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Sarah Leiter April 16, 2013

Christianese: A sociolinguistic analysis of the evangelical Christian dialect of American English

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Abstract

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Evangelical Protestants in the American South refer to their variety of English as "Christianese." Although speakers recognize Christianese as distinct from Standard English, little formal research has thus far been conducted on the subject. Through sociolinguistic analysis, this paper argues that Christianese is, in fact, a dialect and that speakers' use of Christianese effectively constructs and maintains a collective identity.

In the first chapter of this paper, the intersections between religion and language are explored, and Christianese is classified as a religiolect. In the second chapter, Christianese items taken from various evangelical websites are analyzed for their linguistic implications. Specifically, these terms and phrases indicate that metaphor, allusions to biblical passages, semantic shift, preservation of archaic language, and personification of God are all distinguishing features of the religiolect. The third chapter discusses the results of a survey on Christianese use and religious affiliation. In chapter four, the ways in which Christianese constructs a communal identity are studied in depth. In chapter five, dating profiles of evangelical individuals on ChristianMingle.com are analyzed for their Christianese articulations of gender roles. Recurring themes on the site include scripturally derived expectations of male leadership and female submission in marriage.

As revealed through analysis of the aforementioned data, Christianese speakers use their dialect to effectively erect an exclusive boundary between themselves and non-speakers. This paper thus explores the role of the religiolect and its linguistic attributes in forming and affirming the collective identity of Christianese speakers.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTERSECTIONS OF LANGUAGE, RELIGION, AND IDENTITY

Language and religion are similar subjects in that those who study them have not yet agreed on a definition of either concept. Is language a mode of social communication, a metaphor for our thoughts, a biological function? Is religion a set of sacred rituals, an emotional connection to a higher power, a psychological identification with a community? In both cases, including all of the aforementioned elements in a definition of either language or religion removes certain languages and religions from the category; at the same time, excluding any of these features may make an adequately thorough definition of either concept implausible. Moreover, any theory of religion or language is affected by and even dependent upon the culture or society in which it originates.[1] For these reasons, many scholars overtly choose not to define language or religion when addressing the topics. However, in beginning an academic discussion of these abstractions, potential meanings of each concept must be considered in order to establish a framework within which subtopics may be explored.

For purposes of the present discussion, language and religion will both be defined broadly as factors of identity that help individuals conceptualize their world. Beyond this, however, it is possible only to review various meanings of the topics that scholars have previously proposed.

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[1] R.B. Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity: Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). 3.

Religion

As Martin D. Stringer insists, what religion is "is an almost impossible question to answer."[2] Countless scholars of religion have attempted to define the concept, but few agree on any single definition. Some choose to define religion as a sort of relationship with divinity or an abstract sensation. As Earl R. MacCormac suggests, religion is a "human response to the divine."[3] Cantwell Smith emphasizes the notion of faith as what distinguishes religion from other societal entities.[4] George Santayana asserts that the act of identifying with or subscribing to a religion is having "another world to live in—whether we expect ever to pass wholly into it or no."[5] These scholars refer to religion primarily as a vague, intangible entity that is interconnected with other abstract concepts like God, faith, or perceptual experience.

Another potential explanation of the concept of religion is that it is a social or cultural system. Max Weber argues that religion is a guide for normative behavior; its basic focus is providing directions for living and acting.[6] This definition incorporates practice, including the performance of ritual acts, as an essential component of religion. Clifford Geertz defines religion as a "cultural system," or "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions

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[2] Martin D. Stringer, "Introduction: Theorizing Faith," in *Theorizing Faith*, ed. Elisabeth Arweck and Martin D. Stringer (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1999). 2.
[3] Earl R. MacCormac, *Metaphor and myth in science and religion* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1976). 60.
[4] Stringer 3–4.
[5] George Santayana, *Reason in Religion*, vol. 3, *The Life of Reason* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1982).
[6] William Downes, *Language and Religion: A Journey into the Human Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). 42.

with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[7] Thus, according to Geertz and Weber, religion is defined by its ability to influence beliefs and behavior, particularly at the societal level.

Additionally, religion may be viewed as an academic lens. Jonathan Z. Smith, for example, believes that religion is a category that allows scholars to analyze, compare, and generalize.[8] By categorizing something as "religion," in other words, observers are able to identify and make sense of various elements and consequences of the given phenomenon. Moreover, many scholars have noted that because the concept of religion is situated in the Western Christian worldview, it is difficult to use it to accurately classify a non-Christian or non-Western religion, or to use it as a descriptive category at all in a non-Western context. From this perspective, religion is chiefly a lens through which the investigative Western scholar may begin to make sense of various phenomena she or he observes.

Despite the theoretical nature of these proposed definitions, the concept of religion cannot exist without specific individual religions. As Santayana argues, "the attempt to speak without speaking any particular language is not more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular."[9] This consideration highlights the hypothesis that religion—or language—is a label for a certain dimension of human identity. One cannot simply contemplate religion as an abstract concept,

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[7] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (Fontana Press, 1993). 90.

[8] Nile Green and Mary Searle-Chatterjee, "Religion, Language, and Power: An Introductory Essay" in *Religion, Language and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2008). 1.

[9] Santayana.

Santayana asserts; religion is, rather, an umbrella term for the various religious communities to which individuals belong and with which members identify.

Language

In attempting to define language, one encounters a problem similar to the one Santayana identifies in exploring the concept of religion. Namely, individuals are not speakers of Language; we are speakers of one particular language or of a limited number of languages. Thus in conceptualizing language as a whole, our definitions are necessarily bound by our knowledge of certain specific languages.

Harold Schiffman lists plausible definitions of language in *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*: language may be "a rule-governed human communicative system," a "cultural system," an individual language variety and its subvarieties, or the "symbolic, ritual, instrumental" functions that it performs.[10] Linguists Noam Chomsky and Benjamin Lee Whorf each propose yet another meaning of language. While Chomsky understands the significance of language to be in its potentially universal structure, Whorf contends that language is an entity that both reflects and shapes thought within a linguistic community.

Regardless of the meaning of language as a comprehensive entity, it is significant that a given community of people speaks a particular language or version of a language. Some linguists choose to designate the various forms of a language as "dialects," while others prefer to use the more ambiguous and malleable term "varieties." In either case, it is acknowledged that language as a concept is different from the individual languages or forms of a language that are spoken within a given linguistic community. Moreover,

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[10] Harold F. Schiffman, *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (London: Routledge, 1996). 55.

specific language varieties play a role in the construction and expression of collective identities; a community is often designated as such in part because its members speak or understand the same language variety.

While certain features are more appropriately ascribed to language than to religion and vice versa, the failure of either entity to restrict itself to a rigidly specific realm of human existence allows for great fluidity and interaction between the two concepts. As William Downes explains, language and religion often overlap: "our languages are the means by which religious thinking is made manifest and disseminated."[11] In other words, because language is the pragmatic medium through which humans conceptualize and communicate information, language is necessarily a vehicle through which the concepts of and within religion—including religious identities—are relayed and perpetuated. The interdependence of language and religion is apparent in the opposite direction as well. Specifically, the field of sociolinguistics focuses on the ways in which societal factors like religion influence both the structure and use of language. Allyson Jule explains sociolinguistics as a field interested in a core "human curiosity" about "who says what to whom—and why."[12] As will be explored in more depth throughout this paper, religion can certainly affect the "who," "what," "whom," and "why" questions of linguistic interaction.

Language and Christianity

Within Christianity in particular, language plays an integral role. On an externally apparent level, language allows church leaders to preach Christian doctrine to laypeople. Language is also used to worship, to "spread the Gospel" (proselytize or evangelize), to

[11] Downes 3.
[12] Allyson Jule, *Language and Religious Identity: Women in Discourse* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). 1.

deepen knowledge in Bible study groups, and to perpetuate the teachings of Jesus. Written language is especially significant to Protestant Christians, as they regard scripture as a primary source of truth and authority. Furthermore, the pursuit of language translation has been especially important for Christians who wish to evangelize. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, regarded today as the most comprehensive record of the world's living languages, began as a scripture translation project with the mission of bringing the Bible to all parts of the world.[13] *Ethnologue* presently remains a subsidiary of SIL International, a Christian "faith-based" organization.[14]

In addition to functioning pragmatically as a tool of communication and information transmission, language is a vital element of the foundation of Judeo-Christian existence. Christianity is a logocentric tradition in that it incorporates a "profound reverence for the word, and a strong belief in the power of speech."[15] For Protestant Christians, the language within the Bible guides every aspect of their way of living. Moreover, in the narrative told in the religion's scripture, especially within the opening five verses of the Hebrew Bible, language itself is accentuated as utterly consequential. It is the performative tool of creation: there was only emptiness and darkness in the universe until an all-powerful being used language and "said" that there should be light; there were no days until this creator assigned descriptive words to "day" and "night" (Genesis 1:1-5). In the New Testament, language is again emphasized as the tool of creation and is even described as a part of God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the

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[13] "About the Ethnologue," *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, eds., seventeenth edition (Dallas, Texas: SIL International, 2013). http://www.ethnologue.com/about.

[14] "About SIL," *SIL International* (2013). http://www.sil.org/about-sil.

[15] Philip Alexander, "Insider/Outsider Labelling and the Struggle for Power in Early Judaism," in *Religion, Language, and Power*, ed. Nile Green and Mary Searle-Chatterjee (New York: Routledge, 2008). 86.

Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). As is written in the cornerstone text of Christianity, our world would not exist in the most literal sense without language.

According to Northrop Frye, language is more than a starting point for Christianity; the modern religion, he asserts, operates almost entirely through metaphorical language, which allows adherents to encounter faith and God. This use of metaphor, however, is not merely a vehicle by which religious ideas are disseminated; unlike other linguistic devices, metaphors cannot be trivialized as convenient tools for communication. They epitomize language in its most unique and abstract form, requiring the listener to deduce symbolic meaning despite the availability to the speaker of more semantically literal words and phrases. Metaphors represent "linguistic" language, that is, language whose essence cannot be reduced to its function or structure. To claim that the contents of the New Testament, then, are "metaphors to live in"—as Frye does—is to claim that those who base their life choices on the Bible are building their lives on a foundation of pure language.[16] This is not to say, however, that the beliefs and practices associated with the religion are not valid or are not based on the contents of its fundamental teachings. Rather, as Frye clarifies, the reason that Christianity is founded in "mythical and metaphorical language is that such a language is the only one with the power to detach us from the world of facts and demonstrations and reasonings, which are excellent things as tools, but are merely idols as objects of trust and reverence."[17] Meta-language, therefore, is the means by which Christians connect with a higher power. Faith in God, perhaps the most central teaching of Christianity, is made possible through the realm of linguistics.

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[16] Northrop Frye, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). 18.
[17] Frye 18.

English, Christian English, and Christianese

Although language allows Christians to connect with God and with Christian belief, individuals speak particular language varieties, rather than the abstract notion of language. This leads to the question of whether there is a specific language or subdivision of a language that can provide access to religion. For many groups of people, there does exist a particular language variety that is associated with their religion. One such language variety is "Christianese," a subdivision of English that is spoken among evangelical Protestant Christians, particularly in the Southern region of the United States. As Joshua Fishman notes, the "language (or 'variety') of religion always functions within a larger multilingual/multivarietal repertoire."[18] For Christianese speakers, that "larger" vernacular is English, which is a Christian-defined, but not necessarily Christian, language. This influence is seen in English words like *resurrection*, which connote specifically Christian beliefs and tradition, even outside of Christian contexts.[19] Moreover, many Standard English words and idioms, such as *grace*, *miracle*, *redemption*, *confession*, *sacred*, *broken-hearted*, and *scapegoat*, were originally extracted from the King James Bible of 1611.[20] Despite these English words that have Christian origins and meanings, English in its modern form is not a Christian language. Rather, English-speaking Christians often use religious or religiously influenced varieties of English, such as Christianese.

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[18] Joshua A. Fishman, "A Decalogue of Basic Theoretical Perspectives for a Sociology of Language and Religion," in *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion*, ed. Tope Omoniyi and Joshua A. Fishman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006). 14.

[19] Downes 122.

[20] Benjamin Hary and Martin J. Wein, "Religiolinguistics: On Jewish-, Christian, and Muslim-Defined Languages," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 220 (March 2013). 102.

The term *Christianese*, coined and perpetuated by speakers themselves, refers to a variety that evangelical Protestants in the American South use primarily when among other identified speakers. The variety is distinct from Standard American English pragmatically, semantically, lexically, semiotically, syntactically, and possibly phonologically. Christianese is not unique solely because of its structural elements; it also helps reflect and create the collective identity of its speakers and allows them to express a personal association with the linguistic community. Additionally, it is the means by which its speakers' religious beliefs permeate their everyday lives. For speakers of this variety, Christianese is the intersection between language and religion.

Religiolect versus Repertoire

In discussing Christianese, the fundamental question arises of whether the language variety is a distinct dialect of English, or whether it is simply a collection of religiously influenced features that are incorporated into a regional dialect of English.[21] In order to respond to this question, the term "dialect" must first be defined. According to Chambers and Trudgill's *Dialectology*, a dialect is a subdivision of a particular language that is "grammatically (and perhaps lexically) as well as phonologically different from other varieties."[22] Although dialects are categorized as discrete entities for analytical purposes, the reality is that dialects of a language exist on a continuum, and the lines between each

[21] Substantial controversy exists among linguists regarding the nature of religiously influenced language varieties. While some assert that these varieties should be classified as distinct dialects, others prefer to regard religious influences on language use simply as such. For many, at the center of this ongoing debate are the concepts of distinctiveness and mutual intelligibility. Because a religious language variety may appear to be very similar to the standard form of the given language, some linguists are hesitant to assign the word *dialect* and its implications of distinctiveness to the religious variety. When a religious variety is classified as a dialect, as Christianese is in this paper, that distinction is often attributed to the variety's sociological significance.

[22] J. K. Chambers and Peter Trudgill, "Dialect and Language," in *Dialectology*, 2nd ed., Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 5.

tend to be more fluid than generally acknowledged. In terms of regional dialects, for example, it is often assumed that the Midwestern and Western dialects of American English are two distinct entities. Yet there is no concrete boundary between these two regions; rather, the language varieties exist on a continuum, with individuals in certain areas incorporating more "Western" features into their speech and individuals in other areas using more "Midwestern" features. Speakers between the two regions, in states like South Dakota, often exhibit linguistic features that combine elements of the two dialects.[23] Divisions between social dialects are just as arbitrary as separations between regional varieties. As Chambers and Trudgill explain, "there is no social equivalent of the […] geographical dividing line" that can rationally separate social dialects from each other.[24] Because social identities are fluid and constantly changing both within groups and within individuals, it is not possible to locate a point at which one social dialect ends and another begins. Thus divisions between dialects are not entirely linguistically grounded; these boundaries are culturally, politically, sociologically, historically, and geographically based as well.[25] *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, in fact, establishes its distinctions between varieties not on linguistic criteria alone, but on "the existence of well-established distinct ethnolinguistic identities" as well.[26] Distinguishing a given variety as a "dialect" is thus a useful tool in illuminating the unique sociocultural character of its community of speakers. Moreover, using the term "dialect" to refer to a variety that has become a means of communal identity construction lends distinctiveness

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[23] Rick Aschmann, "North American English Dialects, Based on Pronunciation Patterns" (March 18, 2013). http://aschmann.net/AmEng/.
[24] Chambers 9.
[25] Chambers 4.
[26] "The Problem of Language Identification," *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, eds., seventeenth edition (Dallas, Texas: SIL International, 2013). http://www.ethnologue.com/about/problem-language-identification.

and, therefore, legitimacy, to that identity. It also cognitively groups speakers together, a device that permits logical analysis of the variety and of its linguistic community (as opposed to determining that its features are simply dependent on the individual speaker).

In order to highlight the socio-religious factors that distinguish speakers of Christianese from mainstream American society, Christianese will henceforth be referred to as a dialect, despite the disagreement among linguists regarding the applicability of the term. Furthermore, because Christianese is claimed by an overtly religious community, it may be referred to as a *religiolect*, or, as described by Benjamin Hary, "a language variety with its own history and development, which is used by a religious community."[27] According to Hary and Martin J. Wein, because religion (or lack thereof) is an essential part of human society and interaction, "every linguistic variety may be analyzed for its religious characteristics and described as a *religiolect*, a spoken and/or written language variety employed by a religious (or secularized) community, typically of a specific region."[28] Hary and Wein thus do not limit the term *religiolect* to the language of distinctly religious communities. Rather, they use the term as an academic lens (similar to the lens of "religion"), a signal that the researcher is interested in the broadly defined religious aspects of any given language variety. Despite the potential of religiously defined language to expand to non-religious communities, *religiolect* is most often used to describe the language variety used by an identifiable religious community.

Just as any given dialect of a language is more similar to some dialects than to others, religiolects range from being nearly unintelligible to other speakers of the dominant language to consisting simply of a few linguistic markers incorporated into the

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[27] Benjamin Hary, *Translating Religion: Linguistic Analysis of Judeo-Arabic Sacred Texts from Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). 12.
[28] Hary and Wein (2013) 85.

dominant language. Hary and Wein refer to this variability as a religiolect "spectrum" or "continuum" that extends from highly distinct to less distinct from the dominant language.[29] Whenever the language variety used within a religious community differs from the dominant language of the area, the community's variety may be placed on this linguistic spectrum of speech communities associated with the particular religion.

Linguist Sarah Bunin Benor prefers the term *linguistic repertoire* to *religiolect* when a variety is less obviously distinct from the dominant language.[30] After determining that American Jews use a form of English that differs from the standard variety "at all levels of language," Benor explains that American Jews do not speak a distinct dialect. Rather, they have access to a religiously influenced repertoire of linguistic elements, or "a fluid set of linguistic resources," which they choose to use in various situations.[31] Benor avoids the term "dialect" when analyzing a religiously or ethnically uniform speech community because some of its members will not use the religious or ethnic variety, and many members will selectively use only certain features.[32] However, it is precisely this ability of speakers to choose to use elements of the variety that suggests that it is, in fact, distinct from the dominant language.[33] Moreover, it is the nature of language to vary among individuals, so dialects are inherently inconsistent among speakers, especially when individual speakers have been exposed to other varieties.[34] Although Christianese speakers may not consistently use Christianese features, the variety as a whole is distinct from Standard American English. Moreover, as linguist

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[29] Hary and Wein (2013) 93.
[30] Sarah Bunin Benor, "Mensch, bentsh, and balagan: Variation in the American Jewish linguistic repertoire" in *Language and Communication* (2010). 1.
[31] Benor (2010) 2.
[32] Benor (2010) 2.
[33] Hary and Wein (2013) 89.
[34] David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). 24.

