather into dreadful 'wiki gangs' hell-bent on imposing their own myopic views even at

the cost of destroying the wiki and its community" ("Is There a Wiki" 183). The best

strategy then, Barton argues, is to promote a neutral point-of-view that informs rather

than describes a text. This is why *Wikipedia's* three main editing rules are the adherence

of a neutral point-of-view, no inclusion of original research, and "verifiability," meaning

that all assertions on *Wikipedia* that are "challenged or likely to be challenged must be

attributed to a reliable published source" ("Wikipedia: Neutral point of view").

These safeguards allow *Wikipedia*—and other descriptive encyclopedic wikis—to

be successful. By adhering to a neutral point-of-view, the editors of *Wikipedia* transform

the weaknesses of wikis into strengths. The neutrality of *Wikipedia* creates a sense of

openness, and it is "precisely the openness and perceived vulnerability of *Wikipedia* that

draws in so many helpful contributors, who feel that they have a personal stake in the community" (182). Wikis are vulnerable to attack, to being edited or changed by anyone, and to mistakes that are not quickly or easily vetted by experts. But this vulnerability also encourages beginning writers to contribute time and effort to a website where there is no financial compensation or reward for writing. Without the clarity of objectivity that *Wikipedia* demands from its writers, the uneasy social compact between writers would transform into a digital war.

Barton's argument is compelling but incomplete because sites like *Theopedia* clearly demonstrate that wikis can be argumentative. Each of the three wikis that I discussed in Chapter Two are encyclopedias, a fact that complicates Barton's notion of what a wiki can be: From Barton's perspective, a neutral point-of-view brings to fruition the "*essence* of wiki: the tolerance, diversity, give-and-take, and collaborative nature of the wiki enterprise" ("Is There a Wiki" 183, emphasis his). Though each of the three Christian wikis practices an argumentative approach, they still are able to encourage tolerance and a give-and-take approach. *WikiChristian* maintains civility among its contributors by admitting that definitions of Christianity are "considered ambiguous by some people, but unfortunately, these lines in the sand are never perfect." OrthodoxWiki wants each of its contributors to collaborate "in an intelligent manner and engage in polite discussion," and content that contradicts *Theopedia's* statement-of-faith "may be respectfully and reasonably criticized**"** within a Christian community. All of these wikis broaden the possibilities of what wikis can successfully accomplish; the contributors abandon—at least partially—a NPOV strategy without destroying the bottom-up structure contribution structure.

After Barton asserts that wikis are best when written in a NPOV structure, he "examines the specific kinds of value that good wiki assignments can add to the classroom" ("Is There a Wiki" 185). The presumption of the second half of his chapter is that the "best wiki assignments are those that take fullest advantage of these traits and that work *with* rather than *against,* the wiki way" (186), meaning in part a NPOV approach. But while many or most classroom wiki assignments work best by moving alongside the architectural structure of wikis, the presence of these three Christian wiki assignments open up teaching possibilities that Barton and other compositionists have not discussed or imagined yet. Writing teachers can transfer notions of genesis-*ethos* and composed-*ethos* that occur in Christian websites into the everyday work of writing teachers through practical ideas for lessons, writing assignments, and classroom activities.

Genesis-ethos and ethnic identity

To begin making composed and genesis-*ethos* more practical, we should broaden the discussion from only religious evangelism to questions of how genesis-*ethos* connects to reliability; anytime the reliability of a writer on a wiki is complicated by their offline *ethos*, the tension between genesis and composed *ethos* becomes relevant. The attention to identity was explained in greater detail in Chapter Two, so I will only briefly recall that *Theopedia,* for instance, required its editors to not only adhere to the site's primary statement-of-faith when writing, but to affirm that as Christians they personally believed in it. *OrthodoxWiki* and *ChristianWiki* both provided spaces for individual reflection and commentary (single authored pages), which allowed contributors to express their own beliefs on personal pages, while collaborating on other co-authored texts. Each of the

sites was concerned with creating and maintaining a Christian community in order to define what would count as community: each site reminds its readers they are Christians first and wiki writers second. In many of the examples of meta-talk mentioned in Chapter 2, contributors to these sites are concerned with whether their personal beliefs influence their authority within the wiki's religious community.

These same concerns about genesis-*ethos* can be found in previously discussed scholarship on wikis. D.A. Caeton writes about his experiences using wikis to help students think about knowledge as fluid in form and socially constructed. He used a research project on *Wikipedia*, asking students to analyze how identity-terminology (for instance, ethnic descriptors) related to the student's own sense of self; students were required to analyze "the definition and usage of these terms by Wikipedia authors" (126). Part of the objective of the assignment was to examine how *Wikipedia* writers negotiate and agree upon a definition for ethnic descriptors. One student, "Eminia," conducted an analysis of terminology connected to her own ethnic heritage by researching how Bosnians were described through several *Wikipedia* articles. In the process of her research, Eminia began to question the reliability of some of the *Wikipedia* editors based not only on their words but on their supposed ethnic heritage or political background. In many of Eminia's comments she is equally concerned about *who* is speaking as she is about *what* is being said; for her the genesis-*ethos* of the writer appears of paramount importance:

> Why Vedran believes what she does about the name *Bosniak* is not clear.
> She gives a list of reasons, but how do you know she isn't supporter of
> Milosevic or if not, then at least anti-Muslim? She writes how Bosnian

> Muslims are "free to call themselves what they like. However, other
>
> people, such as me, who desire to be called Bosniaks—should be called
>
> Bosniaks. However, this is not clear because this Vedran might not be
>
> Bosnian, at all. Nobody even knows if she is real. (paper of Emina, qtd. in
>
> Caeton 130)