Linda Coleman has noted, this evangelical variety of English reflects the speakers' worldview in a broad manner that affects all areas of their language use. She calls the dialect a *worldviewlect*, as it reveals and applies the group's worldview by defining its speakers' experiences through the lens of the language variety.[35] In other words, Christianese is distinct from Standard English not merely because of its linguistic or structural features; speakers are able to use the variety to conceptualize their religious beliefs and identify with others who share these beliefs as well. Therefore, in order to highlight the role of the variety in constructing and expressing the communal identity of its speakers, the term *religiolect*, rather than *repertoire*, will be used to categorize Christianese.

[35] Linda Coleman, "The Language of 'Born-Again' Christianity," in *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (1980). 141.

CHAPTER TWO: WHAT IS CHRISTIANESE?

Although "Christianese" refers to a Christian-defined variety of English, the term does not apply ubiquitously to all Christian varieties of English. Before proceeding, then, it is necessary to clarify the label "Christianese" as it is used in this paper. While "Christian English" may be used in a general sense to refer to a variety of English spoken in any Christian community, "Christianese" refers specifically to the language variety spoken within the American evangelical Protestant Christian tradition. Although certain elements of the religiolect may appear in the speech of other Christian and non-Christian communities, the features are, as Maureen Doyle McQuerry has observed, "likely to be used more often and less self-consciously by evangelicals."[36] Moreover, evangelical Protestants themselves use the term "Christianese" when referring to their own community's way of speaking.

When discussing this group, the meaning of the term "evangelical" must also be established, as it carries varying connotations in contemporary American society. Although Protestant evangelicalism is not a monolithic movement and can therefore not be outlined definitively, the scholarly definition proposed by historian David Bebbington and amended by George M. Marsden is widely accepted: evangelical Protestants are Christians who believe in converting others to their religion or faith ("conversionism"), actively express the teachings of their tradition ("activism"), highly regard the Bible ("biblicism"), stress the centrality of the sacrifice of Christ ("crucicentrism"), and support

[36] Maureen Doyle McQuerry, "Some Terms of Evangelical Christianity," in *American Speech* 54.2 (Duke University Press, 1979). 148.

evangelistic cooperation between denominations.[37] Evangelicalism also draws attention away from ritual and emphasizes the personal faith and spiritual growth of the individual. Because many Christianese speakers identify as "non-denominational" Christians, and because the dialect appears within evangelical church communities of several different denominations, "evangelical" here will remain an umbrella term. In other words, although certain Christianese features may emerge more frequently within some church communities than within others, the use of the religiolect is not limited to specific evangelical denominations.

In order to determine the characterizing linguistic and sociolinguistic features of Christianese, this chapter consults data primarily from two sources. First, this chapter references selections of spoken Christianese conversations that were observed in Atlanta area evangelical churches and at evangelical student club meetings at Emory University. These conversation participants will remain anonymous. Second, excerpts from various online articles, blog posts, forum responses, and personal websites that either utilize Christianese or discuss the dialect directly are included here as data as well.[38]

What is Christianese?

Tim Stewart, a relatively new speaker of the dialect, has begun compiling lexicographical and historical information about Christianese terms as a resource for interested speakers and non-speakers alike. According to Stewart's forthcoming *Dictionary of Christianese*, the word *Christianese* is used in six different ways. First, it might refer to any terms or phrases used in dialogues between Christians that non-

[37] Larry Eskridge, "Defining the Term in Contemporary Times," Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (2012). http://www.wheaton.edu/ISAE/Defining-Evangelicalism/Defining-the-Term.
[38] For a sample of Christianese speech, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4H-29cJSuv8.

Christians do not understand. Second, it might refer more specifically to special vocabulary with particular meanings used popularly within some Christian communities. Third, Christianese may be church jargon or Christian theological terms that are accurately descriptively defined in Standard English. Fourth, Christianese may be defined as a collection of religiously themed idioms that several evangelical Protestants deride as superficial or deceptive. Fifth, the term *Christianese* might indicate the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, or the form of language that is found in the King James Version of the Bible (published in 1611). Lastly, Stewart defines *Christianese* as "the language used by evangelical Protestant Christians."[39] The present paper explores Christianese as it is described in Stewart's final definition, but his other definitions may be integrated into this primary meaning as well. Specifically, Christianese, the evangelical Protestant dialect of American English, incorporates both scripturally influenced popular vocabulary and theological jargon, much of which is unfamiliar to or unused by non-speakers. The dialect tends to preserve archaic forms of English, and it uses the passive voice and causative verb tense in a manner that might be considered strange and even sometimes ungrammatical in Standard English. Many Christianese speakers also assert through articles and blog posts that the religiolect—though often viewed as a positive expression of spirituality—is overused. The extent to which speakers exploit Christianese indicates that some may use it simply to assert their membership in the community of speakers.[40]

The collection of definitions outlined by Stewart aligns with Hary's characterization of religious language varieties. According to Hary, religiolects belonging

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[39] Stewart (2012).
[40] See Chapter Four for a more in-depth discussion of this feature of Christianese.

to any community are often endowed with certain attributes, such as migrated dialectalism, religiously influenced script and orthography, and elements of "holy" languages.[41] Many of these features that typify religiolects are present in Christianese. Of these, perhaps the most apparent is the speaker view that their language is specifically Christian. This is most effectively evidenced by the simple fact that speakers use the term *Christianese* when referring to their language variety, just as Moroccan Judeo-Arabic speakers distinguish their religiolect from other Moroccan Arabic varieties by naming it what translates as *our Arabic*.[42]

Another trait typically associated with religiolects and present in Christianese is the incorporation of elements of "holy tongues," typically the language or languages in which sacred texts were composed. With reference to Christianese, it may be argued that English is one such sacred language, as many Christianese terms originated in the 1611 English translation of the Bible, known today as the King James Version. Lexical items that stem from the King James translation include *called*, *grace*, and *Lord*.[43] Other Biblical languages that contribute to the lexicon of Christianese are Hebrew and Greek, which have lent the dialect words like *hallelujah* and *kerygma*, respectively. Although the historical Jesus likely spoke Aramaic as his first language, the "sacred" language of his time—the language used to study the Torah, produce biblical commentary, and formally interpret religious concepts—was Hebrew.[44] After his lifetime, the first written manifestation of the teachings of Jesus was composed in the lingua franca Greek.[45] Thus

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[41] Hary (2009) 22–23.
[42] Hary (2009) 24.
[43] Hary and Wein (2013) 102.
[44] Downes 123.
[45] Downes 123.

borrowed Hebrew and Greek words appear in Christianese as representations of these Christian holy tongues.

Another trait that classifies Christianese as a religiolect is its relative unintelligibility to English-speaking non-Christians. Although evangelical Protestants may underestimate outsiders' ability to comprehend the dialect, speakers argue that Christianese is "seldom understood by anyone" outside of the community.[46] In discussing the concept of mutual intelligibility with regard to dialects and languages, Hary references certain African tribes who claim that they cannot understand the speech of a more powerful neighboring tribe. Despite this assertion of incomprehensibility, the speech of the former is, in fact, highly intelligible to the latter. Linguists have found that the tribes who claim not to understand their neighbors do so in an effort to maintain their independence from the more powerful tribes and, thereby, their distinctive identity as a group.[47] Like these African tribes, the linguistic community of Christianese speakers emphasizes that their variety is unintelligible to non-speakers. The group does so, perhaps, in order to reinforce its communal identity, a hypothesis that will be explored further in Chapter Four of this paper.

As is true of other religiolects, literature about Christian matters has been produced by and for Christianese speakers. These writings appear most often in the form of digital media, such as online blog posts. While many of these use Christianese to address theological concerns, several of the online publications consist of humorous descriptions and lists of Christianese words. It is clear that these are intended for Christian readers, as they are neither amusing nor easily decipherable to non-speakers.

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[46] "Christianese: Fun Translations to Stale Church Language!" TastyFaith (2013). http://www.tastyfaith.com/freshtranslation.html.

[47] Hary (2009) 10–11.

Lastly, Christianese is a religiolect because it is comprised of a plethora of religious ideas and images. These will be explored further below.

The Tone of the Term

Because many speaker-written online articles and comments about the religiolect may seem negative, it is necessary to ascertain whether speakers employ the term *Christianese* favorably or derogatorily, as the answer to this question affects the nature of the dialect's role within its community of speakers. According to one member of the community, some use the term *Christianese* derisively, as speaking the dialect may be perceived as unoriginal and, therefore, as insincere or meaningless.[48] Yet others seem to champion the dialect as "the truth, and when it's shared in a meaningful, loving manner, it can cleanse a lot of wounds."[49] If these advocates for Christianese acknowledge any negative aspects of the variety, they generally cite the dialect's tendency to exclude outsiders, as its use "can cause a lot of confusion among non-Christian friends and coworkers."[50] Others who discuss Christianese in a favorable manner, such as evangelical author Brad Kallenberg, claim that the dialect allows speakers to express certain concepts more effectively than they might be able to do in the standard variety of English.[51]

Another speaker's article conveys a tone of defensiveness as it explains why she chooses to use Christianese while others avoid it. In her discussion of the exclusive

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[48] David Cho, "Christian-ese," *The Best Dog In The World* (February 11, 2005). http://davidcho.blogspot.com/2005/02/christian-ese.html.
[49] Laura Lindeman, comment on Laura Ziesel, "Is Christianese Always Bad?" *Laura Ziesel* (July 13, 2011). http://www.lauraziesel.com/2011/07/is-christianese-always-bad.html.
[50] Ariel Price, comment on Laura Ziesel, "Is Christianese Always Bad?" *Laura Ziesel* (July 13, 2011). http://www.lauraziesel.com/2011/07/is-christianese-always-bad.html.
[51] "In Defense of 'Christianese,'" My Offerings (July 28, 2011). http://myofferings.wordpress.com/2011/07/28/in-defense-of-christianese/.

character of the dialect, she asserts that her "aim is not to bash Christianese."[52] It is significant that speakers like the author of this article feel the need to defend the religiolect, as this indicates an acknowledgement of disagreement among members of the community regarding the tone of the term *Christianese*. While some use and refer to Christianese in a positive manner, other "insiders"—evangelicals who have recognized Christianese as overwhelmingly present in their everyday interactions—look upon the use of the dialect unfavorably. However, criticisms of Christianese tend to focus on speakers' eagerness to use it and on its inherent exclusion of non-speakers. Indeed, these negative responses to the "overuse" of the dialect serve to confirm its significance in the lives of members of the linguistic community. Thus although some speakers are more enthusiastic than others regarding the use of the dialect, *Christianese* will be used in this paper as a neutral term.

How Christianese Came to Be

Although some Christianese lexical items have been in existence for centuries, it was within the last forty years that Christianese emerged as a distinct language variety. In the decades following World War II, as mainstream American culture became increasingly secular, Protestant Christianity was dislodged from its predominant role in United States society. This decreasing prominence of the formerly overarching Protestant presence was evidenced within many institutions of higher education as they progressed

[52] Alexis Jones, "CSL: Christianese as a Second Language," The Urban Gospel Mission (March 4, 2013). http://urbangospelmission.com/csl-christianese-as-a-second-language/.

from explicitly Christian to vehemently non-religious.[53] This coincided with and preceded the 1970s influx of new, non-Western spiritual practices in the United States, which also served to decrease the salience of Christianity.[54] Yet, between 1967 and 1978, as Protestant Christianity as a whole grew to be perceived as less of a dominant majority, the evangelical sub-culture underwent a revitalization.[55] Recognizing this at least in part, *Newsweek* magazine named 1976 "The Year of the Evangelical."[56] This prosperity of evangelical culture was also evidenced by its presence in the media, as evangelicals began to dominate American religious television and radio programming around this time.[57] Perhaps the group's rejuvenation was, as Ronald Nash argues, the aftermath of the previous decade's Billy Graham crusades.[58] Perhaps it was also influenced in part by the development of a new attitude toward evangelicalism; namely, evangelists began to present conversion in terms of its benefits, rather than in terms of the duties it would entail. Concurrently, prominent American leaders publically attributed their success in various spheres of society to conversion.[59]

Regardless of the reasons for the decade's evangelical prosperity, the period differentiated the evangelical community from others and from the mainstream. This is illustrated, for example, by the foremost evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*, which published several articles throughout the period about "the end of Christian civilization,"

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[53] Linell E. Cady, "Territorial Disputes: Religious Studies and Theology in Transition," Linell E. Cady and Delwin Brown, eds, *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002). 111.
[54] Phillip E. Hammond, *The Protestant Presence in Twentieth-Century America: Religion and Political Culture* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992). 153.
[55] Martin E. Marty, "The Revival of Evangelicalism and Southern Religion," in *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism*, edited by David E. Harrell, Jr. (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1981). 8.
[56] Ronald H. Nash, *Evangelicals in America: Who They Are, What They Believe* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987). 15.
[57] Larry Eskridge, "Evangelicals and the Media," Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (2012). http://www.wheaton.edu/ISAE/Defining-Evangelicalism/The-Media.
[58] Nash 19.
[59] Marty 11.

referring to the pervasively liberal culture of the time in America.[60] By expressing these sociopolitical opinions, these articles served to distinguish the evangelical community as a subculture distinct from the perceived mainstream.

It was during this post-Billy Graham revitalization and differentiation of evangelicalism that the term *Christianese* first appeared. Although the word had been used once in 1880 to designate Shakespearean English, *Christianese* was first used to refer to a plausible modern Christian language variety in 1968. Interestingly, this first appearance of the term *Christianese* was in the context of a denial that such a language variety existed.[61] In the early 1970s, evangelicals began to employ the term in acknowledgement that they used certain words that were incomprehensible to non-Christians.[62] In 1979, it was recognized that many of these terms had originated in the 1960s, and thus they were evidently more reflective of the vernacular than of traditional Christian doctrine.[63] By the early 1980s, speakers had begun to recognize Christianese as a language variety, perhaps a preliminary version of the religiolect that exists contemporarily.

Christianese and Race

Although the vast majority (81%) of evangelical Protestant Christians in 2008 were Caucasian, it is not possible to make comprehensive statements about the manner in

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[60] Randall Stephens, "Look Back in Anger: The 1960s and Evangelical Conservatives," The Historical Society (November 8, 2010). http://histsociety.blogspot.com/2010/11/look-back-in-anger-1960s-and.html.
[61] Tim Stewart, "Christianese," *Dictionary of Christianese* (2012). http://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/2012/05/17/christianese/.
[62] Stewart, "Christianese."
[63] McQuerry 148.

which all evangelical Christians speak.[64] On the main Emory University campus, for example, the evangelical student organization Intervarsity Christian Fellowship sponsors a subgroup for Asian students and a separate subgroup for African American students. While the main group is not racially- or ethnically-specific, the religiolects spoken at Asian Christian Fellowship meetings and at Brothers and Sisters in Christ (Black Campus Ministry) meetings differ from each other and from the Christianese used within the main group. Though many African American and Asian American Christian individuals speak the same form of Christianese as each other and as Caucasian Christians do, the racial identity of a group does affect its language use. Christian communities in particular are rarely interracial—only 5.5% of American churches claimed interracial membership in 2005—hence race cannot be ignored when examining the language use of a religious community.[65] This "color line" within American Christianity has certainly been crossed, but "few have worked hard to erase it."[66] Thus, in order to avoid overgeneralization, the racial identity of the religious group in question must be specified. At Emory University, where many of the Christianese examples included in this paper were initially recorded, the largest demographic of students is Caucasian.[67] Although some of the features that will be examined here were used by non-Caucasian individuals, the data in this paper comes from a primarily Caucasian population. Therefore, the Christianese discussed in this paper should be recognized as a variety that is spoken primarily among Caucasians.

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[64] The Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey" 2008. http://religions.pewforum.org/portraits.
[65] Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005). 128.
[66] Sweeney 128.
[67] "Admission Statistics," Emory University: Emory College of Arts and Sciences, 2010. http://college.emory.edu/home/admission/statistics.html.

Further research must be conducted in order to determine the precise differences between this form of Christianese and the Christian English of other racially delineated groups.

Functional Shift

In terms of the structure of the dialect, one of its characteristic features is grammatical shifts in the syntactic functions of words. The verb *born again*, which essentially signifies personally accepting Christ or officially affirming one's commitment to Christianity, is also used as a noun and an adjective in Christianese (as in, someone who has been *born again* is a *born again* or a *born again* Christian). The verb *worship* (as in, "I *worshipped* at church yesterday") has also been transformed into a noun in Christianese to designate a part of a church service or a type of church music (as in, "we left church early yesterday, before *worship*"). Certain lexical items that are solely nouns in Standard English, such as *fellowship* and *disciple*, can be used as verbs in the religiolect.[68] Christianese speakers, for example, could "be discipled," meaning that they immerse themselves in a Christian learning program or acquire a religious mentor. Christianese speakers, then, do more with language than simply incorporate religiously based phrases into their speech. The community actually shifts standard functions of words and uses them in its own distinctive ways, which allows speakers to further assert their ownership of the dialect.

Passive Voice

In Christianese, the passive voice carries semantic and religious significance that is not present in Standard English. Within certain Christianese verb phrases that describe

[68] Amanda Baker, "Christianese: 'Low' Church Jargon in Contemporary North America," 2005, http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercy/courses/6362-baker.htm.

the choices or actions of an individual, the passive voice implicitly embeds God as the actor, evoking the Christian notion that God is ultimately responsible for human actions.[69] In other words, this syntactic device is often used to remind speakers that the human actor is not an independent agent in performing good deeds or arriving at decisions of great import. This invocation of God occurs especially where an active verb would be grammatical in Standard English. For example, a Christianese speaker might state that she "was called to quit her job." In Standard English, one might instead say that this person "decided to quit her job." Rather than stating that the employee made this choice on her own, a Christianese speaker might semantically suggest that it was God who prompted the employee's decision.

In addition to utilizing the passive voice in order to avoid the implication of human autonomy, Christianese includes phrases that explicitly attribute human actions to God for this same purpose. For example, at an Emory University Intervarsity meeting in September 2012, a student recalled being unsure which "college the Lord would lead me to." Rather than describing the decision to attend Emory as a personal choice, this student insinuated that it was God who was accountable for this resolution. Some speakers attribute even mundane decisions to God's influence as well; one member of an evangelical church (who refers to Christianese as "Evangelebonics") recalls hearing fellow church members "saying God even directs a purchase for new sheets for your bed room."[70]

This granting of direct responsibility to God is also seen in the Christianese use of the word *grow*. Specifically, Christianese speakers often use the word in the transitive

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[69] Coleman 135.

[70] "Christianese aka Evangelebonics," *On a Journey to Where I Don't Know* (March 26, 2013). http://ritzhaus38.blogspot.com/2013/03/christianese-aka-evangelebonics.html.

sense with a human as the direct object, as in, "let God grow you up so you can become more like Jesus."[71] As is outlined in the Oxford English Dictionary, however, this causative sense of *grow* is grammatical in Standard English only when it refers to the production of plants, crops, seedlings, crystals, hair, nails, or other similarly tangible materials.[72] Individuals can *make* another person grow, but they cannot *grow* the person. Nevertheless, in Christianese, a human being (or abstract entity, such as faith) can be the direct object following *grow* when the verb is used in the causative sense. This usage of the transitive verb tense serves to emphasize the responsibility of God for human progress, particularly in terms of spiritual maturation.

As linguist Linda Coleman notes, Christianese phrases such as the aforementioned seem to be "designed to avoid reference to human beings as primary agents and to introduce God as the moving force behind all good actions."[73] This notion of the divine being's preeminence and control over human action is, as Coleman argues, an evangelical value that is expressed syntactically and semantically in Christianese.

Preservation of Archaic Forms

Like other religiolects that have been examined by scholars such as Hary, Christianese preserves many archaic linguistic forms.[74] "The Lord is faithful to provide," for example, was uttered in 2012 by a college-aged congregant at Grace-Midtown, an evangelical church in downtown Atlanta. According to the OED, the word *faithful* was

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[71] Ann Shipman, "Becoming More Like Jesus," *Voice of Vision Newsletter* (n.d.). http://www.cfaith.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7202:becoming-more-like-jesus&catid=48:leadership-.

[72] "grow, v." OED Online (Oxford University Press, March 2013). http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/81904?rskey=SnHtWs&result=2&isAdvanced=false.

[73] Coleman 136.

[74] For a discussion of archaic forms in Jewish languages, see Hary (2009) 23–24.

used in this manner as an adverb in sixteenth and seventeenth century English; *faithful to* + [verb] is generally obsolete in Standard English today.[75]

Sistren, another Christianese term, fell into disuse in Standard English in the sixteenth century. It is used presently in the southern United States as the plural of *sister*, which means "Christian woman," especially within the speaker's own congregation. The term is also used ironically or humorously in Christianese with reference to the androcentric term *brethren*, which is often used to address a congregation.[76]

Although liturgical poems are not necessarily part of the spoken dialect, many modern Christian hymns are also written in archaic styles, despite their relatively recent dates of creation. "Be Thou My Vision," for example, which was translated into English from Old Irish at the beginning of the twentieth century, is a popular hymn in many modern churches. Despite its relatively recent adaptation into English in the twentieth century, it was translated into a version of the language that contains many features resembling Shakespearian English.[77]

Coleman argues that this preservation of archaic forms occurs in Christianese due to the high value evangelicals place on the Bible, the ultimate written authority. As many evangelicals preferred the King James Version during the time Coleman was researching their speech patterns, she observed that certain elements of their speech imitated the style of writing they found in that version of the Bible.[78] Today, this preservation of archaic

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[75] "faithful, adj., adv., and n." OED Online (Oxford University Press, December 2012). http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/67763?redirectedFrom=faithful.
[76] Tim Stewart, "sistren," Dictionary of Christianese (2013). http://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/2012/09/20/awomen-corner-sistren/.
[77] Robert J. Morgan, "Be Thou My Vision," in *Then Sings My Soul: 150 of the World's Greatest Hymns Stories* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2003). 5.
[78] Coleman 137.

forms found in the KJV Bible perhaps lends a sense of authenticity and tradition to the religious beliefs expressed in the dialect and, consequently, to the group that speaks it.

Allusions to Holy Scripture

Because Christianese is spoken by a community that is differentiated specifically by its set of shared beliefs, these beliefs are likely to shape or at least be expressed within the group's religiolect. As previously discussed, one characteristically evangelical notion is the idea that God is responsible for all good acts performed by humans. This belief was expressed in the evangelical dialect of the late 1970s and early 1980s through speakers' usage of the noun *fellowship*, for example. This word commonly appeared in the phrase "had fellowship with," which connoted assisting a person in need and forming a friendly, mutual connection with that person (as in, "he *had fellowship with* that man who couldn't afford a meal"). Rather than directly stating that they helped someone, speakers of the religiolect would use the preposition *with* to describe a symmetrical relationship, as in the phrase "have coffee with," in which each participant plays an equal role.[79] In syntactically deemphasizing the accountability of the individual in performing a good deed, the religiolect reflected its speakers' religious belief that individuals were not, in fact, directly responsible for carrying out acts of kindness.

Fellowship, which is now used as a verb as well as a noun in Christianese, has effectively lost this connotation among evangelical Christians, as the words *have* and *with* are no longer necessary accompaniments (a Christian can simply *fellowship*). Nevertheless, Christianese still linguistically communicates several of the denominational

[79] Coleman 133.

values of its speakers. Perhaps this occurs most apparently through allusions to biblical passages, which act as manifestations of Christianese speakers' high regard for the Bible.

Author Noel Heather, for example, recalled hearing one evangelical woman refer to her place of residence as a "tent until I'm called home."[80] While the speaker does not directly quote scripture, she uses a common Christianese euphemism for death that references a biblical passage. This particular phrase alludes perhaps to 2 Corinthians 5:1: "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands."[81] The most significant aspect of the speaker's reference to this passage is that it was incorporated into a conversation that occurred outside of an explicitly religious setting. This indicates that scriptural allusion is, in fact, a feature of the dialect, rather than simply part of prayer services or Bible study sessions attended by people who happen to speak Christianese.

Biblical references are also seen in Christianese in the form of individual words borrowed from biblical languages. According to research conducted by Hary, incorporation of linguistic elements from holy tongues is characteristic of all religiously-defined language varieties.[82] In Christianese, some of these borrowed words are *hallelujah*, *amen*, and *hosanna*, all Hebrew in origin (although some speakers assume that they were borrowed from Greek). Although Christian and other religious groups may incorporate these borrowed lexical items into prayer or speech in various ways, the words have taken on distinct meanings in Christianese. *Hallelujah*, for example, which retains its literal meaning of 'praise God' in Christian and Jewish prayer, is used as an

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[80] Noel Heather, *Religious Language and Critical Discourse Analysis: Ideology and Identity in Christian Discourse Today*, Vol. 5 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000). 107.
[81] 2 Corinthians 5:1, New International Version, 2011.
[82] Hary and Wein (2013) 101.

interjection in Christianese as well, signifying approval. *Hosanna*, which may be translated from Hebrew as 'save us,' is used in Christianese as a rough synonym for *hallelujah*.[83]

The significance of Christianese allusions to biblical passages can be gathered by briefly reviewing the source of supreme truth in Protestant Christianity. Within this tradition, authority is based in scripture, rather than in a non-textual establishment or historical convention. Interpretation of scriptural law, then, is somewhat dependent on individual experience and understanding.[84] When Christianese speakers include biblical allusions in their speech, they are effectively validating their personal interpretations of their experiences by aligning personal meaning with ultimate authority.

Moreover, whereas Christianese as a whole carries covert prestige for evangelicals who desire to be part of the community of practice, the use of allusions to scripture holds overt prestige. As William Downes explains, the Protestant Christian attitude toward the authority and "cultural centrality" of the Bible is similar to the overt prestige associated with standard language varieties.[85] And because the Bible is sacred, alluding to it within the Christian community carries a greater amount of overt prestige than does speaking the standard dialect in the secular domain.

"Borrowing" of Biblical Terms

In advocating for the restoration of words found in modern Christian language to their appropriately contextualized biblical meanings, theologian Marcus J. Borg points

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[83] Jonathan Kwon, "Praying Hosanna!" *Redemption ministries* (August 29, 2012). www.nyredemption.com/2012/08/29/praying-hosanna/.
[84] Downes 116.
[85] Downes 117.

out that common Christianese words that are also found in the Bible have taken on modern definitions that are not necessarily consistent with the ways they are used in the scripture. Although Borg's interpretations are not typical among modern Christians, his claims suggest that Christianese may be more focused on evoking the general concept of scripture than on referencing the contents of the Bible literally or precisely. In Christianese, *redemption*, for example, refers to salvation from sin and an unobstructed path to heaven. In the Bible, however, this word specifically signifies freedom from slavery.[86] *Sacrifice* in Christianese refers to Jesus' death as a surrogate punishment for sins, but Borg argues that *sacrifice* in the Bible is completely unrelated to the notion of payment for transgression. In a sense, then, Christianese "borrows" words found in the Bible and endows them with modern meanings.

Some Christianese terms that are not found in the Bible borrow the perceived "spirit" of biblical passages and are thus commonly believed to be theological or biblically derived terms. *The rapture*, for example, which refers to the deliverance of Christians to heaven and the simultaneous suffering of non-Christians, was invented in the nineteenth century; the term and its connotations entered Christian discourse relatively recently.[87] According to Borg, this modern interpretation of 1 Thessalonians distorts traditional Christian doctrine, as it promotes violence (preparing for pre-rapture war) and self-interest (ensuring one's own salvation), which are direct contradictions of the Christian teachings of love and improving the world.[88] Thus although Christianese does incorporate many biblical words and concepts, it also attributes several non-biblical

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[86] Marcus J. Borg, *Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power and How They Can Be Restored* (New York: Harper One, 2011).
[87] John Blake, "Do you speak Christian?," *CNN Belief Blog* (July 31, 2011). http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/07/31/do-you-speak-christian/.
[88] Borg 193.

terms to scripture. This, in effect, adds a sort of aura of perceived holiness or authenticity to the variety among Christianese speakers.

Personification of God

One of the more apparent properties of Christianese is the personification of and frequent reference to God. This feature may stem from knowledge of contents of the Bible: as literary critic Northrop Frye suggests, "nowhere does the Bible seem to be afraid of the word anthropomorphic."[89] One Christianese example of this form of personification is included in the sentence "the Lord placed it on my heart," which is often used as a personal explanation for the act of evangelizing.[90] The sentence means roughly 'I felt this was my divinely inspired mission,' but it makes God the agent of the action the speaker discusses. This example also emphasizes a personal connection with God, another recurring feature of the dialect.

Anthropomorphizing God serves to make the otherwise highly abstract concept more accessible. Humans have experienced, and thus can comprehend, interpersonal relationships with other humans, but conceptualizing a connection with a higher power can be a more difficult task. However, certain communities seem to exploit their linguistic resources in order to conceptualize their deity as one who fits into cultural meanings, needs, and limitations.[91] As Oladipo Salami reasons, "people are likely to draw on their own experiences for analogies and images to help them form ideas of their

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[89] Frye 76.
[90] "Testimonies," Loving the Lord Ministries, n.d., http://www.lovingthelordministries.websiteanimal.com/#/testimonies/4531343343.
[91] Oladipo Salami, "Creating God in our image: The attributes of God in the Yoruba socio-cultural environment," in *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion*, edited by Tope Omoniyi and Joshua A. Fishman. 117.

relationship to God."[92] Therefore, when Christianese speakers verbalize that they "have a relationship with God" or that they "know Jesus," their dialect is expressing this method of conceptualizing the divine by making an understanding of God more attainable. This metaphor of "relationship with God" has religious implications as well. As William Downes argues, "the inter-personal generates obligations" which "make a religion a binding form of life."[93] Thus referring to the divine as a personal relation serves not only to conceptualize God, but also to affirm the individual's commitment to Christianity. If a person views God as a personal acquaintance rather than an abstract concept, then that individual is more likely to feel compelled to follow God's word.

Metaphor in Christianese

Metaphor is another common feature of the religiolect, though the metaphorical language characteristic of Christianese often overlaps with its previously discussed biblical allusions or personifications of God. Metaphor is an especially significant feature because it highlights the religiolect's role in creating a particular lens through which speakers view the world, both philosophically and experientially. Metaphor is a device, as Earl MacCormac argues, that "enables us to formulate hypothetical descriptions of the world and our experience" through "categories derived from analogy to our everyday experience."[94] In other words, by consistently incorporating typical Christianese metaphors into their everyday conversations, speakers create, reinforce, and sustain a specific worldview. This is seen in the use of the Christianese term *kingdom of God*, which roughly signifies the greater Christian community, or wherever God is

[92] Salami 117.
[93] Downes 42.
[94] MacCormac xiii.

acknowledged as supreme ruler.[95] By using this term, speakers maintain the existence of a realm in which they live and in which their God is sovereign. It also determines that kingliness is a godly characteristic, which influences the way in which they relate to and conceptualize the divine being (this is reflected in the Christianese term *servanthood* as well).

In addition to emphasizing the supremacy of God, Christianese metaphors tend to conceptualize faith as doing or acting. For example, a popular Christianese phrase that effectively means to believe in God is *to walk with the Lord*.[96] Similarly, Christianese speakers might speak of their religious background or development as a *journey*.[97] These metaphors of moving forward, particularly as a companion of God, serve to frame speakers' religious beliefs within their understanding of the physical world as advancement and progress. According to Donald Evans, Christianese metaphors like these act as "performative language that [expresses] the self-involvement of the speaker."[98] In a sense, these metaphors allow the speaker to "perform" the abstract concepts of faith and spirituality, as they are understood as a "walk" or "journey" that moves the religious adherent forward.

Another common Christianese metaphor is *backsliding*, which refers to a Christian who has begun to retreat from or subscribe less passionately to the teachings of Christianity.[99] This metaphor likely comes from certain versions of Jeremiah 8:5, which refers to Jerusalemites adhering to deceit and lies. Taken in a more literal sense,

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[95] Dean VanDruff, "Concise Christian Dictionary of Terminology," *Acts 17:11 Bible Studies*, n.d., http://www.acts17-11.com/dictionary.html.
[96] "The Christian Cliches," *Jesus Christ Saves Ministries*, 2012, http://www.jcsm.org/biblelessons/cliches.htm.
[97] Heather 42.
[98] MacCormac 53.
[99] Cho (2005).

backsliding conjures up images of sliding backwards down a mountain, hill, or even playground slide after exerting energy in order to climb in the opposite direction, upwards. Involvement in the religion is again conceptualized as forward-moving action. Unlike *walk with the Lord* or *journey*, however, *backslide* adds a particular sense of value to this recurrent metaphor for faith. Here, Christianese speakers equate Christianity with "up" and non-Christianity with "down." The implications of this dichotomy are vast in terms of the identity construction of the group.

Chapter Three: Survey on the use of Christianese Features

While various websites and online blogs claim that Christians do, in fact, speak a distinct language variety, this assertion is most often made within the context of encouraging evangelization or providing intentionally humorous amusement for speakers, rather than in an academic analysis of the dialect. Despite the eagerness of speakers to claim Christianese as a dialect and to provide those who are interested with collections of Christianese terms, a sociolinguistic study of the presumed language variety has not yet been conducted. Thus an analysis of Christianese must investigate the prevalence of its distinguishing features among speakers. To conduct this exploration of Christianese, I created a survey about Christianese use among self-identifying Christians; the structure of and responses to the survey are outlined below. According to sociolinguist Sarah Bunin Benor, using such a survey to identify the pervasiveness of several of the dialect's linguistic features is crucial in locating the variety within greater society and determining how it differs between speakers and in different contexts.[100]

It must be noted that Christianese is, as most dialects are, primarily a spoken variety. Therefore, gathering data through a medium (online survey) that does not include observable speech may be an insufficient method of research, as the data collected depends on the self-awareness of the survey participants. In addition to containing unavoidable inaccuracies due to the nature of self-reporting, the survey cannot evaluate potential phonological characteristics of Christianese, which may be significant aspects of the dialect. Though this survey did include three questions intended to determine whether the participant spoke with a broadly defined modern regional southern accent, it did not test for phonological features other than those generally representative of that

[100] Benor (2010) 2.

regional dialect.[101] Moreover, it cannot be guaranteed that respondents answered these questions about pronunciation within their idiolects accurately.

In addition to the shortcomings inherent in this method of research, the participant population presents further limitations to this particular survey. The respondents, consisting of 136 individuals, were of a non-representative population. Thus the present analysis will be entirely qualitative, rather than quantitative.

Survey Design[102]

This survey on Christian English was designed to be generally parallel in structure and content to a 2009 survey created by Sarah Bunin Benor that gathered data on a language variety used among English-speaking Jews. Benor's "Survey of American Jewish Language and Identity" asked participants questions about their religious and demographic backgrounds and their familiarity with select features of Jewish English.

Like Benor's questionnaire, the "Christianese" survey began with questions about participants' perceived use of religiously influenced terms in their own daily lives. They were first asked if they had used or heard each of the eleven presented terms when speaking with Christians. This was followed by a question about whether they had heard or used the same terms when speaking with individuals who do not identify as Christian. Participants were able to select answers indicating whether they were completely unfamiliar with each term, had heard the term but would not use it, use the term occasionally, or use the term often. The lexical items included were *backslide*, *doubled*

[101] These questions about idiolectal pronunciation tested for the presence of the pin-pen merger, a well-known feature present in many forms of the Southern regional accent. Those who answered that a monosyllabic word containing /In/ rhymes with the accompanying monosyllabic word containing /ɛn/ likely have the pin-pen merger.

[102] See Appendix C for a complete list of the questions asked of survey participants.

eggs or *angel eggs*, *hosanna*, *hallelujah*, *kerygma*, *pre-Christian*, *servanthood*, *Sunday Christians*, *to fellowship*, *to win souls*, and *mother-in-love*.[103] In a later section, participants were asked about *testimony* and *stretching* as they are used among Christianese speakers. Each of these terms has been identified as "Christianese" on various non-academic websites created by evangelical Christians. Survey respondents were also asked whether they believe they speak Christianese, as claiming that one speaks the religiolect is a significant feature of Christianese.

Next, the survey asked participants about their familiarity with specific phrases. These were intended to highlight syntax that might typify the grammar of Christianese, but they included lexical items of note as well. A common theme in these phrases was the use of prepositions to indicate spiritual intimacy. Christianese prepositional phrases like the ones included in the survey are often ungrammatical in Standard English, and they denote highly personal, emotional, and spiritual meanings.