The inquiry into Vedran's ethnic identity and the questioning of her political allegiances emphasizes not how Vedran represents herself but who she is in actuality, her genesis-*ethos* rather than her composed-*ethos*. She even goes so far as to question whether Vedran is "real," but if one finds Vedran's argument about Bosnians convincing, then it should be irrelevant whether she exists. If we were to assume that "wikis do not distinguish between authors and readers, but emphasize only the text itself," then the examination of genesis and composed-*ethos* would be a fruitless endeavor (Barton, "Future of Rational-Critical" 183). But the meta-talk pages on wikis do offer the opportunity to focus on authorial presence more, and the people most likely to focus on those meta-talk pages are heavy contributors to the wiki-page. Caeton's examination of Emina's growth as a writer focuses more on her growing awareness of the social-construction of knowledge. As she witnessed arguments between various authors on the Serbian Wikipedia page, "her conceptions of truth became more sophisticated, and she began to regard knowledge as a composite of different claims and ideas" (132). But another way of looking at her growth as a student-writer would explore how *ethos* played a role in how she viewed truth, how the wiki complicated her notions of truth through a focus on genesis-*ethos* and reliability. Consider how Caeton describes the process wherein objective truth became a problematic concept for his student:

Both Nikola and Igor shared Emina's opposition to Vedran's efforts to

redefine Wikipedia's official representation of Muslims originating from

the formerly united Yugoslavia. In response to Vedran's comment that the

term *Bosnian Muslim* was separatist in nature and therefore problematic,

Nikola, whose user profiler revealed that he holds interests in "Serbia,

Serbian culture, and history," replied that "in this case Bosniak is

ambiguous, incorrect, and derisive." Igor, who like Nikola was listed in

Wikipedia's directory of Serbian users, concurred that "the Bosniak name

causes ambiguities and confusion." But, while Emina appreciated Igor's

and Nikola'a positions on Bosnian Muslims, she was challenged by their

understanding of discourse production and negotiations of knowledge.

(131)

Central to Emina's analysis is her focus on Nikola's background as someone interested in

"Serbia, Serbian culture, and history," and both editors who agreed with Emina were

identified as Serbians. Their ethnic identification reinforces their argument about how

Bosniak is a derisive term for Emina and is a relevant part of her ability to understand the

world around her. What Emina is learning is that knowledge is subjectively constructed,

and Caeton wants to enhance that knowledge by showing her how truth on *Wikipedia* is

negotiated among authors to the site. Emina's experience exemplifies that the *ethos* of

writers contributes to how knowledge is constructed on wiki sites. Her experience also

suggests that genesis-*ethos* may play an especially important role when the content on

wikis relates to ethnic identity. My point here is not to argue definitively that genesis-

ethos does play a role whenever wiki writers spar over contested terms of ethnic identity,

but merely to show how my argument about religious wikis and *ethos* in Chapter 2 may extend to questions about how other wikis are written. If the relevance of genesis *ethos* to ethnic identity can be established, then any other authorial identifiers that could lead to disagreements could conceivably be grounds for fruitful analysis as well: i.e. how does economic class and political identification impinge upon a writer's perceived reliability on a wiki? Caeton claims that "the experience of not having any sort of physical referent, no matter how problematic physical referents may be, made it difficult for her to gauge the legitimacy of claims made by Wikipedians about Bosnian Muslims" (132). Referencing Mark Poster's book, *What's the Matter with the Internet,* Caeton explains that ethnic identity has the potential to be stripped from an online writer's identity, and the loss of those ethnic markers can disconcert readers and collaborators when ascertaining someone's expertise, authority, and background.

Simply ascertaining that genesis-*ethos* plays a role in collaborative online writing does not indicate how that information can lead to practical pedagogical lessons in the writing classroom. What is needed is a way for genesis-*ethos* to complement pre-existing concerns for writing teachers, and one such concern is teaching students that knowledge—rather than being static and objective and verified by authorities—is instead fluid, subjective, and constantly contested. Caeton argues that if wikis are viewed uncritically, they can falsely appear to endorse a monologic representation of knowledge; this false assumption comes because wikis hide the disagreements and contributions of each individual author unless readers study—or at least make themselves aware of—the corresponding discussion and history pages. From this perspective, even though wikis can promote the rational public square as Barton argues, their ability to hide authorial

disagreements means that "the same mechanism of authorial distribution makes it difficult to discern whose version of the truth is being represented" (Caeton 124). But Caeton acknowledges that this monologic appearance of a stable objective truth fragments into a bevy of "discussion pages where meaning [is] constantly in flux" when someone begins to pay attention to discussion pages (134). Will Lakeman observes how meta-discourse might also be part of the wiki architecture including, "technical management of the wiki software and Web space," "language policy, uniform linking strategies, and the complex standards that govern acceptable user interaction" (154). And Thomas Nelson writes that wikis host "constantly changing knowledge structures" that allow teachers "a means for revealing to the individual student the constructed nature of knowledge" (194). The ease with which wikis can reveal the social construction of knowledge happens because they are "based on an ethos of continual modification and improvement by many agents" (196).

Nelson has a particularly clever way of revealing in a writing class how knowledge is socially constructed. He introduces the idea of the "wikishop," which would be ideal for an advanced writing course where students could both produce an encyclopedic work and then reflect on the collaborative processes that went into their text's creation. The wikishop class would begin with students picking one theme for the entire class, and their chosen theme would be the subject matter for the class's collaborative wiki. Nelson suggests that topic could be anything so long as the topic does not have a high learning curve and so that the topic is broad enough for students to contribute information to. He suggests "computer culture" or "Modernist poetry" as examples, but the chosen topic is up to the discretion of the students and teacher. After

Nelson's students choose a topic, they compose several documents together, forming a sizable encyclopedia. After completing the encyclopedia, the students review their writing process; they look at how they revised each other's work and how they discussed this material on talk-pages. Students could then "make an out-of-wiki argument" on the their contributions" by reflecting on "patterns in his or her writing and in the nature of changes that others make to their contributions" (201). The out-of-wiki argument is the last part of a set of scaffolding assignments that introduces students to the social construction of knowledge.