For example, the phrase *to speak into* + [abstract noun] (as in, "my mentor speaks into my life," or "the Lord has spoken into my sorrow") may be defined as supportively and constructively guiding someone, particularly through a difficult period or challenging event. Adding the preposition *into* to the verb *speak* marks the phrase both semantically as a spiritually personal act and syntactically as Christianese.

The Christianese phrase *to have a heart for* employs the preposition *for* in a similar manner. This phrase connotes being particularly sympathetic or compassionate toward a group or an individual, and it uses *for* to express that sense of personal emotional connection to the given prepositional complement. The themes of intimacy and affection emerge again in the Christianese phrase *to love on*, as in, "I spent the day being

[103] See Appendix B for a glossary with definitions of the Christianese terms used in this paper.

loved on by friends at church."[104] While the word "love" alone expresses a sense of friendship and care for another person, *love on* connotes both a deliberate awareness of Christian faith and a sense of support for the struggling or for the non-Christian. The phrase is used most often in Christian settings, such as churches, Christian summer camps, or gatherings of Christian friends, where the term implies harnessing a love for and from God to "heal" those in need. Although *love on* may be used in or in reference to situations that are not explicitly Christian, the contexts in which the phrase tends to appear are overwhelmingly Christian. One Christianese speaker explains that *to love on* is a "Christian-y" term used "when we are talking about broken people or unbelievers. We're gonna 'love on' them."[105] The term was also used in a Christian Science Monitor article about an evangelical event at which a formerly non-Christian teenage attendee reported, "God literally showed me His love through some Christian girls at church who just loved on me so much. They said, 'Monica, God loves you.'"[106] In these contexts, attaching the preposition *on* to the word *love* effectively connects the interpersonal to the divine by associating care for others with the evangelical commitment to disseminating belief in God's love.

The survey also presented the phrase *to be in Christ* to participants. This Christianese idiom broadly signifies a confidence in personal salvation as a result of one's belief in Christ. The phrase *in Christ*, which appears in the New Testament several times, serves to symbolically unite the individual who is "being in Christ" with Jesus by

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[104] This sentence was said by a recent Emory University graduate in 2012 after participating in a volunteer event at an evangelical church in Atlanta. *Love on* is also listed in an online blog post as an "overused" Christianese term: Amy Mitchell, "Buzz, Buzz," *Unchained Faith* (October 4, 2011). http://unchainedfaith.com/2011/10/04/buzz-buzz/.

[105] Nicole Cottrell, "Top 10 Christian Phrases I Never Want to Hear Again," *Modern Reject* (March 29, 2011). http://modernreject.com/2011/03/christian-phrases/.

[106] Mary Beth McCauley, "Extreme Devotion," *The Christian Science Monitor* (Indianapolis: May 7, 2002). http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0507/p14s02-lire.html.

using *in* to emphasize the indestructibility of the union.[107] While aligning one's own beliefs and actions with the teachings of Jesus is a theologically fundamental characteristic of Christianity, using the prepositional phrase *in Christ* intensifies the gravity of this idea and highlights the aspect of closeness.

Another feature of the dialect that was included in this portion of the survey was functional shift. Certain lexical items that are used frequently by evangelical Christians adopt new syntactic functions in Christianese. For example, the noun *fellowship*, meaning "(Christian) companionship," is used in Christianese as a verb to signify gathering with other Christians in order to create a sense of community. Likewise, the morpheme *faith* is used in Christianese in grammatical structures like *grow your faith* and *faithful to* + [verb]. In Standard American English, faith can *grow* but cannot *be grown* as crops or hair can be. A person can also be faithful to a noun, such as another person, but the adverb *faithfully*, rather than the adjective *faithful*, would be used in concurrence with a verb in Standard English. In Christianese, commonly referenced words like *faith* and *fellowship* undergo functional shifts and, consequently, may be used by speakers in a wider variety of syntactic settings than in Standard English.

After asking participants about their familiarity with these Christianese terms and phrases, the survey included three questions designed to test for the presence of the Southern American regional dialect in the respondents' idiolects. According to the 2008 Pew Forum U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, 50% of evangelical Protestant Christians live in the South, broadly defined as stretching from Texas to West Virginia.[108] In Tennessee, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, between 51% and 53% of the adult population

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[107] For example, 2 Corinthians 5:17 states that anyone who "is in Christ is a new creation."

[108] "Portrait and Demographics of United States Religious Affiliation," *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, February 2008. http://religions.pewforum.org/portraits.

identifies with the evangelical Protestant tradition.[109] It was expected, then, that non-Christians who speak a Southern dialect were more likely to have heard Christianese terms than non-Christians who are from less heavily evangelical areas. These questions about regional dialect were also intended to determine whether Christianese is primarily spoken in the American South, and whether it is associated with the Southern regional dialect.

These items were followed by a series of demographic questions to gather data about each participant's age, gender, marital status, place of residence, ethnic and racial background, first language, and level of education. This section also determined whether the respondent was a student at Emory University.

In the next sections, participants were asked about their affiliation and acquaintance with Christianity and the frequency and nature of their interactions with Christian individuals and organizations. If participants responded that they do not currently identify as a Christian Protestant (defined as affiliated with a non-denominational, evangelical, mainline, or historically black church), they were directed to a final page of the survey, where they were given the opportunity to submit comments about distinctly Christian features they had noticed in their own speech. If they responded that they do currently identify as a Christian Protestant, they were directed to a separate set of questions about their preferred version of the Bible, their leadership roles within Christian organizations, and the importance of Christianity within their own lives. Lastly, Protestant participants were asked if they are evangelical Christians. However, this question could not be asked explicitly, as many evangelicals refrain from identifying

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[109] "U.S. Religion Map and Religious Populations: U.S. Religious Landscape Study," *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, February 2008. http://religions.pewforum.org/maps.

themselves as such. According to research cited by the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, only 75% of evangelical Southern Baptists acknowledged either "evangelical" or "born again" as acceptable labels for themselves.[110] Even using the word "Christian" is problematic, as describing one's self as such "is no longer cool among evangelicals on college campuses."[111] Thus in order to determine if survey respondents were, in fact, evangelical, they were asked three questions: first, they were to rate the importance of "being a follower of Jesus." The next two items inquired into the value they do or do not place on evangelizing others ("helping non-Christians become Christians"). If they answered both of these questions positively and placed high importance on following the teachings of Jesus, then they were likely to be evangelical Christians.

Survey Participants

In order to recruit survey participants who were likely to speak Christianese, I reached out to leaders of nine of the Christian organizations that are affiliated with Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. These included the Baptist Collegiate Ministry, the Emory Christian Fellowship (including the Asian Christian Fellowship and Brothers and Sisters in Christ), the Emory Korean Christian Association, the Episcopal Campus Ministry, the Independent Christian Church, the Lutheran Campus Ministry, the Presbyterian Church USA Ministry, the Presbyterian Reformed University Fellowship, and the United Methodist Campus Ministry. The professional leaders of many of these

[110] Larry Eskridge, "How Many Evangelicals Are There?" Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (2012). http://www.wheaton.edu/ISAE/Defining-Evangelicalism/How-Many-Are-There.
[111] Blake (2011).

organizations agreed to send the survey to their student and community members.[112] In addition to asking transparently Christian groups to complete the survey, I posted a link to the survey on four Facebook.com web pages that serve as designated announcement spaces for each of the four classes of current Emory undergraduate students. Both Christian and non-Christian Emory students who discovered the posts in their class Facebook groups participated in the survey. Non-Emory students who received a link to the survey from Emory-affiliated acquaintances participated as well.

Of the 136 individuals who completed the survey, 91 indicated that they are either current or former students at Emory University.[113] Thus the data collected in the survey should be considered specific to the Emory student population, rather than applicable to a wider demographic. However, answers provided by these students and their acquaintances may indicate likely trends outside of the particular university setting. This survey was intended to establish a starting point from which further research about Christianese could proceed.

A Context-Dependent Variety

As was previously mentioned, those who participated in this survey cannot be considered a representative population. Thus the responses discussed here are helpful in determining the validity of qualitative claims that have been made about Christianese, but they cannot contribute to quantitative statistics about the prevalence of the religiolect within certain demographically categorized populations.

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[112] The Emory Korean Christian Association was the only organization that explicitly declined to circulate the survey, implying in its response that its members might speak a form of "Christian Korean" rather than a Christian variety of English.

[113] See Appendix D for select demographic information about survey participants.

While Christianese is a Christian dialect among English speakers, it was apparent upon reviewing the survey responses that not all Protestant Christians speak Christianese, and different speakers of the dialect may not use the same linguistic features in their idiolects. Moreover, those who speak Christianese do not use its features in every situation. They are at least bi-dialectal, as Christianese is generally used as a context-dependent dialect, specifically when all participants in the given conversation have been identified as evangelical Christians.

Of the 136 individuals who completed the survey, 54 identified as current Protestant Christians, and 61 answered that they affiliated with a Protestant Christian tradition as a child. Among those who currently identify as Christian Protestant, most respondents had either heard or used the listed Christianese words when speaking with other Christians. When speaking with non-Christians, however, the same respondents rarely use the lexical items they use at least occasionally in conversations with other Christians. Excluding the word "hallelujah," which six of these respondents answered that they "use often" when speaking with non-Christians, none of the Christianese words were identified by the currently Christian survey participants as being included frequently in conversations with non-Christians.

This context-dependent characteristic of the dialect is perhaps more apparent when considering each of the survey's Christianese terms individually. While fourteen self-identifying Protestant Christians answered that they use the term *to win souls* either often or occasionally when speaking with fellow Christians, only six of these respondents reported that they have used the term when speaking with someone who is not Christian. Similarly, 23 Christian participants use "to fellowship" as a verb "often" when speaking

with other Christians, whereas only seven of these respondents use the term "often" in conversations with non-Christians. Thus although these words remain part of the Christianese speaker's repertoire regardless of context, speakers elect to use Christianese terms more often in conversations with other Christians than in conversations with non-Christians.

The Age Factor

One participant commented within the survey that older Christians speak differently than younger Christians, suggesting that age should be taken into account when discussing Christianese. As per this respondent's recommendation, I filtered the survey responses so that only responses from individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 would be visible. Of the 106 participants who fell within this age range, 98 had never heard the term *doubled eggs* or *angel eggs* when speaking with Christians (101 had never heard the term when speaking with non-Christians). 93 had never heard the term *mother-in-love* when speaking with Christians (98 had never heard this term when speaking with non-Christians). 103 participants in this age range had never heard the term *kerygma* when speaking with individuals of any religion, and 92 had never heard the phrase *to put out a fleece*.

Although these overwhelmingly similar responses might seem to suggest that these terms and phrases simply are not part of the Christianese repertoire, this data more likely indicates that these phrases are part of the religiolect of older Christians. In fact, as Tim Stewart indicates in his "'Apology' for Christianese," older Christians are generally not familiar with the Christianese terms younger Christians use regularly.[114] Stewart asserts that there are at least three generation-based subdialects of Christianese; one of

[114] Tim Stewart, "An 'Apology' for Christianese" (January 10, 2013). 2.

these has been in existence for between thirty and forty years, and another is less than one decade old.

In 1979, an article was published in *American Speech* profiling the dialect of a group of "non-denominational" English-speaking Christians in southeastern Canada. The authors indicated that their subjects gave specialized meanings to existing English words, derived many of their colloquial phrases from the Bible, and preserved the archaic forms and connotations of many of the lexical items they used.[115] Although no further linguistic description was provided, it seems as though Williston and Kinloch were discussing Christianese. Yet upon referencing the article's glossary of common dialectal terms, it becomes clear that this religiolect is different from modern Christianese. For example, it lists *testimony* as signifying the Christian religion (as in, "she's in the testimony"), whereas the term means "story (about a spiritually enlightening Christian experience)" in Christianese today.[116] While geographical location may certainly be a factor in this dialect's dissimilarity to Christianese, it is likely its age that principally accounts for its disparateness. Language is constantly changing, so the Christian vernacular of 1979 is predictably different from the Christianese that is spoken thirty years later.

The validity of the hypothesis that Christianese in its most current form is spoken differently among older Christians than among younger Christians may be tested by reviewing the sources of the phrases included in the survey. The phrase "to put out a fleece," for example, was used in separate conversations with two personal contacts. Both of these contacts currently identify as Protestant Christians, and both are over the age of 50 years. "To put out a fleece" was also included in a list of terms used by evangelical

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[115] R. C. Williston and A. M. Kinloch, "Some Nondenominational-Christian Words," in *American Speech* 54.1 (Duke University Press, 1979). 68.
[116] Williston 69.

Christians that was composed in 1979.[117] The synonymous terms *angel eggs* and *doubled eggs* were taken from an online discussion group for Christian mothers "to support each other in raising our kids in a Christian home."[118] In 2011, many members of the group, presumably all Christian women with children, posted that they recall hearing their own mothers use the aforementioned euphemisms for "deviled eggs." *Kerygma* was taken from a list of words labeled "Christianese" on the personal website of an individual who identifies as a "baby boomer."[119] Lastly, *mother-in-love* is presumably used by Christians who are married, and very few of the 18-24 survey respondents reported being married.

Very few survey participants were over the age of 24, so the responses of the 18-24-year-olds cannot reasonably be compared with the responses of another age group. However, analysis of the survey responses suggests that age is a significant factor in determining the form of Christianese that an individual speaks. While evangelical Christians of all ages may name their dialect "Christianese," perhaps this term does not consistently refer to precisely the same version of the dialect.

American Southern Regional Dialect

As was predicted, many of the speakers who used Christianese terms also spoke with the American Southern dialect. The accent was considered to be present in a respondent's idiolect if she or he answered that *when* rhymes with *spin*, an indication of the pin-pen merger. Although Southern accents are comprised of several distinctive features, none of these features is ubiquitously present throughout the American South.

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[117] McQuerry 149.
[118] "Christian Mommies: Deviled Eggs on Easter?" *Baby Center*, April 19, 2011. http://community.babycenter.com/post/a27333703/deviled_eggs_on_easter?cpg=3&csi=2331374760&pd=0.
[119] "Christianese." *Love of God*, January 18, 2013. http://www.davenevins.com/loveofgod/topics/more/christianese.htm.

However, the pin-pen merger varies relatively little throughout the Southern United States, despite its absence in various southern locations (such as central Arkansas) and presence in certain non-southern areas (such as the Modesto Valley in California).[120] Thus although using the pin-pen merger as the representation of a Southern accent will omit certain respondents who do speak with Southern accents from this category, the merger of /In/ and /ɛn/ is a likely indication that the accent is present.

Based on the survey item that tested for the merger, 39 participants likely speak with a Southern regional accent. All except one of these 39 respondents do, in fact, live in the South, in Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, or Texas. The one non-Southern participant whose speech patterns include the pin-pen merger currently lives in California, but this respondent's parents are from Oklahoma and Florida.

Upon comparing the responses of non-Protestants who have the pin-pen merger with the responses of non-Protestants who do not have the pin-pen merger, it becomes clear that Christianese is likely more common in the South than in other parts of the United States. While analyzing the language patterns of Protestant Christians is useful in determining the presence and prevalence of certain linguistic features within Christianese, ascertaining Christianese "outsider" awareness of the dialect can reveal, among other properties, its probable geographic location.

Among the non-Protestant respondents who do not have the pin-pen merger (no Southern accent), 50% had never heard *hosanna*, 70% had never heard *servanthood*, 67% had never heard *to fellowship*, 74% had never heard *to win souls*, 30% had never heard *to have a heart for*, and 35% had never heard *to grow your faith*. Contrastingly, among non-

[120] William Labov et al., Map 3, *The Phonological Atlas of North America* (The Telsur Project: February 11, 1997). www.ling.upenn.edu/phono_atlas/maps/Map3.html.

Protestants who do have the pin-pen merger (non-Christians living in the South), 21% had never heard *hosanna*, 57% had never heard *servanthood*, 43% had never heard *to fellowship*, 36% had never heard *to win souls*, 7% had never heard *to have a heart for*, and only 8% had never heard *to grow your faith*. Though significant percentages of both Southern and non-Southern non-Christians had never heard certain Christianese terms, those who live in the South were more likely to have been exposed to Christianese than those who do not live in the South. Thus it may be assumed that Christianese is more prevalent in the South of the United States than in other geographical areas.

Religious Upbringing

According to the survey responses, Christianese terms are not used exclusively by current Protestant Christians. However, the non-Christian participants who were familiar with Christianese features tended to have grown up in Christian communities. One non-Protestant respondent, for example, commented, "I guess I do use some words sometimes but I feel that they are common knowledge not necessarily church inspired." This individual attended a Christian elementary or middle school. Similarly, another non-Christian participant has heard many of the Christianese terms but would not use them in his own speech; he attended a Christian high school. A third respondent who does not consider himself to be Christian or "part of the church" uses the phrases *to have a heart for* and *to be called to do something* at least occasionally. He also uses *stretching* as an adjective meaning "difficult" and has heard many of the listed Christianese words when speaking with Christians (but not when speaking with non-Christians). Although this participant does not identify as a Christian, his use and knowledge of certain Christianese features is expected; he attended Christian summer camp and Sunday school and has

worked professionally in a Christian organization. This participant also commented that in the Protestant community in which he grew up, he often heard metaphors not included in the survey that were intended to refer to "something spiritual." Thus the presence of Christianese in one's idiolect may not exclusively indicate a current religious affiliation; it may also suggest a religious upbringing in a community that incorporates Christianese into its colloquial speech.

Self-Identifying as a Speaker

Perhaps the most significant item in the survey was a question that asked participants very directly if they think they speak Christianese. While the collection of survey responses from speakers and non-speakers alike were helpful in determining certain features of the dialect, responses from those who explicitly label themselves as Christianese speakers begin to reveal the characteristics of the collective identity speakers construct as they establish the parameters of the religiolect.

One such characteristic is the tendency to not identify with a particular denomination of Christianity. Of the 22 participants who responded that they do speak Christianese, 10 answered "non-denominational" to a question about current church affiliation. One of these ten non-denominational Protestant Christians added the comment "I don't like labels" in her answer to that question. Interestingly, all except five of the 22 self-identified Christianese speakers did affiliate with specific denominational churches as children.

A second commonality among the Christianese speakers was their commitment to church attendance and participation in Christian community activities. 18 of the 22 speakers attend church at least once per week, and the remaining 4 attend church once or

twice each month. 18 have also attended a Christian summer camp, and 17 participated in a Christian Sunday School program. As teenagers, 20 of the 22 Christianese speakers were involved in Christian youth groups; as college students, 20 were or are involved in Christian organizations on campus.

Lastly, as was predicted, those who acknowledged that they speak Christianese tended to be evangelical Christians. 13 of these 22 respondents believe that helping non-Christians become Christians is "very important," and 6 believe that this activity is "somewhat important." Similarly, 12 self-identifying Christianese speakers would "actively try to help non-Christians become Christians or embrace Christianity." Seven Christianese speakers would not do this themselves, but they "still believe that this is an important Christian value."

CHAPTER FOUR: INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

> "Within just a few weeks of attending my new Protestant [Methodist] church, I realized that the people there had a lot of figures of speech and slang terms that they used to talk about the church and their own faith that I had never heard before. This was unusual to me, because I had been a Catholic all my life, and I assumed that I knew 'how Christians talked.' I realized that [members of this church community] had an entire slang vocabulary that they used when they were casually conversing with each other before church and after church and when they were just hanging out (or, as they referred to it, when they were 'fellowshipping')."[121]

The most socially significant characteristic of Christianese is that those who speak it use the dialect to construct and maintain a collective identity. This notion of "identity," according to R.B. Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller, can be approached from two angles: "to identify" can mean to spot or notice a particular person based on some characteristic or idiosyncrasy, or it can signify acknowledging a person as being a part of a larger group. These two meanings overlap and are interconnected in that "the individual's idiosyncratic behaviour reflects attitudes towards groups, causes, traditions but is constrained by certain identifiable factors," and "the identity of a group lies within the projections individuals make of the concepts each has about the group."[122] In other words, individuals may be identified by particular behaviors that both reflect and shape the character of the larger groups to which they belong.

Le Page argues that group identities exist only in the minds of individuals and persist through interpersonal behavior. Tabouret-Keller views the linguistic attributes of a group as the means by which individuals claim their group identity and associate with other group members.[123] Although the two linguists choose to exclusively apply Le Page's explanation to their research outlined in *Acts of Identity*, the present discussion of

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[121] Correspondence with Tim Stewart, personal communication, February 11, 2013.
[122] Le Page 2.
[123] Le Page 5.

Christianese will mainly adopt Tabouret-Keller's theory of group identity and the centrality of language. It will be argued that Christianese is a means by which speakers identify as part of the community and identify others who are in the community as well. Through linguistic acts such as naming their religiolect, speaking like a group member in order to "fit in," and asserting that outsiders cannot understand Christianese, the group's identity is maintained among speakers.

In using Christianese, members of the linguistic community simultaneously exclude "outsiders" and psychologically unite as "insiders." Because these two acts of identity formation are intertwined and concurrent, they are not discrete affairs in practice; a distinguishable group cannot include some without excluding others. However, for purposes of theoretical analysis, communal inclusivity and exclusivity will be considered here as separate instances of identity formation.

Language and Inclusive Identity

In terms of the factor of inclusivity in constructing a collective identity, speakers of Christianese assert their place within the community and recognize others as insiders through various means. These include naming the dialect, using the language variety to express shared non-linguistic characteristics, and employing devices such as in-group humor and peer pressure to speak Christianese.

By using the term *Christianese* to refer to their own way of speaking, members of the community conceptualize themselves as belonging to a clearly defined societal group. In Tabouret-Keller's "Language and Identity," the author explores the significance of labeling one's language in building and maintaining the speaker's social identity.

Language, according to Tabouret-Keller, can function as "an external behavior allowing the identification of a speaker as a member of some group" (as in, a person who speaks only French is likely to be French), or it can be "the means of identifying oneself" (as in, 'I know that I am a native speaker of French so I am French').[124] From either of these perspectives, whether from that of the speaker or of the observer, the name of the language one speaks is crucially important in determining one's identity.[125] This is perhaps more obvious in situations where the name a person gives to his or her idiolect is a primary factor in distinguishing the individual's language from another language. For example, linguists have found little structural difference between Hindi and Urdu as they are spoken in India. However, Hindus of the region assert that they speak Hindi, while Muslims maintain that they speak Urdu.[126] Hindi speakers and Urdu speakers insist that the two varieties are distinct languages despite their overwhelming resemblance, a claim that reveals much about the groups' respective communal identities. Similarly, in Yugoslavia, the literary forms of Serbian and Croatian are virtually indistinguishable linguistically. Nevertheless, the varieties are given different names primarily because Eastern Orthodox Christians in the area label their language "Serbian," while Roman Catholics assert that their language is "Croatian."[127] The name a speaker gives to an idiolect, in other words, is crucial in determining the speaker's affiliation with a communal identity. Naming a language or a dialect, Tabouret-Keller asserts, gives it

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[124] Andrée Tabouret-Keller, "Language and Identity," in *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Florian Coulmas (Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 315.
[125] Tabouret-Keller 319.
[126] This data may be found on page 23 of Schiffman's *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*, a book published in 1996. Although this information was true in the year 1996, the religiously based distinction between Urdu and Hindi has become less conspicuous in recent years.
[127] Schiffman 23.

"iconic status."[128] The name "Christianese" is a symbol of social affiliation with the evangelical Christian community. This religiolect's name is particularly relevant because, as is true of Hindi, Urdu, Serbian, and Croatian, it is its speakers who insist on lexically distinguishing it from other varieties and claiming it as their own. Naming a variety, therefore, is a significant component of building the identity of its speakers.

In addition to labeling their dialect as distinct, Christianese speakers express non-linguistic commonalties through the medium of language in order to solidify their collective identity. On the pragmatic level of language, by using Christianese, speakers are able to indicate their religious beliefs without necessarily stating them plainly in Standard English. When another member of the community speaks the religiolect, an insider is able to identify that person as sharing his or her worldview, and thus both individuals establish that they are members of the same community. For example, when a Christianese speaker uses the word *walk* as a synonym for "life," "behavior," or "spiritual condition" (as in, "my walk with God"), other insiders recognize that the speaker believes that he or she is constantly accompanied by Christ, which is part of the religious ideology of evangelical Christians. The speaker who "walks with the Lord" is expressing a religious belief, but he or she is also asserting membership in the community of speakers by doing so. As William Downes suggests, "what we assume and communicate doesn't only convey content, it conveys who we are."[129] Thus the articulation of religiously endowed Christianese serves to locate speakers within the group that accepts these expressed doctrinal items.

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[128] Tabouret-Keller 318.
[129] Downes 232.

Moreover, as was suggested in the survey responses, speakers may use the dialect most commonly in conversations with fellow insiders or in explicitly Christian contexts. An explanation for this may be that dialogues between insiders simply focus on Christianity more frequently than do conversations with others, so a Christian religiolect would be the most appropriate mode of communication in those environments. However, the use of Christianese in these settings cannot be attributed entirely to topic choice, as speakers do employ the dialect to discuss subjects that are not necessarily religious (as when a mentor *speaks into* a mentee's life, for example). Furthermore, because Christianese did not exist until relatively recently, Christians must possess the ability to adequately discuss religious subject matter without using this religiolect. Therefore, religious factors cannot be an absolute explanation for the use of Christianese. Rather, a primary purpose of communicating in Christianese is likely to signal to members of the group that the speaker is an insider. Evidence that the dialect is used for this purpose can be found in the grievances with the language variety certain insiders have publically expressed on the Internet. Namely, many online blog posts written by Christianese speakers convey a frustration that some insiders use the religiolect not to express religious beliefs, but to assert their membership in the group. Although the posts appear to be negative responses to Christianese, these complaints are not grievances with the variety itself; rather, these speakers perceive fellow insiders as using the religiolect simply to "sound just like everybody else who uses it," without concern for theological accuracy.[130] To the writers of these blog posts, it seems that some speakers use Christianese primarily for its pragmatic rather than semantic connotations, in order to make themselves appear to be insiders in the community. As one blog states, Christianese

[130] Cho (2005).

terms are "overused, to the point that they've begun to lose any [religious] meaning they once had."[131] A comment on another site reads, "Christianese is frequently spoken with meaningless intent, which I think is what makes [speakers' 'misuse' of the variety] particularly aggravating."[132] The prevalence of this sentiment is significant because it suggests that many individuals choose to speak Christianese instead of a more secular variety of English primarily for a social reason, that is, in order to display their membership in the group. David Cho, an evangelical who consciously avoids speaking Christianese, admits that he has "a hard time fitting in" among other evangelical Christians precisely because he does not use the religiolect.[133] Cho's sentiment calls to mind William Downes' argument that "to speak like a member" is a significant element of being in a social group.[134] Because Cho does not "speak like a member" of the Southern evangelical Protestant community, he feels as though he is not immediately recognized as an insider. This recognition of a correlation between use of the dialect and "fitting in" reinforces the hypothesis that speakers use Christianese among fellow insiders in order to linguistically affirm their membership in the group.

This active assertion of membership is provoked in part by the peer pressure insiders face from fellow group members to use the language variety. Some acknowledge that they speak the religiolect in order to "fit in or appear normal," as many encounter a social expectation within their church communities to use Christianese.[135] One speaker suggests that members of the group use Christianese in order "to show their

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[131] "Speaking Christianese," Unpunctuated Life (July 21, 2011). http://unpunctuatedlife.com/2011/07/speaking-christianese/.
[132] Jenny, comment on David Cho, "Christian-ese," The Best Dog in the World (February 17, 2005). http://davidcho.blogspot.com/2005/02/christian-ese.html.
[133] Cho (2005).
[134] Downes 233.
[135] Stewart, "Apology" 3.

allegiance to the group."[136] On an online blog post, another insider remarks that Christianese is "how people speak who want to sounds [*sic*] like 'good Christians.'"[137] Even when they are privately uncertain about the teachings of their religion, members of the group use Christianese "to appear as if we have everything under control, that it all makes sense, and we don't doubt God."[138] Because psychologically embracing a communal identity entails conformity to the norms of the group, insiders will express their faith by using Christianese, even when their mindsets do not entirely align with the group's ideology.[139] Emory University undergraduate Alexis Jones admits that she "used [Christianese] to make my stagnant spiritual growth appear to be happening exponentially" in order to give her peers the impression that she had fully accepted the tenets of the group. She discloses that in striving toward conformity to her peer's expectations, she "talked like a Christian but I did not walk like one."[140] Speakers of Christianese thus use the dialect in order to assure other insiders, who expect them to exhibit certain speech behaviors, that they are unquestionably members of the community.

Another vehicle by which speakers establish their affiliation with the group is in-group humor. This can be observed in articles that are written for the entertainment of those who speak Christianese. Mark Waltz's "Christianese Translated," for example, contains a list of phrases that have been comically translated from Christianese to Standard English "so that you can find out what your Christian friend is really saying to

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[136] "Christianese aka Evangelebonics" (2013).
[137] "Christianese Sucks," The Unconventional Doctor's Wife (July 26, 2012). http://theunconventionaldoctorswife.com/2012/07/26/christianese-sucks/.
[138] "Christianese Sucks" (2012).
[139] Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes* (London: Routledge, 1998). 3.
[140] Jones (2013).

you."[141] Despite this misleading description, the website is targeted primarily at insiders who would find it amusing. It lists Christianese phrases and contextual "translations" such as *God is good* (explained as "my life sucks"), *bless his heart* ("what an idiot"), and *I think you should pray about it* ("you'll see that I'm right"). Although these "translations" appear to be written in Standard English, the list is intended primarily for the enjoyment of Christianese speakers. An appreciation of the humor of the satirical translations requires an insider perspective and a prior understanding of the meanings and appropriate usages of each Christianese phrase. Members of the community, then, may be assured of their insider status if they recognize the humorous falsity of these translations.

Durkheim has observed that people "represent their sense of unity in the groups of which they are members [through] ceremony and symbol, in belief and ritual."[142] For speakers of Christianese, language is one such symbol and practice that stands for a collective identity.

Identity Formation By Exclusivity

When non-speakers observe a Christianese conversation for the first time, they may find it difficult to understand the dialogue. This is due in part to the receding presence of Christian language in public society. According to sociologist David Martin, American society has undergone a secularization that has relegated the religion away from the mainstream, making it less familiar than it may have been in the past to those who are not part of the Christian population. Christian varieties of English, Martin

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[141] Mark Waltz, "Christianese Translated," *Mark Waltz: ...Because People Matter* (January 31, 2008). http://www.becausepeoplematter.com/marks_weblog/2008/01/christianese-tr.html.
[142] Hammond 143.

asserts, have become "either remote, or too familiar."[143] Due in part to this secularization of American culture, Christian varieties of English, which are integral to the daily lives and identities or those who speak them, have become foreign to non-speakers.

Yet perhaps more than general societal trends, it is the maintained exclusivity of Christianese that has made the religiolect unfamiliar to those who do not speak it. Dialects like Christianese, author Philip Alexander argues, are "meant to be opaque: They are constructed to *exclude* comprehension except in the case of insiders 'in the know.'"[144] This exclusion of outsiders occurs primarily in order to reinforce the identity that is constructed within the community; because collective identities are formed by symbolically drawing boundaries around a group, an outside-of-the-boundary must necessarily exist ("this is who we are" is inevitably accompanied by "this is who we are not").[145] Furthermore, psychologists Hogg and Abrams maintain that "discrimination against outgroups" is a crucial factor in group identity construction.[146] Christianese is utilized to build and preserve an internal, insider identity, which entails an exclusion of those who are not in the group.

As was previously discussed, members of this community distinguish themselves as a group through their use of the term *Christianese*. Naming their dialect functions as a tool of exclusion as well, as this act implies that there exist others from whom they wish to dichotomously differentiate themselves. Noel Heather suggests that in addition to conceiving of themselves as different from "the other," Christianese speakers wish to

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[143] David Martin, *Christian Language and its Mutations: Essays in Sociological Understanding*, Theology and Religion in Interdisciplinary Perspective Series (England: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2002). 3.
[144] Alexander 85.
[145] Green 12.
[146] Hogg and Abrams 3.

separate from their own past selves.[147] Insider status for evangelicals is attained rather than inherited, so many current insiders—both new converts and lifelong church-goers—were once outsiders, if only symbolically. This dimension of their identity is apparent in terms connoting self-transformation, like *born again*, which indicates a preference to affiliate solely with the explicitly Christian identity that the individual adopted upon his or her "rebirth." Christianese is thus used to disconnect a speaker from any period in which she or he may not have been an accepted member of the community.

Additional evidence of Christianese speakers' exclusion of outsiders for the purpose of establishing an identity is found in the terminology the group uses to name themselves and others.[148] Moreover, the specific labels that the community ascribes to insiders and to outsiders reveal information about the nature of the social border that speakers create around themselves. Christianese terms for insiders generally serve to associate the group with universally accepted virtues, such as truth, righteousness, and goodness, which necessarily implies that outsiders are aligned with their opposites.[149] These names for insiders include *believers*, *followers of Christ*, *disciples (of Christ)*, *saved*, *Christians*, and *brothers and sisters*. In the Christian worldview, the exemplary lifestyle emulates that of Jesus and complies with Christian teachings; according to insider understanding, this way of life embodies truth, righteousness, and goodness. Thus for Christianese speakers, linguistically designating a group as adhering to Christian doctrine and striving to echo the ways of Jesus is effectively equating the group with the morally upright. In using names such as *non-Christians* and *pre-Christians* to describe outsiders, then, Christianese speakers suggest that those who are not members of their

[147] Heather 42.
[148] Alexander 85.
[149] Alexander 85.

group may not (yet) possess these ideal attributes. Thus a dichotomy is established between the Christian and the *lost soul* or *heathen*—both Christianese labels for the non-speaker—and it becomes especially desirable for insiders to lay claim to their membership in the community.

Exclusion of Prospective Insiders

The word *Christianese* is occasionally applied derisively within pleas written by speakers and directed toward other speakers to discontinue their use of the religiolect. These appeals illuminate a paradox that arises when this particular community uses a group-specific dialect. As has been discussed throughout this chapter, using a religiolect like Christianese creates a boundary around the community of speakers that excludes non-speakers. Yet those who speak Christianese are characterized in part by their emphasis on evangelizing, or bringing others into the fold. Thus this dialect that effectively excludes outsiders is spoken by a group of people that explicitly seeks to include outsiders.

In recognizing this, Christian individuals and organizations have attempted to increase their community's consciousness of the phenomenon. The *Evangelical Press Association*, for example, published an article in 2011 entitled "Avoiding 'Christianese' in your writing."[150] Independent evangelical authors have published books such as *No More Christianese*, which is intended to help speakers "learn to speak in a way that those without a religious background will understand" in order to "communicate effectively

[150] "Avoiding 'Christianese' in your writing," *Evangelical Press Association*, January 11, 2011, http://www.epassoc.org/Writing/christianese.html.

about God."[151] *On Mission*, a publication of the North American Mission Board, has posted on its website a section entitled "Unlearning the lingo," which provides alternative phrases to replace Christianese terms that it deems "meaningless, too churchy or clichéd to the people we're attempting to reach."[152] To these Christianese speakers, it is problematic to use religious language that is unintelligible to those who are not yet Christian, as doing so limits accessibility to the community for potential converts. However, in consciously recognizing that it alienates those who do not speak it, the authors of these articles reify the dialect and explicitly label it as their own. Ironically, although these books and articles condemn the tendency of Christianese to exclude people from the community, they actually reinforce the identity-determining borders between the insider speakers and outsider non-speakers. This is especially evident in Patricia King's review of *No More Christianese*, in which she praises the book for being a "great tool" for "every Christian who is desiring to relate to the unsaved."[153] Although King does express an enthusiasm for reaching out to prospective converts, her use of the term *unsaved* deepens the chasm between speakers and non-speakers of the dialect. Christian insiders, she implies, possess the virtues necessary to be protected from damnation; outsiders do not.

Why, then, do Christianese speakers continue to fortify the dividing line between themselves and non-speakers as they simultaneously articulate a desire to bring non-speakers into their community? Perhaps one answer to this question is hinted at within

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[151] Doug Addison, *No More Christianese: Replacing Religious Language with Everyday Words* (2004).
[152] "Unlearning the lingo," *On Mission* (2013). http://www.onmission.com/onmissionpb.aspx?pageid=8589965509&terms=unlearning%20the%20lingo.
[153] Patricia King, "Editorial Review," Amazon. *http://www.amazon.com/No-More-Christianese-Replacing-Religious/dp/1886068275/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1362187610&sr=8-1&keywords=no+more+christianese.*

the Christianese term *pre-Christian*. It is, as has been established, a perpetual evangelical goal to increase the number of insiders in the community. However, there must be some way for members of the group to distinguish between current insiders (*Christians*) and future insiders (*pre-Christians*) in order to effectively seek out those who are not yet part of their religion. The dialect of Christianese has become a sort of shibboleth for the community: those who do not speak the religiolect are evidently non-members. They are classified as potential converts or new Christians who have not yet fully achieved the status of "insider"; in this way, the parameters of the group identity are established. The use of Christianese for this purpose aligns with Tabouret-Keller's theory that language is the means by which identity is recognized.