Nelson's approach shows a practical way that Emina's lesson about the fluidity of knowledge can be broadened as a learning objective for the entire class. For instance, I think Nelson's writing-project could carry extra pedagogical value if the topic chosen by students related to *ethos* and reliability, whether those topics be religious, ethnic, or generational in nature. The encyclopedia that students write could pertain to a particular American ethnic group, or it could be a survey of major religious groups in America. The difference between my suggested writing approach and Nelson's classroom experience is a focus on genesis-*ethos*. What happens when students-writers write in a NPOV manner on topics that inform their religious beliefs or ethnic identity? How do writers assert their own *ethos* when negotiating truth on a wiki that impinges on religious or ethnic terminology? How do administrators or other writers define what counts as an authoritative voice? Does it primarily depend on the quality of one's contributions, the quantity of one's contributions, or does the self-described identity of the wiki-contributor play a major factor? Finally, how do the answers to these questions change shape if the wiki is a point-of-view wiki?

Genesis-ethos and procedural rhetoric

Despite many common assumptions, not all wikis are purely descriptive or NPOV, and in addition to the sites mentioned in Chapter Two there are many others that take an argumentative point-of-view. Nor are all wikis encyclopedic in nature. Mark Phillipson warns instructors that "[t]reating Wikipedia as the model wiki may in fact result in a distracting debate about the trustworthiness of this particular resource, students' reliance on it for research purposes, and the general importance of information literacy" (19). He offers a variety of other wikis, such as "the resource wiki, the presentation wiki, the gateway wiki, the simulation wiki, and the illuminated wiki" (39). Phillipson's typographical analysis of wikis illustrate that the benefits of online collaborative writing extend far beyond *Wikipedia*, and that wikis do not necessarily need to be descriptive rather than argumentative. The simulation wiki, as described by Phillipson, relates especially well with lessons having to do with genesis-*ethos*. A simulation wiki works by having students describe and plot out a scenario online. For instance, Philipson describes it as "an interactive experience" where writers and users create the content "through a negotiation of unique pathways, confrontation with decision points, exploration of one possibility over another, and comparison of real life scenarios (31). One such simulation wiki, the Holocaust Wiki Project, asks students to create a fictionalized family that will face numerous "decision points" in 20th century Nazi Europe; each decision has two possible options and leads the family to another decision (Phillipson 31). In addition to revealing the difficult choices Holocaust families encountered, the decision points force student-writers to study the historical and cultural background within which those decisions were made. But what makes the simulation

wiki especially effective is how the user/reader is immersed into the creative process as well. The user of the Holocaust Wiki Project weighs the wisdom of each option from within the narrative of the simulation. In this sense, it is the user more than the site itself, which simulates the decisions of the depicted WWII family. Another simulation wiki asks students to create their own Greek tragedy. The wiki was designed so that users assume the role of a newly minted Greek tragic hero, facing his dilemmas and working within his limited time frame and tragic flaws (Phillipson 32). The student-writers of the *SkidmoreGreekTragedy* project used the conventions of Greek tragedy to establish the background of the Greek story and the logic of decision points for the Greek protagonist. Simulation wikis teach students to have "sympathetic engagement with fictional characters"; but their "rigorous attention to branching and coherence" broadens its educational possibilities by inviting users the opportunity to role-play. In both instances, when students create, read, and then interact with the simulation wiki, they are engaged as an audience in a subtle and tacit argument from the wiki's architecture. The wiki's subtle argument could be articulated as, "Things in mirror may be more complex than they appear." In other words, the simulation wiki embeds users within the decision maker's point-of-view and by doing so allows those users to problematize choices that may at first have seemed simple.

In this way, Phillipson's description of the simulation wiki resonates with Ian Bogost's definition of procedural rhetoric. Bogost defines procedural rhetoric as "the practice of using processes persuasively" and claims that it is a "technique for making arguments with computational systems and for unpacking computational arguments others have created" (3). The goal behind procedural rhetoric is too examine the

architectural designs of "software systems we encounter every day and to allow a more sophisticated procedural authorship with both persuasion and expression as its goal" (29). As an example of procedural rhetoric, Bogost describes the 1975 game *Tenure*, which illustrates the everyday concerns of a secondary school teacher in his or her first year on the job. The player in this game assumes the role of a first-year teacher. He or she must make decisions about how to respond to disobedient students, difficult colleagues, and administrators who have their own agendas and pedagogical dispositions. But each time the gamer resolves a dilemma that the teacher faces, more problems arise. Bogost provides an example: the gamer might encounter a tardy student, who was held over from his previous class where the math teacher kept the class late. Each decision that the gamer-teacher makes has second and third level consequences, for "[a]sking the student to take responsibility would avoid conflict with [the math teacher] and principal on the one hand, but would put [the student] in an uncomfortable situation," but confronting the math teacher would create a regrettable inter-office conflict (2). The videogame *Tenure* highlights how the everyday lived experiences of teachers and administrators—their emotional, professional, political, and bureaucratic conflicts—informs the environment students learn in. Just as with the simulation wiki, the player learns to problematize what at first seemed simple:

> Novice teachers and idealistic parents would like to think that their children's educations are motivated primarily, if not exclusively by pedagogical goals. *Tenure* argues that this idea is significantly undermined by the realities of school politics, personal conflicts, and social hearsay. The game does not offer solutions to these problems; rather, it suggests

that education takes place not in the classroom alone, but in the ongoing

affinities and disparities in educational, social, and professional goals.