By asserting that non-Christians cannot understand Christianese, members of the in-group use language to tacitly solidify their own collective identity. Because the vast majority of information on the supposed unintelligibility of Christianese to outsiders comes from speakers themselves, it may be possible that non-speakers are able to understand the religiolect. Yet by insisting that outsiders cannot decipher Christianese, speakers underline the identity-constructing function of their language use. If the dialect were accepted as intelligible and accessible to all English speakers, as members of the community claim they desire it to become, then language use could no longer serve as an indicator of identity for the group. Although evangelicals strive to attract new members to their community, prospective members remain outsiders so that Christianese speakers are able to build a distinct communal identity. As one speaker openly states, in direct opposition to those who discourage Christianese use, "we need to protect our language by

not watering it down to a secular understanding."[154] Although this argument was made in reference to preserving the nuanced semantic contents of Christianese, it reveals an insider perspective on the social nature of the dialect: it is something that needs to be "protected" from outsider understanding.

In recognizing the immeasurable identity-determining powers of language, theologian Marcus J. Borg insists that when one group of Christians adopts an understanding of language that is different from another Christian group's interpretation and use of it, "the differences are so sharp that they virtually produce two different religions."[155] Language and the way speakers use it, then, are not merely reflections of their communal identity. Rather, their language use itself helps construct the group's identity.

[154] "In Defense of 'Christianese'" (2011).
[155] Borg 2.

CHAPTER 5: GENDER ROLES IN CHRISTIANESE

An Evangelical Conception of Gender

Within any religious community, the identities of individuals must be reconciled with the character and ideologies of the group. Among Christianese speakers, idiolects are particularly influenced by religious and societal perceptions of gender. Christianese is riddled with gendered terms like *new man* and *old man*, *God the Father*, and *Son of God*, so the ways in which individuals interpret, inhabit, and manage this element of the religiolect should not be overlooked.

Many members of the greater evangelical community promote complementarianism, or the view that men and women are inherently endowed with different roles and functions in society, as a core value. There are, of course, exceptions to and controversies regarding this view in several evangelical churches. A 1999 study conducted by Gallagher and Smith, for example, found that the evangelical tradition of complementarianism is more symbolic than pragmatic among many who embrace the belief.[156] Nevertheless, it is an ideology that is emphatically advocated among many adherents to the religion. Contemporary evangelical organizations such as the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood proclaim that they were founded in imperative "opposition to the growing movement of feminist egalitarianism."[157] The Gospel Coalition, a national network of evangelical churches, and Together for the Gospel, an association of evangelical pastors, both cite complementarianism as a principal tenet in their official mission statements. One subscriber to the ideology explicitly connects

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[156] Sally K. Gallagher and Christian Smith, "Symbolic Traditionalism and Pragmatic Egalitarianism: Contemporary Evangelicals, Families, and Gender," *Gender & Society* 13 (1999). 211.

[157] "About Us," The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, n.d. https://www.cbmw.org/about-us/.

complementarianism to the spiritual essence of Christianity, arguing that gender differences "are the foundation of the social relationship that speaks of the love of Christ for his church."[158] It is thus probable that this philosophy is somehow manifested within the speech of evangelicals, just as their reverence for the Bible is reflected in their preservation of archaic forms of English, and their emphasis on forming personal relationships with God is apparent in their anthropomorphizing metaphors for the divine being.

Among speakers of Christianese who subscribe to complementarianism, "woman" is the social, spiritual, ideological, and functional opposite of "man." From the traditional Christian perspective, the notion of "man" is associated with power, dominance, and strength, as reflected in the gendered titles and images used in Christianity to refer to and conceptualize the divine ("God the Father").[159] The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood adds a dimension of religious responsibility to this dynamic, explaining that it is a "really high calling" for husbands to love their wives "like Christ loves the church."[160] Moreover, a group of Atlanta-based young evangelical Christians affirms (partially in Christianese) that "male leadership is essential in the patriarchal mission of advancing the kingdom," a perspective that relegates women to a subordinate status in this central mission of evangelicalism.[161] According to Elizabeth Johnson, "the feminine

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[158] Owen Strachan, "The Gospel Is for Baby Bear: On Sesame Street and Gender Confusion," Patheos (February 21, 2013). http://www.patheos.com/blogs/thoughtlife/2013/02/the-gospel-is-for-baby-bear-on-sesame-street-and-gender-confusion/.

[159] Münevver Tekcan, "An Overview of God and Gender in Religion," in *Gender and the Language of Religion*, edited by Allyson Jule (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). 11.

[160] Tony Reinke, "Marriage in the Cosmic Plan of God," The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood 17.2 (2012). 24.

[161] Aaron Anderson, "7 Things You Need to Know about Biblical Manhood," The Urban Gospel Mission (February 28, 2013). http://urbangospelmission.com/7-things-you-need-to-know-about-biblical-manhood/.

is there for the enhancement of the male, but not vice-versa: there is no mutual gain."[162] Although these prescribed gender roles seem to favor males, it is not solely the men of the group who determine their character; as Allyson Jule elucidates, the concept of "female" is established through women's own use of language as well.[163] Societal notions of "male" and "female," in other words, are constructed through and influenced by the contextual language use of individuals who identify with and perform the roles of each gender.

Biblical Gender Roles

According to Jule, "the term 'women' is used as a social category that includes certain behaviors, expectations, and attitudes associated with those being female in certain social/religious communities."[164] Gender roles, then, are specific to the communities in which they are constructed and expressed. Within American evangelical Protestant groups, communal interpretations of scripture are of prime importance in establishing the functions of men and women, as these groups emphasize reverence of and compliance with the contents of the Bible in all facets of life. One advocate of complementarianism indicates that gender differences within the community are "elegant gifts of God" and are outlined in the Bible, with "the apex of [gender] distinctiveness seen in marriage, the picture of the gospel."[165] Therefore, reviewing biblical portrayals of marriage can reveal information about the nature of these expected gender roles. The marital responsibilities of men and women are addressed specifically in chapter five of

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[162] Tekcan 12.
[163] Jule 3.
[164] Jule 2.
[165] Strachan.

Ephesians and in Proverbs 31, where the ideal marriage entails spiritual leadership on the part of the male and subservience on the part of the female.

Ephesians 5

Among those who responded to the previously discussed survey on language use and Christianity, 22 individuals indicated that they believe they speak Christianese. All 22 of these participants responded that they do regularly read or study the Bible, and each of them prefers a particular English version. The majority of these respondents cite one of the following versions as their preferred translations of the Bible: the English Standard Version (ESV), the King James Version (KJV), the New International Version (NIV), or the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Ephesians 5 will thus be considered as it appears in these translations in order to illuminate characteristics of biblically prescribed gender roles as evangelical Christians have been exposed to them. Excerpts of the four versions will also be juxtaposed with each other in order to determine if the Bible translations differ in the way that they recommend gender roles.

First, Ephesians 5:22 explains how a wife should relate to her husband. This verse is written as "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord" (NIV), "Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord" (NRSV), "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (ESV), and "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (KJV).[166] The principal difference between these versions is the effect of the simile that compares women's prescribed relationships with their husbands to their metaphorical relationships with God. Evidently, each version encourages wives to embrace the authority of their husbands. Yet while the verse as it

[166] "Ephesians 5," BibleGateway.com, n.d. http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ephesians%205.

appears in NIV and NRSV acknowledges that women already accept the sovereignty of God ("as you do" and "as you are"), ESV and KJV seem to refer to female submission to God in an imperative, rather than descriptive, sense. Whereas the verse in NIV and NRSV assumes that Christian wives already respect God's supremacy as good Christians should, the ESV and KJV translations seem to be reminding wives more directly to be mindful of this basic Christian teaching. The ESV and KJV translations thus imply that for women, marriage entails a sort of religious coming of age, a time when they fully grasp the notion of submission to God. Regardless of the spiritual growth that these translations may or may not attribute to becoming a wife, all four versions entreat women to behave toward their male partners with utmost respect and to use their reverence for God as a metaphor for this intention. Christian wives, according to Ephesians 5:22, are generally expected to accept the authority of their male counterparts.

While Ephesians 5:22 explicitly indicates that women are subordinate to their husbands, Ephesians 5:25 implicitly encourages men to be more Christ-like than their wives. This verse is written almost identically in each of the four aforementioned versions as "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."[167] Christian men's love for their spouses, according to this verse, is intentionally sacrificial. This passage alludes to the crucifixion of Christ, an image that adherents to the religion associate with martyrdom for the ultimate benefit of others. Fulfilling the Christian duty of loving one's wife, then, requires a man to metaphorically sacrifice his own wellbeing, or "give himself up," for the sake of his wife's protection. This verse encourages male spouses to be Christ-like, as they are instructed to experience

[167] "Ephesians 5:25 (English Standard Version)," BibleGateway.com, n.d. http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ephesians%205:25&version=ESV.

and express love "just as Christ" did. Thus while women are commanded to metaphorically relate to their spouses in the way that humans relate to God, men are ordered to relate to their spouses in the way that God relates to humans.

Proverbs 31

Another commonly cited scriptural passage that influences Christian views on gender roles is Proverbs 31. Verses 10 through 31 of this chapter describe what many Christianese speakers refer to as the *Proverbs 31 Woman*, or the "model wife" whom many evangelical women either claim they aspire to become or resent for representing an unattainable ideal.[168] The Proverbs 31 Woman is both "a model of womanhood" and "a model of who godly single men should be pursuing."[169] The significance of this scriptural representation of womanhood is manifest through the existence of organizations like Proverbs 31 Ministries, which provides religious guidance for Christian women "with Proverbs 31:10-31 as a guide."[170]

The term *Proverbs 31 Woman* sometimes appears in Christianese as *P31 Woman*. This initialism is linguistically significant because it indicates the extent to which speakers use the dialect and affirms that it is inaccessible to non-speakers. *Proverbs 31*

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[168] Proverbs 31:10–31 is highly significant in Judaism as well, but the Jewish interpretation and utilization of the passage differ from those characteristic of evangelical Protestantism. While evangelicals may refer to Proverbs 31 as describing an often unattainable ideal for women, Jewish husbands use the same scriptural excerpt as praise for their wives. In many Jewish families, it is customary to recite the passage—which is refered to by its opening words in Hebrew, "Eshet Chayil"—weekly before the first Sabbath meal as an expression of gratitude toward the wife. This difference in interpretation corresponds with popular Christian and Jewish metaphors for marriage: while Ephesians 5 compares Christian wives to the Church, which is a human response to the divine, Jewish wives are often compared to the Torah (Hebrew Bible), which is considered to be the word of God. These analogies thus remain consistent within each religion. Jewish wives are praised as products of God in the Torah metaphor, so "Eshet Chayil" honors them as such. The humanity (and, therefore, imperfection) of Christian wives is highlighted in the metaphor of Jesus and the Church, so for evangelicals, the ideal depicted in Proverbs 31 is a goal, rather than a reality.

[169] Tim Stewart, "Proverbs 31 Woman," Dictionary of Christianese (December 10, 2011). http://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/proverbs-31-woman2/.

[170] "About Us," Proverbs 31 Ministries (2013). http://www.proverbs31.org/about-us/.

Woman and its implications have become so integral to Christianese speech that some insiders replace the phrase with an initialism that is presumably understood by speakers of the variety. This use of initialisms is also found in Jewish English, a religiolect that contains lexical items such as *BT* ("ba'al tshuvah," someone who has newly embraced Orthodox Judaism) and *FFB* ("frum from birth," a Jewish person who has been Orthodox for his or her entire life). As is true of *BT* and *FFB*, *P31* is not available or comprehensible to speakers of Standard English. Thus in addition to allowing speakers to express a religiously influenced gender expectation, *P31 Woman* demonstrates the characteristic exclusivity of the religiolect.

Although the woman outlined in Proverbs 31 is considered the paragon of femininity among evangelicals, there does not seem to be a consistent or comprehensive definition of the woman or her characteristics in the aforementioned English translations of the Bible. Proverbs 31:10, the only verse in the section that praises her overall character without chronicling her actions, includes an adjective that emphasizes her extraordinary worth and seems to encompass the essence of the rest of the passage. Yet this adjective is not synonymous in every English translation. The ideal female is described in Proverbs 31:10 as "a wife of noble character" (NIV), "a virtuous woman" (KJV), "an excellent wife" (ESV), or "a capable wife" (NRSV). Thus when Christian women aspire to become the Proverbs 31 Woman, they may not all have precisely the same intentions. This is perhaps more apparent in Proverbs 31:26, which is translated as "faithful instruction is on her tongue" (NIV), "in her tongue is the law of kindness" (KJV), or "the teaching of kindness is on her tongue" (NRSV and ESV). While the overall meanings of each of these translations are seemingly homologous, their tones

reveal very different qualities to which evangelical women may aspire. The NIV translation presents the woman primarily as a teacher of religious belief, while the verse in KJV implies adherence to commandments as its focus; NRSV and ESV suggest that the woman described in the verse is predominantly an instructor or model of kindness. Christian organizations that uphold the passage as one that defines the exemplar of womanhood provide still novel interpretations: Proverbs 31 Ministries, for example, understands the verse as describing a woman who "encourages others and develops godly friendships."[171] In Melissa Ringstaff's "10 Virtues of the Proverbs 31 Woman," the scriptural passage is interpreted in yet another way; Ringstaff cites Proverbs 31:26 as a portrayal of a mother who "disciplines [her children] with care and wisdom."[172] Thus although the woman described in Proverbs 31 is championed as an ideal among evangelicals, the nature of her character is defined somewhat ambiguously in the evangelical community as a whole.

More significant than her specific qualities is perhaps the notion that the Proverbs 31 Woman "fears the Lord" (Proverbs 31:30) and is good to her husband (Proverbs 31:12). These attributes are listed explicitly as the first two precepts of womanhood within the mission statement of Proverbs 31 Ministries. According to this organization, the Christian woman should firstly build a "relationship with Jesus Christ," and secondly honor and enrich "the life of her husband, encouraging and supporting his leadership within his family and his church."[173] As is apparent in Ephesians 5, the primary responsibility of the ideal Christian wife is to submit to both her husband and God.

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[171] "The Seven Principles of a Proverbs 31 Woman," Proverbs 31 Ministries (2013). http://www.proverbs31.org/about-us/.
[172] Melissa Ringstaff, "10 Virtues of the Proverbs 31 Woman," A Virtuous Woman (2012). http://avirtuouswoman.org/10-virtues-of-the-proverbs-31-woman/.
[173] Proverbs 31 Ministries (2013).

Perhaps it is the embracing of these relationships that prompt evangelicals to praise the Proverbs 31 Woman as the ideal. The Proverbs 31 Woman is "worth far more than rubies" (NIV) in part because she serves her husband and reveres God, two attributes of the ideal evangelical woman.

Method: ChristianMingle.com

In order to determine if and how evangelical beliefs regarding gender roles emerge linguistically within Christianese, I turned to ChristianMingle.com, a Christian dating website and online "community where you can find singles that share your values and love for God in Christ."[174] ChristianMingle.com, a Spark Networks USA company founded in 2001, is marketed as a "destination for single Christians looking to date and marry within the Christian faith."[175] The website currently has over nine million registered members. On the site, evangelical users likely use Christianese to present themselves to potential matches, as they are attempting to be recognized as members of the in-group—individuals who are suitable for long-term relationships. The contents of the website are entirely focused on the romantic compatibility of members of the opposite sex, so personal understandings of gender roles are indicated as well.[176] Thus on ChristianMingle.com, one can observe the gendered dynamics of Christianese use.

When registering on the website, individuals are advised "to check a dating mate's authenticity," or commitment to Christianity, before pursuing a romantic relationship with another member of the site. In order to do this, ChristianMingle.com

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[174] "About ChristianMingle.com," ChristianMingle.com (2013). http://www.christianmingle.com/.
[175] "About ChristianMingle.com," Spark Networks (2013). http://www.spark.net/portfolio/christianmingle-com/.
[176] In accordance with the religious beliefs of many members of the website, subscribers are not given the option to indicate that they are seeking a romantic partner of their own sex or gender. Although this is not stated directly anywhere on the site, members are only able to select "man seeking a woman" or "woman seeking a man" upon registration.

suggests that the individual "watch for meaningful signs of spirit-filled interest in God and a willingness towards obedience of God's Word, in order to serve the Lord with their total heart, mind and body. [...] The person whose mind, body and spirit is focused on Christ is truly living an abundant Christian life."[177] Because the only "meaningful signs" that users can plausibly observe through the website are found within linguistic self-portrayals, ChristianMingle.com essentially encourages the use of religiously infused language—like Christianese—to help registered users identify other in-group members.

Individuals do, in fact, use their allotted space on the website both to present themselves as desirable romantic partners for members of the opposite sex and to describe the attributes of a hypothetically ideal Christian individual of the opposite sex. In delineating the speculatively suitable Christian male and female, ChristianMingle.com subscribers use Christianese to reveal and support certain religiously influenced opinions about gender roles and differences.

As with using a survey to collect information about a spoken language variety, analyzing a variety through written textual excerpts on the Internet may not provide a complete picture of the gendered dynamics of the variety. In addition to restricting the ability to investigate phonological elements, written texts tend to reflect a more standard dialect, so features specific to a particular gender are likely not distinguishable in written language. However, text written by ChristianMingle.com members is generally intended to be stylistically conversational. Moreover, due to the nature of the site's subject matter, user-written text does highlight the ways in which speakers use Christianese in order to disclose their attitudes toward the social and religious capacities of men and women.

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[177] "Do's and Don'ts for Christian Dating," ChristianMingle.com. http://www.christianmingle.com/tips_and_advice/dos_and_donts.html.

ChristianMingle.com profile text specifically reveals the ways in which complementarianism and scripturally based expectations for marriage emerge within Christianese.

When searching for probable Christianese speakers on ChristianMingle.com, I filtered the index of members on the website to include only those who indicated that they were raised in evangelical churches. Although this method does, of course, exclude data from those who became evangelical Christians more recently, the website allows users to browse potential matches only by childhood denomination, rather than by current affiliation. In addition, I limited the profiles I reviewed to those who are between the ages of 18 and 36 years in order to increase the likelihood that they would speak that age group's variety of Christianese, rather than the form of the religiolect that emerged in the 1970s, for example.