Tenure outlines the *process* by which high schools really run, and it makes

a convincing argument that personal politics indelibly mark the learning

experience. (2)

I am struck with the parallels between Bogost's description of *Tenure* and the

preconceptions of wikis described above. Just as many parents falsely assume that the

only variable of a successful education is the school's abstract pedagogical concepts,

Computers and Writing specialists have too quickly assumed that the social construction

of knowledge in a wiki is determined primarily by the Habermasian public square

(Barton, "Future of Rational Critical"). What procedural rhetoric offers is an opportunity

to reveal how wikis are a product of the personalities and agendas of their contributors

instead of simply the marketplace of ideas, wherein the most compelling argument leads

to a democratically chosen form of expression. In other words, if procedural rhetoric

illuminates the complexity of the decision making process that people in a given scenario

go through, then genesis-*ethos* can be explored and effectively taught using procedural

rhetoric.

In Chapter Two, I discussed how each of the three Christian wikis developed a

culture within their wiki based on a series of rules, statements-of-faiths, policies for

disagreeing or dissenting with administrators, and defining what it means to be Christian.

My analysis was a form of written rhetoric, and Bogost writes, "[j]ust as verbal rhetoric is

useful for the orator and the audience, and just as written rhetoric is useful for both the

writer and the reader, so procedural rhetoric is useful for both the programmer and the

user, the game designer and the player" (3). The purpose of procedural rhetoric echoes Phillipson's educational goals of using simulation wikis. From this connection we, as writing instructors, can see the simulation wiki as a way of introducing procedural rhetoric in order to better understand how genesis-*ethos*, among other less investigated influences, contributes to the formation of knowledge on a wiki. What I am suggesting would be something akin to the wiki equivalent of a matryoshka doll: a simulation wiki that emulates the decisions that wiki contributors make when writing. Such an assignment would be most appropriate for an advanced writing class; the course could immerse students in the rhetorical choices collaborative writers make. It could begin with students writing individual analysis papers, where students look at different rhetorical dimensions that play a role in wiki writing. The students would create a simulation wiki—a form of procedural rhetoric and by doing so work through the decision-points a wiki author would be encountered with. A simulation wiki would not specifically concentrate on genesis and composed-*ethos,* but it would show how *ethos* is one string of a larger tapestry, which in turn tells the story of how complex decision-making processes inform online wiki collaboration. When the simulation wiki project was completed, visitors to the website would go through each step of creating their own wiki. They would encounter problems, such as "Another user questions your authority on the matter; how will you represent your *ethos*?" or "Do you wish to make your wiki point-of-view and if so how will you determine who may write on your wiki?" The process of walking through the simulation would "teach" users that wikis are more complex in their knowledge construction than they might at first assume. Of course, the point is not to argue that POV wikis could be more successful than NPOV wikis; rather, by ignoring the

presence of argumentative wikis, we are missing out on opportunities to examine how writers encounter and respond to interpersonal conflicts and questions of identity when constructing knowledge.

The Tillichian Kairotic Moment and the "Crisis in the Humanities"

In what way could writing teachers benefit from learning about the rhetoric of the Emergent Church? What possible intersections could there be between the enthusiasm of Emergent Church members to reinvigorate Christendom in an increasingly secularized 21st century world and the daily struggles of writing instructors? In order to answer those questions, I will describe a few personal memories and four not so hypothetical scenarios. At the end of Chapter Two, I suggested that the Tillichian notion of *Kairos* provided a lens to help teachers/researchers think about the relationship between educational objectives and practical means, between outcomes and methods. To explain why Paul Tillich and the rhetoric of the Emergent Church might be useful for digital humanists, I need to briefly highlight two claims, the first of which is surely non-controversial. First, in our profession the repeated calls for critical self-reflection over the use of communication technologies often happens at a moment of crisis: funding is found or lost, federal laws indirectly impact learning happening in the classroom, or dwindling job prospects for teachers and enrollment of students create a crisis in the humanities. Second, these external problems force us as writing specialists to articulate who we are as educators to outside institutions, and the more antagonistic the audience to whom we define ourselves, the more we need to carefully articulate a *kairotic* moment—a Tillichian moment—to ourselves and our audience.

As teachers and researchers, we should always reflect on how our daily classroom practices fulfill or deviate from our pedagogical theories, an assertion that almost goes without saying. But this self-reflection often accompanies the need to act as ambassadors to other academic departments, university leadership, or non-academic institutions, such as state governments, grant-offering organizations, and accreditation boards. The need to use self-reflection to communicate with outside audiences is something various scholars in the field of Rhetoric and Composition have touched on. Cynthia Selfe warns that "when we allow ourselves to ignore technological issues, when we take technology for granted, when it becomes *invisible* to us [. . .] we participate *unwittingly* in the inequitable literacy system" that reinforces rather than breaks down class and racial divides (144). She observes that the incorporation of technology into the classroom is a futile and unproductive effort if it is done unreflectively. But her call for critical reflection does not exist within an ivory tower vacuum; rather it happens within the context of the "Technology Literacy Challenge, a federal literacy project begun in 1996 that has redefined literacy and the practices recognized as constituting literate behavior in America" (xix). In *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*, Wysocki, et al., offer practical applications for turning new media theory into teaching lessons for the classroom. To preface their suggestions they note that the decisions of writing teachers—and, in particular, Computers and Writing specialists—are informed by "different backgrounds, educations, and *institutional settings*" (vii, emphasis mine). Reflecting on his own experience as a writing program administrator, Tony Scott observes "that the political economic factors that structure the terms of our teaching work likewise shape our pedagogical philosophies and practices"

(41). Richard Miller recounts his efforts at Rutgers to incorporate unwanted technological funding provided by high-level university officials. He reflects how institutional change for first-year writing programs involves the mixture of complex and contradictory academic visions from "the holders of the purse strings"—donors, administrative officials, and state governments—and WPAs and instructors. By reflecting on the narratives of institutional change of "those who plan and those who critique the plans of others," he concludes that the latter group is often made of Writing Program Administrators and teachers who feel beholden to more powerful "central administration" officials on campus (25). Instead of seeing ourselves as victims to the onslaught of the computerization and digitization of the classroom, he recommends writing instructors view this crisis as an opportunity:

> And so, although there are doubtless many reasons to embrace the view from below and cast the rush toward technology as the final phase in the rumination of the university, I suggest that we see this as a time of unparalleled opportunity, one where we have a chance to reimagine what writing programs might be, who might work in them, and under what conditions. (25)

The passage shows that Miller's call for self-reflection was catalyzed by the need to define and advocate for his writing program. The crisis catalyzed the self-reflection. Joe Moxley warns that "if we do not assert our right to design and develop our own datagogies, we will concede the central pedagogical stage of the 21st century" and as a result we "will lose [our] voices and authority as teacher" (200). In each of these instances, there is a call for self-reflection about the communication technologies we use

in the classroom, but each call is invariably tied to exigent circumstances that go beyond the peaceful and placid environment of office hours, a lectern, and student-conferences. One obvious lesson to be garnered from this discussion is that the stakes for how we represent ourselves as a profession directly affect our day-to-day lives.

Personal reflections and institutional persuasion

I've experienced the juxtaposition between critical self-reflection and institutional diplomacy in my own career as a teacher/researcher, but I have found that my efforts to represent myself and my profession profoundly depend on whether my audience approaches me with a sympathetic, indifferent, or antagonistic disposition. Often times, my thinking about my own teaching occurs within my own mind rather than as a dialogue with other teachers, with administrators, supervisors, or assessment organizations. I decide to experiment with a new writing tool—Twitter, wikis, blogs, or *YouTube* videos—for a writing assignment, and I need to decide how these tools will alter my teaching in unintended ways. Within my own mind, I need no footnotes, no explanations of basic assumptions, and no background explanation of values since the audience (me) knows the speaker so well. So much has gone unsaid in my work within writing program committees alongside other rhetoricians or English instructors. Grounded in the same research and steeped in the same institutional knowledge (about changes in university policy, NCTE policy statements, and current practices and research), we would tease through the difficult tensions between practice and policy without pausing to prove what was already understood. Yet, when those committees presented major program curriculum changes before the larger composition faculty, we could not assume a shared set of assumptions and background knowledge. An explanation by the committee for

radical change in a course's writing project descriptions or teaching technologies

transformed into a much more challenging debate. Assumptions had to be explicitly

stated, explained, and connected to the concerns of returning teachers. If we, as writing

program administrators, claimed that an online assessment tool would actually improve

teaching in the long term, then teachers would request grounds to support that claim. No

problem. The supporting evidence for the institutional change is that online assessment

tools help aggregate grading data, find patterns in student success and weaknesses in

writing, and identify best practices among teachers and students. To which the next

question would be, "How does aggregating data from students in other classes possibly

relate to my teaching?" The question is appropriate and necessary but indicates that a less

sympathetic audience will ask more questions. The audience of instructors needed the

warrant to connect our claim and grounds. Every assertion needed to be footnoted; every

claim reinforced. As my audiences as a teacher/researcher expanded outward into ever-

larger concentric circles, the explanations for innovative pedagogy and administrative

policy became ever more challenging. Much like Miller, I found myself negotiating with

multiple parties, many of whom only partially shared—or perhaps not at all—my

philosophical/pedagogical background. Very similar to Miller, Moxley, and Scott, I

found myself as an advocate for the writing program of which I was a part, and through

that advocacy, I had to rethink how exactly my daily pedagogical practices reinforced the

broader learning goals that I and my audience—whoever they were—found important.

Moving outward one degree more, the shared assumptions between speaker and audience

turned into very weak bonds. When justifying a course curriculum to the University,

clarifying how new media scholarship relates to more traditional scholarship in tenure

portfolios, or applying for grants to departments, the shared assumptions between the technorhetoricians in our program and the audience dwindled. Judging on the scholarship above, my experiences were not singular or arbitrary. In such instances, an administrative audience may adopt a more antagonistic attitude toward Computers and Writing specialists, and wonder what it is these so-called writing specialists are doing: "Why aren't they teaching commas and periods?" "Why would they possibly need SharePoint, when we, as a University, already have Blackboard?" As the audiences become less familiar with the unspoken assumptions in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, they are less likely to even share a similar point of reference, in addition to being sometimes antagonistic to one's claims. Scholars in the field of Computers and Writing may feel the rhetorical gulf widening between themselves and other academic audiences particularly acutely because of the quick adoption and analysis of writing tools before they enter the mainstream. There are a stream of blogging articles and conference panels circulating in the last few years asking whether blogging is dead; for instance, one ten-member roundtable at the 2011 Computers and Writing was entitled, "Is Blogging Dead? Yes, No, Other" (Gere, et al.) Since the work of Computers and Writing specialists almost by definition is to push boundaries and rethink paradigms—a statement that to some extent is true for any English academic field—then explaining the connection between our larger pedagogical values and our daily practices can be especially challenging. Cynthia Selfe helps to illuminate why when she writes about the gulf that exists between humanistic studies and science and technology: "This separation rests on a powerful set of ideological beliefs that establishes a gap between science and art, between scientists and humanists scholars, and this gap has structured Western culture for much of its

history" (143). The gap between Computers and Writing has been internalized by people in English studies as well: "teachers of English, composition, and language arts are generally content with the culture's traditional separation of arts and technology" (143). But the discipline of Computers and Composition is a synthesis between the two traditions Selfe describes. It is its very own contact zone between the *Logos* of traditional humanistic study and the *Kairos* of datagogies (Moxley).