The data that is being considered here was gathered entirely from the "Introduction" section of profiles of individuals who indicated that they were raised in an evangelical church. The Introduction displays the text that the user submits in response to the question "Who am I and what am I looking for?" Users are not given an apparent word limit for their answers, but Introductions are generally between 20 and 400 words. All members of ChristianMingle.com are required to include this personal Introduction on their profiles. As with the survey on Christianity and language use, the data presented here should be regarded as qualitative, rather than representative or quantitative. The relatively small number of reviewed profiles were retrieved from the first few pages of broadly qualified search results on the site; different profiles may have been selected had the website ordered the results differently. For purposes of the present analysis, male and

female profiles will be reviewed separately. Moreover, descriptions of women on male profiles ("looking for") will be discussed apart from descriptions of women on their own profiles ("who am I"). Likewise, the ways in which men describe themselves will be considered separately from the ways in which women describe their desired male partners.

Results[178]

Although reviewing ChristianMingle.com profiles would have ideally allowed for a comparison between male and female Christianese use, men and women on the website did not appear to differ significantly in their usage of the dialect. Both men and women did, however, use their profiles to reference the scriptural motifs of male leadership and female submission. More specifically, several profiles belonging to men and women reference an expectation that the husband in a marriage should be the spiritual, Christ-like leader in the family, while the wife should be the teaching, serving, kind Proverbs 31 Woman. In addition, males and females alike use their allotted introductory space to publically declare that they have personal relationships with God and that they desire a romantic partner who experiences a similar connection to Jesus. However, when men discuss their desired partner's relationship with God, that relationship is often characterized by obedience on the part of the woman. Women, contrastingly, tend to discuss their sought after partners as being in more reciprocal relationships with Jesus, despite the assertions made by some men that they submit themselves to God as well.

Christian Women, as Described in their own Profiles

[178] For excerpts from the referenced ChristianMingle.com profiles, see Appendix E.

As Allyson Jule argues, "through their discourse patterns, [women] locate themselves inside religious identities."[179] Through their linguistic expression, in other words, evangelical women have the ability to either reinforce the notion that their duty is to submit to God and to their husbands, or to construct divergent roles for women within their social and religious environments. Female evangelical members of ChristianMingle.com tend to use this capability to establish themselves as the submissive Proverbs 31 Woman through their own self-descriptions. Many also choose to highlight the nature of their personal relationships with God, albeit in varying manners. While some women present themselves as servants to God, others refer to their metaphorical connection with Christ as a more mutually loving relationship.

In endeavoring to describe themselves as the Proverbs 31 Woman, ChristianMingle.com members compare their own interests and activities to those outlined in the scriptural passage. One woman who works in an organization's human resources department, for example, depicts her career as one that honors God, as it allows her to "care for those around me and serve those in need." Another woman, who uses Christianese phrases like "grow in my faith," "in Christ," and "have a huge heart for" throughout her profile, expresses "a passion for discipling younger women." This emphasis on helping others learn to be more faithful is reminiscent of the "woman as teacher" interpretation of Proverbs 31. Lastly, several women plainly reference the biblical excerpt in their profiles. One woman from North Carolina states, "I strive each day to be the Proverbs 31 woman that God wants me to be." Another who refers to herself as a born-again Christian strives "to emulate the traits described in [Proverbs 31]."

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[179] Jule 3.

As women who wish to live by interpretations of Proverbs 31, these ChristianMingle.com members use their profiles to express their personal relationships with Jesus. Some portray this devotion to God in the manner that Proverbs 31 Ministries does, as a loving relationship that is more vital than the bond between spouses. Two website members from Colorado and Ohio profess, respectively, "I love Jesus with all of my heart," and "my personal relationship with Christ is the most important thing in my life." Other women perhaps interpret the scripture more literally, as their understanding of "fear the Lord" is revealed through their use of language that connotes submission to God. One woman from Quebec, for example, aspires "to serve God where He wants me to" and vows "to follow him wherever He will want me to go."

Although these women do not explicitly acknowledge any obligation to submit to their eventual husbands, they do refer to themselves both as servants of God and as the non-leading member of a future marriage. Many state that they desire a "man to lead a relationship," which relegates the women away from a position of superiority.

Desired Christian Women, as Described in Male Profiles

The function of women according to evangelical males on the website can be deduced by examining men's expectations of their own roles within future marriages. Namely, many of these men believe that they are meant to be the relationship's spiritual leader, which implies that the woman would be subordinate. However, male profiles often avoid explicit discussion of their desired partner's conformity to the ideal of submission. Although several men "would love to find a P31 (Proverbs 31) woman" (as stated by a 35 year old male from Nashville, Tennessee), they tend to refer to her "fearing

of the Lord" in terms of a loving relationship with God, rather than in terms of dutiful obedience. While evangelical women may accentuate their own subservience as a desirable quality, men on the website semantically classify the ideal Christian woman as loving, devoted, and willing to dedicate herself entirely to the precepts of Christianity. These men seek "a lady who is committed to Christ," "a girl who loves Jesus with all her life," "a godly woman," and "a girl who loves Jesus as much as I do." In other words, they express a desire to find a woman who experiences a relationship with God in a similar manner as they do. Therefore, perhaps it is primarily the women, rather than the men, on ChristianMingle.com who linguistically reinforce the perceived religious expectation of female submissiveness.

Christian Men, as Described in their own Profiles

As has been previously discussed, both men and women on ChristianMingle.com state that the male partner in a relationship should ideally be the leader. This suggestion is developed in a "Tips and Advice" section of the website directed towards potential husbands: "As a true Christian believer, you are called to be a priest in your home and part of a holy nation. You are called to teach, be a covering for your mate and help others by being a priest for God. Study the bible to form a deep relationship with God and accommodate the knowledge of His Word in your daily living."[180] These expectations are reflected in several evangelical male profiles that emphasize spiritual leadership, personal dedication to God, and a commitment to advancing the doctrines of evangelical Protestant Christianity.

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[180] "Developing as a Christian," ChristianMingle.com. http://www.christianmingle.com/tips_and_advice/developing_as_a_christian.html.

In referring to their anticipated roles as husbands, male members of ChristianMingle.com express a desire to become the spiritually elevated head of a relationship as described in the aforementioned biblical passages. One user from South Carolina declares that "being a godly husband and father are some of the highest priorities in my life." Similarly, a member from Georgia wants to develop into "the Godly husband and father that my future family deserves." In a somewhat more direct tone, the profile of a male from Oregon tells prospective spouses, "I'm supposed to be the spiritual leader of the relationship." While these men do imply that they wish to become the heads of their future marriages and families, they do so only while referencing God or their religious obligations. Rather than asserting that he should simply be the leader in a marriage, the man from Oregon qualifies his role with the term "spiritual." The other aforementioned men do not wish to be good husbands; they strive to become "godly" husbands. Thus through their linguistic choices, they make it clear to prospective matches that their expression of their own gender role is derived from their conceptions of religious doctrine. In perhaps assuring others that they are members of the evangelical in-group, they lexically underscore that their priority is adhering to the teachings of Jesus.

In addition to expressing a spiritual obligation to leadership, male profiles communicate a sense of dedication to and personal connection with God in the same way that many women on the website do. A man from Illinois, for example, states that the "only serious relationship I've ever had is with Jesus Christ." Another man from Florida publicizes that he is "most passionate about my relationship with God." Some even discuss their relationships with a higher power in terms of the traditionally more feminine emphasis on obedience. A male Georgia resident, for example, explains, "I am giving

Him all of me, and all that I am," and another male user's "main passion in life is to be committed and obedient to God in everything I do." These statements of faith perhaps serve as validation for the profile as a whole; if every aspect of the user's life is a consequence of following divine direction, then he can present himself to potential wives as the Christ-like husband of Ephesians 5. This desire to appear to be the idealized scripture-based man is more evident in the profile of a male from South Carolina, in which he evokes Ephesians 5 by declaring, "being a godly husband and father are some of the highest priorities in my life."

Lastly, evangelical males use their profiles to euphemistically articulate a commitment to the missions of evangelicalism. A man from Indiana, for example, states that he anticipates "fulfilling the good works that He has strung along this path beforehand." Others, such as one man from Georgia, specifically reference the evangelical value of converting others to the religion; this male user tells prospective matches, "I want God to use me to increase his kingdom."

For these evangelical men on ChristianMingle.com, gender roles are a conscious reflection of religious doctrine. In expressing those roles in a manner that they feel will appeal to other Christians, these men lexically and semantically emphasize the religious basis of their ideas about gender.

Desired Christian Men, as Described in Female Profiles

In describing their ideal spouse, evangelical women on ChristianMingle.com cite personal dedication to God as a principal requirement. In fact, a woman's profile will often say that her ideal man must be more devoted to God than to her, his wife. A woman

from Kentucky, for example, is "looking for a man who loves God more than he could ever love me." Another female user from Missouri desires "a guy who loves the Lord first and foremost," and a woman from North Carolina believes that her husband should be "first seeking the Lord and secondly pursuing me." Some even wish for their spouses to make dedication to the church, or "love for Christ's bride," a distinct priority. Female members of ChristianMingle.com emphasize the intimacy between God and their desired partners, referring to this ideal husband "a godly man" or a "man of God."

Additionally, unlike the evangelical men who describe themselves as future "spiritual leaders," many women on the site are less careful than are men to justify male leadership as a specifically religious commandment. When discussing the male role as head of a household, female users often do not include qualifying statements alluding to scripture or doctrine. Rather, they are simply seeking "a man to lead a relationship," "a man who will be a leader in our relationship," or "someone who is willing to be the leader of the house." In contrast with male ChristianMingle.com members who qualify their leadership as religiously mandated, these women affirm that they are seeking men who will simply be the head of the relationship. Their ideal spouse conforms to the descriptions found in scripture, but the source of these expectations is more implicit than it is in male portrayals of themselves.

Although many women on the website reference scripturally derived gender roles without citing their source, some do explain their preferences as religiously based. For instance, one woman from Colorado seeks an "honorable man who desires to live out biblical roles for husbands and wives." Whether explicit or implicit, several evangelical women on ChristianMingle.com express their own role as subordinate and inferior both

by asking for a male to lead them and by asserting that they should not be viewed as the most important aspect of their husbands' lives.

Gender in Christianese

When using Christianese to communicate with others, many male and female speakers highlight the complementarian notion that women are meant to be subordinate to men. The articulation of these gender roles reflects the association of masculinity with spiritual leadership, a connection that is semantically implied in many Christianese terms. *Son of God* and *God the Father*, for example, assign a male identity to the religion's highest power, while *new man*, which signifies an acceptance of Christ, classifies religious enlightenment as a male accomplishment.

This linguistic manifestation of gendered social qualities is seen in ChristianMingle.com profiles, a venue in which users present themselves as desirable in-group members to Christians of the opposite gender. The themes of complementarianism, male leadership, and female submissiveness echo throughout the site, particularly within evangelical users' self-portrayals. It is evident that Christianese speakers express these socio-religious conceptions of gender in a setting that underscores idealized notions of gender. However, further research must be conducted in order to determine if and how Christianese is spoken differently among male and female idiolects in situations that do not explicitly stress gender distinctions.

TOWARDS FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper has explored several sociolinguistic features of Christianese. Through analysis of articles, websites, and online comments written by speakers, a survey of Christianese use among young adults, and ChristianMingle.com profiles, this paper sought to outline characteristics of the religiolect as a starting point for further research in the field. It established that Christianese is used both in effect and deliberately to build and reinforce the identity of its linguistic community. In accordance with Hary's hypothesis that religiolects have emerged whenever religious groups have wished, been encouraged, or sometimes even been forced to distinguish themselves from their neighbors, Christianese speakers use the variety in order to set themselves apart and identify as a distinct community.[181] Historically, the term "Christianese" was first used to refer to a distinguishable language variety precisely when the mainstream dominance of Christianity as a whole was decreasing, a sign that evangelical Protestants wished to differentiate themselves from a group whose prominence was beginning to decline.

Christianese speech is characterized largely by its tendency to syntactically and semantically allude to scripture and to lend agency to God. These evocations of the divine, combined with the thematic Christianese metaphors that liken Christianity to forward motion, attribute a sense of truth, validity, and rightness to the community of speakers. Christianese speakers thus do not only differentiate themselves from their neighbors; they distinguish themselves as a superior or more appealing community. This notion is substantiated by the methods by which speakers create a boundary between themselves and those who are not members of their linguistic community, such as

[181] Hary (2009) 8.

pressuring peers to use Christianese and lexically differentiating themselves from non-speakers.

These elements of Christianese indicate that the field of religiolinguistics has the potential to be expanded beyond Jewish- and Muslim-defined language varieties.[182] Whereas the concept of "religiolect" has been developed in terms of Muslim and Jewish language varieties, it has previously been discussed only minimally with regard to Christian language varieties.[183] Moreover, this suggests that religiolects likely exist within religious communities beyond the aforementioned, a hypothesis that opens many potential avenues for future research. A "religiolect," in other words, is not simply a description for one or two specific language varieties; it is plausibly a much larger category that can be expanded in order to unearth and analyze a wide range of religiously influenced language varieties.

While a plethora of opportunities exists for future research in the broader field of religiolinguistics, a considerable amount of research still may be conducted on Christianese, as literature on the topic is presently limited. Perhaps the most necessary of prospective follow-up work is a study of the phonological features of Christianese. While it may be surmised that Christianese is spoken primarily among those who have American Southern regional phonological traits, it is not clear whether Christianese itself is phonologically distinct from other dialects, or whether speakers simply happen to live in generally phonologically homogeneous areas. In order to respond to this question, perhaps it would be useful to compare the phonetic properties of Christianese speech to

[182] As established by Hary and Wein (2013).
[183] Although the term "religiolect" has, in fact, been applied to Christian-defined varieties by Hary and Wein (2013) 100–105.

the speech of individuals in the American South who identify with different denominations, with different religions, or with no religion.

Another potential focus for future research is gender variation in Christianese speech. As was discussed in Chapter Five, expectations regarding gender roles, particularly as they reflect the ideals of complementarianism, appear in Christianese speech. However, it is likely that Christianese usage differs depending on the gender of the speaker. In studies of general English use, it has been found that women ask more questions, use a larger intonational range, and use the pronouns *you* and *we* more often than men do. It has also been found that when speaking English, men are more likely to interrupt, introduce more new topics of conversation, and make more declarative statements than women.[184] Perhaps these or other gender-specific dynamics exist within Christianese, but further research on the topic is necessary. Future analysis of systematically observed spoken Christianese conversations should bring to light additional dimensions of the dialect.

To conclude, this paper is the beginning of an unfinished analytical project that places Christianese, a Christian religiolect, within the framework of religiolinguistics. Within this framework, Christianese should be compared to Jewish and Muslim religiolects in terms of structure and cultural significance. Knowledge of the dialect's features may contribute to the pursuit of locating and studying other religiolects as well. Through an exploration of various elements of Christianese and the ways in which it is used, this paper has hopefully opened a small window into a vast investigation of the evangelical Protestant dialect of American English.

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[184] Crystal 21.

APPENDIX A: A SELECTION OF CHRISTIANESE FEATURES

Distinctive lexical items

- Examples: *backslide* ("It's a shame that he began to backslide"), *P31 woman* ("I want to marry a P31 woman"), *stretching* ("Coping with losing my job was very stretching")

Use of prepositions to indicate heightened interpersonal intimacy

- Examples: *love on* ("I spent the day being loved on by my family"), *have a heart for* ("She has a heart for the elderly"), *speak into* ("My best friend spoke into my life, and now I have a better idea of what I should do")

Functional shift

- Example: the noun *disciple* becomes a verb ("I was discipled by an incredible mentor who inspired me to disciple others")

Passive voice as an implicit reference to God

- Example: *to be called to* ("I was called to move to Nicaragua")

Preservation of archaic forms

- Example: *sistren* as the plural of *sister* ("Brethren and sistren, I am glad to see you all here today")

Semantic emphasis on scripture

- Allusions to Biblical passages
    - Example: "Is that your house?" "Yes, that's my tent until I'm called home."

- Borrowed words from Hebrew and Greek versions of the Bible
    - Examples: *Hallelujah*, *Hosanna*

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF CHRISTIANESE TERMS

Amen: Exclamation of strong agreement, especially after prayers, hymns, or sermons in church settings. The term appears in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Angel eggs or *doubled eggs*: [noun] Deviled eggs. The synonymous euphemisms *angel eggs* and *doubled eggs* are used in order to avoid referring to the term "devil."

Backslide: [verb] To become "less Christian" or to become less committed to Christian beliefs, values, or practices. According to a definition that was written in Christianese, or, "according to the accepted meanings in Christian circles," a *backslider* is "someone who was once living a godly lifestyle, but has returned to worldliness – or worse."[185]

Be called to (do something): [verb phrase] To feel inspired or instructed by God to complete a specific task or mission.

Be in Christ: [verb phrase] The confidence that one will attain salvation as a result of believing in Jesus as Savior. Evidence of *being in Christ* is seen in an individual's behavior as it aligns with the teachings of the New Testament. This phrase appears in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Believer: [noun] A person who is a member of the greater community of Christianese speakers (a "believer in Christ"). Other Christianese terms for Christianese speakers include *followers of Christ*, *disciples (of Christ)*, *Christians*, and *brothers and sisters.*

Born again: [verb, adjective, or noun] A personal acceptance of Christ or affirming one's commitment to and faith in the teachings of Christianity for the first time (a "rebirth of the soul"). The term is derived from John 3:3-8. Being or becoming a *born again* Christian is often the norm in evangelical Protestant communities.

Fellowship: [verb] To gather with other Christians in order to create a sense of community (within a particular church or among Christians in general). *To fellowship* is derived from the Christianese noun *fellowship*, the community that is created when Christians *fellowship*.

(To be) discipled: [verb] To be trained by another person to be a competent Christian. This verb is derived from the noun *disciple* (a Christianese synonym for *Christian*).

Grow one's faith: [verb phrase] To strengthen one's belief in the doctrines of Christianity. A Christianese speaker may also say "God will grow you" or a similar phrase, meaning that "you" will develop spiritually or gain experiential wisdom or maturity.

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[185] A.L. Howard, "Christianese Dictionary," A Christian Apologetics Blog: Biblical Answers to Tough Questions, last modified May 24, 2009, accessed February 4, 2013. http://www.modernchristianissues.org/christianese/.

Hallelujah: Exclamation of joy from Hebrew; literally 'praise God.'

Have a heart for: [verb phrase] To be particularly sympathetic or compassionate toward a specific group or individual.