If there is an especially steep gap of understanding between Computers and Writing scholars, in particular—and English studies scholars more generally—and the rest of the academic community, then there are special circumstances that exacerbate potential misunderstandings. The conversations that occur with teachers, administrators, colleagues in other departments, prospective undergraduate and graduate students do not happen in a vacuum. The conversations about goals and practices occur in the midst of the "crisis in the humanities," the "crisis in higher education," and the worst economic recession is eighty years. For instance, one such crisis for modern-day rhetoricians concerns the slow erosion of the humanities and Departments of English, in particular. The number of English majors and tenure-line English positions are fast depleting, and the current economic crisis has intensified discussions about whether English studies deserves financial support. With the current economic crisis stagnating job growth, the desirability for an English degree—or any college degree—has started to be questioned. Some journalists are beginning to talk about "education" as the new economic "bubble." Supporters of the humanities have been frantically searching for a compelling justification for their existence and for their centrality within the mission of higher education. As Stanley Fish observes, most of the arguments that have been proffered lack

persuasiveness: for instance, "it won't do to invoke the pieties [. . .] [that] the humanities enhance our culture; the humanities make our society better—because those pieties have a 19th century air about them and are not even believed in by some who rehearse them." With these crises in mind, let's consider four scenarios and what connections there are between them. Imagine . . .

Scenario #1

An administrative faculty member in a Department of English receives an e-mail that diminished resources will lead to difficult fiscal choices. Though the Dean feels that English studies is crucial to the University's long term mission, he or she wonders if the department should take a temporary "hit" in financial resources due to the unfortunate exigent circumstances the University faces.

Scenario #2

The general education requirements for undergraduates at a major university have been altered in a way that makes first-year writing courses redundant, or at least non-essential. Students can now take alternative courses in other departments that may be more practical and economically relevant to their future employment possibilities. Alternatively, the general education requirements may have been altered because the relevance of newly revised writing classes to larger university learning goals—critical thinking, spirit of inquiry, information literacy, understanding of history—are no longer relevant.

Scenario #3

An undergraduate must decide on a major. The student is intelligent and talented, and filled with passion to make a difference in the world. But the student also wants to be

mindful of what will best prepare her for the job market. Most of the advice the student

receives from teachers, family members, and friends frames the issue a choice between

either following one's passion or maturely picking a "practical" major. The student

searches for information concerning each major, including on the webpage of the

Department of English at the school she is enrolling in.

Scenario #4

Christianity in England, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States has faced a major

crisis. Young Christians no longer see the faith as relevant to their lives, and non-

Christians perceive it, as either intolerant and antithetical to their values, or as laughably

irrelevant to modern day problems. Many Christians question whether the hierarchical

and rigid structure of church organizations allows sufficiently for free expression. Many

Christian writers have noted that Christendom finds itself on the periphery of the culture

for the first time in centuries. Instead of occupying a central space in people's lives and

therefore being relevant, the relevance of a faith in Jesus has to be justified to indifferent

or antagonistic audiences. In order to respond to these concerns, a networked but non-

formal community of worship leaders, writers, and worshipers begin rethinking

Christianity by connecting it to 21st century culture. They begin thinking about the church

in ways that coincide with the rhetoric of post-Web 2.0 culture. They begin thinking of a

"networked" church, of downloading spirituality, of an open source faith, and of a

cyberchurch. They talk about changing the narrative of the Gospel, while at the same

time getting back to the core concerns of the Gospel. This attempt to simultaneously

modernize the Church, while returning it to its biblical roots confuses and disorients older

more conservative Christians. They ask questions like, "What does open source have

anything to do with Christianity?" "Isn't this a distraction, and how is this going to show people the love of Jesus?" The Emergent Church, which some claim stands at the vanguard of Christian ministry, is beset on all sides by critics and doubters. Their goal is to redesign the daily practices of the Church and renew commitment to the basic tenets of Christianity, but by doing so they risk confusing or upsetting the Christian flock.

Connections to tillichian *kairos* and the emergent church

The subtext that I have attempted to suggest with these scenarios concerns the similarity between the problems faced by the Emergent Church and those faced in numerous ways by scholars in Computers and Writing and, more generally, in English Studies. In both instances, an institution (Departments of English or The Christian Church) finds itself in an increasingly less privileged position, either within Higher Education or the culture at large. Each respective institution needs to both respond to a changing landscape and clarify the relationship between its goals and its methods—or conversely to rethink the applicability of old goals. Attempts to innovate the daily practices and reinvigorate interest in the institution bring about confusion among many of its members. In both scenarios there are particular exigent circumstances, a crisis that exacerbates the problem, and in both scenarios the promise and peril of computer-mediated-communication technologies plays a central role in efforts to redesign the institution. By examining the rhetoric of the Emergent Church and how they do or do not successfully respond to their crisis, we may learn more about how institutions define themselves and sell (in the best sense of the word) themselves in savvy ways.

One way to compare the efforts of the Emergent Church and those of writing specialists would be through a *kairotic* lens. There are some obvious reasons why *kairos*

would play an important role: both situations I have described involve a crisis that may be alternatively viewed as an opportune moment; in both situations the most prudent responses involve balance and proportionality in a response to that crisis. Crisis, opportunity, and proportionality, as described in Chapter 3, are words heavily associated with *kairos.* But one alternative definition of *kairos* that I think is especially useful involves the connection between daily practices and larger goals. James Kinneavey explains how "*kairos* brings timeless ideas down into the human situations of historical time" (Kinneavey 62). In his book chapter, "*Kairos* in Classical and Modern Rhetorical Theory," he surveys how Pindar, Bacchylides, Gorgias, and Plato express the juxtaposition of timeless ideas and human situations; Kinneavey then introduces Paul Tillich. As described in Chapter Three, Tillich explains the difference between *Logos* and *Kairos* (both purposefully capitalized); *Logos* represents an epistemological perspective that presumes knowledge is immutable, eternal, and abstract, whereas *Kairos* represents "an emphasis on time, on change, on creation, on conflict, on fate, and on individuality" (63).

With my own metaphorical leap, I would like to compare Tillich's sense of *Logos* with our profession's own immutable—or at least rarely evolving—central learning objectives for students. For instance, the "Council of Writing Program Administrators" has their own "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing," which "describes the rhetorical and twenty-first-century skills as well as habits of mind and experiences that are critical for college success." Some of these "habits of mind" include "Curiosity," "Openness," "Engagement," "Creativity," and "Persistence," all of which are laudable and longstanding educational goals ("Framework for Success"). These "habits of mind"

are our learning objectives for students, and one could quite easily refer to them as immutable, eternal, and abstract, as the *Logos.* In order to practice these learning goals, some innovative pedagogical methods must break through; a *Kairotic* moment must emerge to facilitate meaningful learning in the classroom. There are liminal moments when new pedagogical methods emerge from the slime or descend from the clouds, whether those be the sudden increase in funding that Miller experienced, the datagogical sea change that Moxley brings attention to, or the misguided federal efforts to improve literacy that Selfe warns us about. These are the moments when the *Kairos* and the *Logos* meet, when contact zones (Bizzell, Pratt) manifest between them, when the moments of change and chaos spill into the more stable learning goals we as teachers have all grown comfortable with. And it is up to us, as teachers/scholars, to explain that moment to the larger public, to the institutional forces (state governments, university administrators, foundations, and accreditation boards) that govern our academic lives.

As I recounted earlier, the problem is that those explanations to larger institutional forces can be very daunting when one speaks to an antagonistic or indifferent audience. So we need to think about the most effective ways we speak not just to ourselves as scholars but to the outside world, and that's where the rhetoric of the Emergent Church becomes relevant. As I alluded to earlier, Computers and Composition scholars have an especially daunting task explaining the relevance of our work. We need to act as ambassadors on behalf of our own discipline because the stakes are so high:

> As a profession, we have tried critique and we have tried despair. It seems
> to me that, at a time when the economy has placed vast sums of money in
> the hands of the few and the traditional sources of funding for higher

education have been all but depleted, the challenge that lies ahead for us

all is to figure out ways to steal opportunity from the jaws of disaster. We

might as well try. (Miller 36)

The "jaws of disaster" are those of a crisis, and a crisis is a prime opportunity if defined

in a different way. The rhetoric of the Emergent Church has some things to teach scholars

in Computers and Writing about efforts to adapt to change, as we attempt to clarify our

own methods to unsympathetic or neutral audiences. Based on my analysis from Chapter

3, there are at least three actions taken by the Emergent Church that may be relevant to

our own crises:

- **Turn a crisis into an opportunity**: Many scholars who study the Emergent

  Chruch see Christianity as losing its privileged position as the center of Western

  Culture (Driscoll, Drane, Jamieson, Jones, Lings). But many have noted that this

  cultural displacement places the faith closely to where it was when Christ and the

  Apostles lived the earth. They see a strategic strength in the waning of cultural

  prominence because their peripheral status provides them a way to reposition

  themselves. As the institutionalized versions of Christianity falter, they reframe

  the question from, "How do we maintain our traditional institutional structures"?

  to "How do we embrace the loss of structure and top-down power by becoming a

  "networked church"? They change their self-reflective rhetoric to acknowledge

  and embrace the changes that are inevitably happening. The use of post-Web 2.0

  technology is a way of saying "network" instead of "crumbling" or "dying"

  church.

- **Think in terms of the relationship between traditional institutions and networked communities**: The Emergent Church writers do more than simply change the language though; their rhetoric informs their actions. Many Emergent Church writers discuss the "network" that exists between informal worship groups that meet in bars, online, and in homes and the more static organized structures. They theorize about ways that this ecology of formal and informal Christian communities is changing the way people are doing church. More to the point, they privilege this information in their explanations about the Emergent Church. Mark Taylor has suggested that academia refashion itself as a network of temporary departments built around interdisciplinary study. Each temporary department would be designed around a problem—the search for "renewable resources," for instance—and when that problem was solved, the department would dissolve.

- **Metaphors and imagery work**: The Emergent Church's predilection to use "network" and online metaphors was the main basis of Chapter Three. We need to ask ourselves not simply what arguments we make in our scholarship but what metaphors or imagery we develop. Just as importantly, how accessible is that imagery to outside communities (Deans, Provosts, undergraduate and graduate students, foundations)?

I do not mean to suggest that we do not already do these things, but only that reflection on how other non-academic communities do them would be enlightening. It would be beneficial then to both turn to Paul Tillich's conception of *Kairos* and to how other institutions or communities, specifically the Emergent Church movement, navigate crisis moments. The challenges we face are in many

ways analogous to those faced by the Emergent Church. By learning from that

religious movement, we can reflect on our own rhetoric in order to more

effectively represent our discipline.