Hosanna: Exclamation of joy or praise from Aramaic or Hebrew; literally 'save us' or 'deliver us.'

Kerygma: [noun] A Greek word used in the New Testament to refer to preaching, specifically about Jesus.

Kingdom (of God): [noun] Wherever God is acknowledged as supreme ruler. This term may be used with reference to church expansion, to the formation of a Christian-defined utopia on earth, or to heaven in the afterlife. *Kingdom* may also be used as an adjective to describe something that is "truly" Christian (as in, *kingdom community*).

Love on: [verb phrase] To express friendly affection for another person, especially with a consciousness of God's presence.

Mother-in-love: [noun] Mother-in-law. This term emphasizes the Christian notion that marriage should focus on love, rather than on its legal implications.

New man and *old man*: [noun] A renewed commitment to or belief in the teachings of Christianity, and one's naturally sinful nature, respectively. Included together because the two terms often accompany each other in Christianese speech.

Pre-Christian: [noun] A person who is not Christian. By virtue of not being Christian, a *pre-Christian* is someone who can potentially be converted to Christianity. Other Christianese terms for a person who is outside of the greater community of speakers include *non-Christian*, *heathen*, and *lost soul*.

Proverbs 31 Woman: [noun] The ideal Christian wife and mother, as described in verses 10 through 31 of Proverbs 31.

Put out a fleece: [verb phrase] Testing God, or asking God to provide an observable sign in response to an individual's prayer.

(The) rapture: [noun] The eventual deliverance of Christians (those who believe in Christ) to heaven while non-Christians remain on earth.

Redemption: [noun] Salvation from sin, having an unobstructed path to heaven.

Sacrifice: [noun] Jesus' death as a surrogate punishment for the sins of contemporary Christians.

Servanthood: [noun] The Christian value of "serving God" by helping and expressing love for others; the active acknowledgement that one is subordinate to God.

Sistren: [noun] Christian women, especially of one's own congregation. *Sistren* is the archaic plural of *sister*. This term likely references the more widely used term *brethren* (plural of *brother*, a Christian man).

Speak into: [verb phrase] Supportively and constructively giving advice or guiding someone, particularly through a difficult period or challenging life event.

Stretching: [adjective] Difficult.

Sunday Christian: [noun] A person who may attend church services on Sundays and assert that he or she is Christian but does not adhere to the practices, beliefs, or expected behavior of Christians throughout the rest of the week; someone who "acts Christian" only at church.

Testimony: [noun] A person's story about a spiritually enlightening Christian experience (becoming a Christian, forming a personal connection to Jesus, overcoming sinful tendencies, etc.).

Walk with the Lord: [verb phrase or noun phrase] To believe in God, or an individual's faith in God.

Win souls: [verb phrase] To successfully persuade individuals to convert to Christianity. Often accompanied by "for Christ" or a semantically similar prepositional phrase (as in, "win souls for Christ").

Witness: [verb] To explain to another person how and why one is or became Christian. When *witnessing*, a Christian would be referring to him or herself.

Worship: [verb or noun] Praying or praising God; a part of a church service involving prayer or praising God; a type of church music.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY ON CHRISTIANESE AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION[186]

Have you heard or do you use the following words or phrases WHEN SPEAKING WITH CHRISTIANS?

	I've never heard it	I've heard it but I don't use it	I use it occasionally	I use it quite often
Backslide				
Doubled eggs OR angel eggs				
Hallelujah				
Hosanna				
Kerygma				
Pre-Christians				
Servanthood				
Sunday Christians				
To fellowship [verb]				
To win souls				
Mother-in-love				

Have you heard or do you use the following words or phrases WHEN SPEAKING WITH NON-CHRISTIANS?

	I've never heard it	I've heard it but I don't use it	I use it occasionally	I use it quite often
Backslide				
Doubled eggs OR angel eggs				
Hallelujah				
Hosanna				
Kerygma				
Pre-Christians				
Servanthood				
Sunday Christians				
To fellowship [verb]				
To win souls				
Mother-in-love				

Have you heard or would you say the following phrases?

1. To speak into – example: "I have a good friend who speaks into my life."
- I've never heard a phrase like this
- I've heard a phrase like this but I wouldn't say it
- I say this at least occasionally

2. Have a heart for – example: "my mother really has a heart for elementary school students."

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[186] This survey has been approved by the Emory University Institutional Review Board. The structure of the survey is based, with permission from Sarah Bunin Benor, on the Survey of American Jewish Language and Identity:
Steven M. Cohen and Sarah Bunin Benor, "Survey of American Jewish Language and Identity," Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) (October 2009). http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=3874.

- I've never heard a phrase like this
- I've heard a phrase like this but I wouldn't say it
- I say this at least occasionally

3. To be in Christ – example: "the minister is helping that man grow to be more in Christ"
- I've never heard a phrase like this
- I've heard a phrase like this but I wouldn't say it
- I say this at least occasionally

4. Faithful to do something – example: "the Lord is faithful to provide me with food today"
- I've never heard a phrase like this
- I've heard a phrase like this but I wouldn't say it
- I say this at least occasionally

5. To put out a fleece – example: "I put out a fleece this morning because I'm having trouble making a big decision."
- I've never heard a phrase like this
- I've heard a phrase like this but I wouldn't say it
- I say this at least occasionally

6. To love on – example: "Your friend is really struggling right now; you should just love on him."
- I've never heard a phrase like this
- I've heard a phrase like this but I wouldn't say it
- I say this at least occasionally

7. To grow your faith – example: "Going on that retreat really helped him grow his faith."
- I've never heard a phrase like this
- I've heard a phrase like this but I wouldn't say it
- I say this at least occasionally

8. To be called to do something – example: "I felt called to quit my job."
- I've never heard a phrase like this
- I've heard a phrase like this but I wouldn't say it
- I say this at least occasionally

Let's discuss the word "testimony."
Have you HEARD anyone use "testimony" this way? Yes/no
Have you USED "testimony" this way? Yes/no

1) "Testimony" as in the statement a witness gives the jury in court
2) "Testimony" as in a person's story about how he or she became a Christian
3) "Testimony" as in evidence or proof of something

Let's discuss the word "stretching."
Have you HEARD anyone use "stretching" this way? Yes/no
Have you USED "stretching" this way? Yes/no

1) "Stretching" [verb] as in warming up your muscles/as part of exercising
2) "Stretching" [adjective] as in "difficult"
3) "Stretching" [noun] as in the act of reaching

Do the words “when” and “spin” rhyme? Yes/No

Do the words “fit” and “get” rhyme? Yes/No

How often do you use the phrase “you guys?”
Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Somewhat Frequently / Very Frequently

How often do you use the word “y’all?”
Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Somewhat Frequently / Very Frequently

At least occasionally, I use the phrase “might could,” as in, “She’s lost so she might could ask for directions.” True/False

If you were talking about religion with your friends, you would refer to God as: (check all that apply)
Lord / God / Jesus / Christ or Jesus Christ / Father / None of the above

Do you think you speak “Christianese” at least once in a while?
Yes / No, but I’ve heard the term / No; I have never heard the term “Christianese”

Gender: Male/Female

Age
18-24 / 25-34 / 35-44 / 45-54 / 55-64 / 65-74 / 75+

Marital status:
- Single/never married
- Married or partnered
- Divorced or separated
- Widowed

Current place of residence: (City/Town, State, Zip Code)

Where did you mostly live when you were 8-14 years old? (City/Town, State)

Where did your FATHER mostly live before he was 15 years old? (City/Town, State)

If your FATHER was born outside of the United States, what country was he born in?

Where did your MOTHER mostly live before she was 15 years old? (City/Town, State)

If your MOTHER was born outside of the United States, what country was she born in?

Did/do you attend college? Yes/No

Highest degree attained:
- High School
- Some College
- BA/BS
- Masters

- Doctorate
- Other professional or graduate degree (please specify)

Are you a current student or were you previously a student (current alumni) at EMORY UNIVERSITY? Yes/No

Ethnic group (please check all that apply):
- White / Caucasian
- Black / African descent
- Hispanic / Latino
- Asian / South Asian
- Middle Eastern
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Other (please specify)

What was your first language?
- English
- English and another language
- A language that is not English
- Which language? (optional)

How many of your close friends are Christian? (close friends now/close friends in high school)
None / Some / About half / Most / All or almost all

If you are Christian, how long have you been in the church?
- I am not Christian OR I do not consider myself to be part of the church.
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years (not my entire life)
- 20+ years (not my entire life)
- I have been in the church my entire life

What about your mother?
- My mother was raised Christian
- My mother converted to Christianity
- My mother is not Christian

What about your father?
- My father was raised Christian
- My father converted to Christianity
- My father is not Christian

If you are currently, or have ever been, married, is/was your spouse Christian?
Yes/No/I have never been married

What is your CURRENT religious affiliation?
- Christian – Protestant (non-denominational, evangelical church, mainline church, or historically black church)
- Christian – Orthodox (Greek, Russian, or other Orthodox)

- Catholic
- Mormon / LDS
- Jehovah's Witness
- Unitarian
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- None
- Other (please specify)

GROWING UP, what was your main religious affiliation?
- Christian – Protestant (non-denominational, evangelical church, mainline church, or historically black church)
- Christian – Orthodox (Greek, Russian, or other Orthodox)
- Catholic
- Mormon / LDS
- Jehovah's Witness
- Unitarian
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- None
- Other (please specify)

If answer to current religious affiliation question is anything EXCEPT "Christian-Protestant," survey redirects here:

Have you ever worked professionally in a Christian institution or organization? Yes/No

Did you ever attend a Christian summer camp or school? (check all that apply)
- No
- Yes, Christian summer camp
- Yes, Christian Sunday school
- Yes, Christian elementary or middle school
- Yes, Christian high school
- Yes, Christian college

Have you noticed any distinctly Christian words, phrases, or manners of speaking in your everyday way of talking? If so, please explain (optional):

Additional Comments:

_____

If answer to current religious affiliation question is "Christian – Protestant," survey redirects here:

If you were RAISED as a CHRISTIAN PROTESTANT (non-denominational, evangelical, mainline, or historically black church), what church were you raised in?
(check all that apply)
- I was not raised as a Christian Protestant
- Anglican
- Apostolic
- Assembly of God
- Baptist
- Charismatic
- Christian Reformed
- Episcopalian
- Evangelical
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Nazarene
- Non-denominational
- Pentecostal (NOT including Assemblies of God)
- Presbyterian
- Seventh-Day Adventist
- Southern Baptist
- Other (please specify)

If you are CURRENTLY a CHRISTIAN PROTESTANT, what church do you identify with?
(check all that apply)
- I do not identify as a Christian Protestant
- Anglican
- Apostolic
- Assembly of God
- Baptist
- Charismatic
- Christian Reformed
- Episcopalian
- Evangelical
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Nazarene
- Non-denominational
- Pentecostal (NOT including Assemblies of God)
- Presbyterian
- Seventh-Day Adventist
- Southern Baptist
- Other (please specify)

What is your preferred English version of the Bible? [drop down menu including the following items]
No preference/Not sure
I do not regularly study or read the Bible
American Standard
Common English Bible
Contemporary English Version
Darby Translation

Douay-Rheims American Edition (1899)
Easy-to-Read Version
English Standard
God's Word Translation
Good News Translation
Holman Christian Standard Bible
J.B. Phillips New Testament
King James
King James (21st Century Version)
Lexham English Bible
The Message
Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament
New American Standard Bible
New Century Version
New International Reader's Version
New International Version
New International Version (1984)
New King James Version
New Life Version
New Living Translation
Today's New International Version
Worldwide English
Wycliffe Bible
Young's Literal Translation
Other (Please Specify)

Are you a leader in your Christian community? (check all that apply)
- No
- Yes, I am a church pastor/reverend/minister/clergy member
- Yes, I am a youth pastor
- Yes, I am a student leader in a campus Christian organization
- Yes, I am a teacher in a Christian Sunday School
- Yes, I have another leadership role in my Christian community (please specify):

Have you ever worked professionally in a Christian institution or organization, in a role OTHER THAN educator or community leader?
Yes/No

How often do you attend church?
Every Week / Once or twice each month / Just for the major holidays / I rarely or never attend church

Did you ever attend a Christian summer camp or school? (check all that apply)
- No
- Yes, Christian summer camp
- Yes, Christian Sunday school
- Yes, Christian elementary or middle school
- Yes, Christian high school
- Yes, Christian college

Did you participate in a Christian youth group or youth conference as a teenager?

Yes/No

Are you/were you involved in a Christian organization or Christian campus ministry in college?
Yes/No

CURRENTLY in your life, how important is being a Christian OR being a follower of Jesus?
Very important / Somewhat important / Not very important / Not at all important

To what extent do you feel that helping non-Christians become Christians is important?
This is very important / This is somewhat important / This is not that important / This is not at all important

Do you or would you actively try to help non-Christians become Christians or embrace Christianity?
Yes / No, but I still believe that this is an important Christian value / No; I do not think it is important to do so

Have you noticed any distinctly Christian words, phrases, or manners of speaking in your everyday way of talking? If so, please explain (optional):

Additional Comments:

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Note: Not all participants answered every question. Thus the quantitative information below should be assumed to be incomplete. This summary of demographic data should be considered a broad and general description of the survey respondents.

Total respondents: 136

Participants who attend or attended college: 118

Current or former Emory University students: 91

Native speakers of English: 111

Female: 88
Male: 31

Between ages 18 and 24: 106
Between ages 25 and 34: 4
Over the age of 34: 8

Never been married: 108
Married or partnered: 9

Georgia residents: 68
Mississippi residents: 5
Tennessee residents: 5
Michigan residents: 5
Other states with fewer than 5 respondents: Alabama, California, Florida, Louisiana, New York, South Carolina, Texas, and others

Caucasian/White: 94
Asian/South Asian: 12
Black/African descent: 11
Hispanic: 5

Raised as Christian Protestant: 61
Raised as Christian, not Protestant: 24
Raised as other religion: 28
Raised with no religious affiliation: 10

Currently identify as Christian Protestant: 55
Currently identify as Christian, not Protestant: 10
Currently identify with other religion or denomination: 23
Currently do not identify with any religion: 27

APPENDIX E: EXCERPTS FROM CHRISTIANMINGLE.COM USER PROFILES

I. On Having a Personal Relationship with God

Gender	Age (years)	Location	Profile Text
Female	32	Marietta, Ohio	My personal relationship with Christ is the most important thing in my life.
Female	36	Cochrane, Canada	One of my favourite quotes is: 'A woman's heart should be so lost in God that a man must seek Him in order to find her.'
Female	30	Cynthiana, Kentucky	I am looking for a man who loves God more than he could ever love me.
Female	28	Edmonton, Canada	I am looking for someone who loves the Lord and his life shows it.
Female	26	Lexington, Kentucky	[Seeking a man who] loves Jesus with all his heart
Female	32	Marietta, Ohio	I love Christ, my Savior, and am looking for someone who shares this love for the Lord.
Female	36	Saint Petersburg, Florida	I'm serious about my walk with Jesus. I'm looking for the same....someone who loves Jesus with their whole heart!
Male	33	Berne, Indiana	[…] looking for a girl who loves Jesus with all her life.
Male	21	Lawrenceville, Georgia	I am looking for a girl who loves Jesus as much as I do.
Male	31	Sarasota, Florida	Most passionate about my relationship with God.
Male	23	Salem, Oregon	I love God and I know He knows whats best for me. I try to seek Him and grow closer to Him ever day.
Male	24	Cerro Gordo, Illinois	The only serious relationship I've ever had is with Jesus Christ
Male	26	Dallas, Georgia	Keep Him # 1 and everything else will fall into place! It's all about a relationship with Christ!
Male	35	Nashville, Tennessee	My main goal in life is to grow in the knowledge and experience of God's love for me, to be satisfied in Him

II. On Submitting to God

Gender	Age	Location	Profile Text
Female	19	Quebec, Canada	I really want to serve God where He wants me to. […] I'm want to follow him wherever He will want me to go.

Female	30	Washington, D.C.	I'm […] deeply interested in following God's call in my life.
Male	32	Newberry, South Carolina	My life is dedicated to God. […] I would like to find someone who would like to help and find her greater calling in life serving God.
Male	34	Pickering, Ohio	I'm looking for a lady who is committed to Christ and who is constantly pursuing His will for her life
Male	26	Dallas, Georgia	My main passion in life is to be committed and obedient to God In everything I do.
Male	33	Frankfort, Kentucky	I'm dedicated in life to God from day-to-day
Male	21	Lawrenceville, Georgia	I am giving Him all of me, and all that I am.

III. On Male Leadership or Husbands Becoming Christ-Like

Gender	**Age**	**Location**	**Profile Text**
Female	30	Denver, Colorado	I desire a man who is prepared (or preparing) to be the head of a household and spiritual leader of a family. An honorable man who desires to live out biblical roles for husbands and wives.
Female	30	Washington, D.C.	I'm looking for a man who can lead me further in that call
Female	25	Saint Louis, Missouri	I am looking for […] a man to lead a relationship, […] a guy who loves the Lord first and foremost and tries to be more like Christ each day.
Female	23	Charlotte, North Carolina	I am looking for a strong christian man
Female	23	Waterford, Michigan	I want someone who is willing to be the leader of the house and put his family before himself.
Female	29	Indian Trail, North Carolina	My prayer is that the Lord will lead me to a godly man, […] a man who will be a leader in our relationship
Female	31	San Jose, California	Would love to meet a man of God!
Male	27	Columbus, South Carolina	Being a godly husband and father are some of the highest priorities in my life
Male	26	Dallas, Georgia	I want God to […] make me into the Godly husband and father that my future family deserves.
Male	23	Salem, Oregon	I try to seek Him and grow closer to Him ever day. As the man of the relationship I know this is important because I'm supposed to be the spiritual leader of the relationship.

IV. On Being or Desiring a *Proverbs 31 Woman*

Gender	Age	Location	Profile Text
Female	32	Colorado Springs, Colorado	I care for those around me and serve those in need
Female	33	Thomasville, North Carolina	I strive each day to be the Proverbs 31 woman that God wants me to be
Female	24	Westerville, Ohio	I work with first graders and have a huge heart for them to see Christ in me and come to know Jesus. […] I love to share my faith with others and have a passion for discipling younger women.
Male	26	West Chester, Ohio	I'm looking for a godly woman to come into my life
Male	28	Mount Dora, Florida	I'm looking for a woman of good character and a good heart.
Male	35	Nashville, Tennessee	I would love to find a P31 (Proverbs 31) woman.

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