Conclusion (Chapter 5)

The use of *genesis* ethos in online religious wikis complicates our notions of how

knowledge is formed on all wikis. The formation of knowledge on wikis has been

described as a "political struggle" (Barton, "Future of Rational-Critical" 188) and one

that engages in the "mess and the social nature of writing" (Garza and Hern). What both

of these descriptions point to is that knowledge formation on wikis is not simply a contest

over words, of which logical argument is most compelling, or over which version of a

passage has the most support from editors. Knowledge on wikis, just as anywhere else, is

partially formed by strong emotional and deep-seated beliefs. Eminia's feelings about the

word "Bosniak" affected her evaluation of some of the editors of *Wikipedia*, and the

Christian wikis are well aware of how identity and emotion can influence how knowledge

is created. So if we see "rational-critical debate" as merely an arena where arguments are

dispassionately argued—a meritocracy where truth must pass through the crucible of the

"wisdom of the crowds" (Suroweicki)—then our understanding of wiki knowledge

creation will be incomplete. To be fair to Barton, he acknowledges the role that identity

plays in wiki collaboration: "I feel it is unlikely that students will succeed at building

wikis and also learn to speak with a community voice unless they have first developed a

personal voice and sense of identity" ("Future of Rational-Critical" 189). But as soon as

he acknowledges the role that identity plays, he writes that the end goal for writing

teachers should be to "move slowly, first gaining a voice, then strengthening that voice in

a rhetorical arena, and, finally, fusing that voice to others committed to social action"
(189). Equally important, I suggest, is showing students how that personal voice
remains—or at least could remain, given the type of wiki—distinct and separate from the
collective.

The rhetoric of the Emergent Church relates less to what happens in the classroom
than to the discussions that happen between teachers, to administrative officials, and to
any organization or institution that impacts the future of writing programs. What I have
tried to explain in my admittedly circuitous narrative above is that while Computers and
Writing teachers share the same set of values with others teachers and administrators in
the field of education, they do not always share the same methods. They share the same
immutable *Logos*, but the revelation of the *Kairotic* moment to which they bear witness
may seem foreign, meaningless, or counterproductive to other audiences, including many
writing instructors who specialize in different fields (British or American Literature, or
Creative Writing). Some might ask—and have asked—"Why in God's name do I need
this peer-production tool? My job is to teach writing, not to teach computers. This is a
waste of my time and my students' time." The question is a valid objection, but more to
the point, it represents a failure of communication. Paul Tillich's conception of *Kairos*
provides a helpful framework and vocabulary to talk about how our divine (learning
objectives) and day-to-day experiences (methods) meet. The Emergent Church shares
many of our concerns and circumstances as digital humanists; we can learn from their
struggles and effective rhetorical choices.

Epilogue

In the first chapter, I examined the ways in which the theme of revolutionary architecture was present both in Computers and Writing scholarship and the larger scholarship of technologists. Then in the middle three chapters I tried to find counterintuitive variations on this theme within different online Christian websites. When I first began this study, I thought I would find explicit self-reflective statements about the use of web technology to promote or represent Christianity online. At first, I looked for online treatises that would argue—or at least ruminate—on how new online communications would revolutionize the way Christians practice their faith. When researching Chapter Three, I found several Christian authors who took pains to think about and articulate the overlap between Christian beliefs and the implicit rhetorical structure of various communication technologies. Tim Bednar, for instance, traced how the blogging cyberchurch reinforced the ideology of Paul the Apostle and the Protestant reformer Martin Luther. However, I was surprised by the lack of specific articulation about rhetoric and ideology from the various Christian wikis—*Theopedia, WikiChristian,* and *Orthodox Wiki*—and the video website *GodTube*. Unlike the Emergent Church authors, the other websites did not specifically reflect in a sustained way on how the communication technologies would revolutionize their online or face-to-face communications. Instead, they followed a familiar pattern of identifying a revolutionary communication technology, studying the most popular version of that technology, creating a "Christian" version, and differentiating their own technological creation from

the most popular version. The Christian wikis and *GodTube* both took great pains to differentiate themselves from *Wikipedia* and *YouTube*, respectively. In both Chapters One and Three, the effort to differentiate these tools manifested itself in at least three similar ways: a desire to create a more personal space, a focus on how argumentative/didactic the site should be, and a persistent attention to the more popular site. All of the sites in Chapters One through Three encouraged to some extent the expression of personal beliefs, and some had places for very personal information (consider the prayer lava lamp on *EmergingChurch.info*). The encouragement of personal confession or expression meant that each website needed to consider how collaborative efforts would fail or succeed if everyone was able to share their own version of the Gospel. How does one avoid the type of wiki dystopian nightmare that Matt Barton feared if everyone can voice an opinion on such a passionate topic? The answer found by the Christian wikis and *GodTube* was to bend but not break the architecture of the website: making the wiki more authoritarian while having personal pages, closely monitoring content on *GodTube*, and creating content that personalized both websites (the Emergent Church writers, as described below, found a different answer to that question). The result of this bend but not break model is that the websites are in constant negotiation with their more orthodox and popular versions: *Wikipedia* and *YouTube*. They paradoxically defined themselves by what they were trying to avoid. In contrast, the Emergent Church espouses an ideology of decentralization, so their use of blogs was complimentary rather than contradictory with their belief system. When it came to deciding whose blog was orthodox and whose was heretical, both *EmergingChurch.info* and Tim Bednar theorized that God would use Google to sort the sheep from the goats: only the holiest blogs would receive high Google

ratings. Despite their different methods, these Christian writers and websites have imagined new approaches to using computer-mediated-communication technologies—approaches that broaden our understanding in Rhetoric and Composition of what is possible when people collaborate. They have shown that using a tool counterintuitively is not the same as misusing it.

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