

VOICING BELIEF: CONSTRUCTED DIALOGUE AND EPISTEMICS IN
RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Wuthnow (2012) notes that in the modern West, “talk about the supernatural is problematic and thus requires construction in ways that reinforce its reasonableness” (296). Thus, many religious communities sense constant pressure from within and without to conform their accounts of their beliefs to the standards of what van Dijk (2012) calls the surrounding “epistemic community.” The current study examines the role of reported speech, or what Tannen (2007) more accurately terms “constructed dialogue” in establishing the reasonableness of faith.

Constructed dialogue constitutes a ubiquitous feature of everyday conversation and has attracted attention within linguistics from myriad perspectives focusing on its forms and functions in talk (see Holt, 2009). This study demonstrates how two of constructed dialogue’s roles which have historically received separate treatment – as a resource for managing interpersonal relationships (e.g., Tannen, 2004) and as an evidential or “epistemic” device (e.g., Clift, 2006) – can actually work in tandem. Examining American Protestant religious talk across a variety of institutional contexts including a journalistic interview, sermons, and Bible study, the discourse analytic approach adopted here blends insights from Interactional Sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982; Tannen, 1992) and epistemic discourse analysis (Heritage, 2013) in advancing

our understanding of the shape and conversational ends of constructed dialogue, as well as offering a novel perspective on the construction of reasonableness in religious discourse.

This study makes a key contribution to epistemic discourse analysis through its integrated vision of contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) and constructed dialogue as epistemic phenomena which function in tandem. Of the few studies of epistemics which deal with paralinguistic signaling mechanisms (e.g., Roseano et al., 2016) or represented discourse (e.g., Clift, 2006; Holt, 1996), none examine these discursive phenomena together. I show how the presence of various contextualization cues within stretches of constructed dialogue contribute to the framing of knowledge claims as authoritative or reliable (or not). Additionally, building on Tannen (2007), I argue that what she calls “conversational involvement,” which constructed dialogue engenders by enlisting listeners in the sense-making process, serves as a critical epistemic resource establishing a spiritual worldview as accessible and intelligible to the modern mind.

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S.D.G.

For Julia

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CHAPTER ONE: FRAMING THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction: Speaking of faith and reasonableness

A few days before I started writing this introduction, the doorbell rang as my family was preparing to leave the house. Opening the door, I was greeted by a smiling elderly couple framed by the bright sunlight that had somehow managed to find its way through the tall trees of our neighborhood. The man introduced himself as Paul and his wife as Catherine. They were dressed neatly, but otherwise unremarkably. Both had gray hair, and Paul's messenger bag was slung slightly awkwardly around his neck so that it rested halfway between his side and stomach. He shook my hand, his warm grin still creasing his face as he asked me my name, and then without missing a beat,

“Josh, do you believe in God?”

A prickle of adrenaline registered deep inside me but then quickly dissipated. Perhaps it was the reassuring beauty of the afternoon sunshine, or the good-natured faces of these two missionaries – or the hope that because my answer was yes, our conversation would be superfluous and, more importantly, short. But without hesitation, Paul proceeded through several more questions about the Bible (Did I know it? Did I believe it was God's word?) and heaven (Did I think it was real? Did I know what the Bible said about it?). By this point, my two young daughters had gathered at the threshold to see what was happening. Paul opened his worn, leather bag and produced an iPad, wanting to read me a portion of the New Testament. I found myself taken aback at the spectacle of such a futuristic piece of technology integrated into this antiquated, door-to-door-style evangelism. “They don't make Bibles like they used to,” I offered, as Paul fumbled around the screen looking for the right icon. He eventually found the

Bible, and showed me a verse from the book of Revelation (highlighted electronically in pale yellow pixels) as he read it aloud. I made some cheerfully anodyne reply, hoping that the sight of the girls restlessly climbing up my legs would now be enough of a clue that our conversation was winding down. Paul offered me a pamphlet, opening it to a page with a photograph of a lush rainforest canopy caught in the light of the rising sun, and asked me if it wouldn't be great to be in paradise with my kids. Thanking him, I took the pamphlet, and he, the hint, and we cordially said goodbye.

A short while later as we were driving out of the neighborhood, we slowly passed Paul and Catherine and I waved; they were most of the way down our street by this point, strolling at a leisurely pace, surveying the houses that might be next on their tour. I commented to my wife, Julia, that they seemed to have come from a bygone era. She agreed, adding that their approach seemed even more anachronistic now that we lived in a time when no one trusted anyone else's "facts" (it is not so long since one of Donald Trump's counselors famously announced that the administration had used "alternative facts" to dispute the crowd size at his inauguration). How much less, then, would you trust the worldview of someone who knocks at your door and tells you that everything you've believed about the universe needs to be reconsidered? I think Julia is correct about this (and I trust most of her facts, as it happens). But in retrospect it was not so much the "facts" of Paul's brief presentation to me that stood out as the manner in which they were communicated. I remembered that even as I stood at my front door with his iPad "opened" to me, hearing him use expressions like "the Book of Revelation, chapter twenty-one, verses one to five," noticing the curious label "New Living Translation" in small print at the top of the screen, I had been wondering to myself, "Who takes this man seriously who is not already in his church?" I knew that if he had come knocking at my door when I was a fifteen-year-old agnostic

I would have looked at him like he was from outer space. Even now as a Christian believer, I found Paul's presentation unconvincing, from his starting with what seemed like a cheap appeal to my desire for an afterlife to his presumptuous proof-texting from a holy book that I might have understood quite differently.

Paul's manner of reasoning with me about his faith, in short, failed to resonate. The fact that he was a Jehovah's Witness and I was not does not in and of itself explain this communicative trouble. (I could not tell that he was a Jehovah's Witness until later in our conversation when he mentioned certain theological concepts I knew were important to that community). Instead, it was something about the way he framed his arguments from the very beginning of his presentation that left me unmoved. He simply did not seem credible, or even plausible, in his explanation of his beliefs. In Porter's (1986) terms, we seemed to belong to different "discourse communities," groups which share "assumptions about what objects are appropriate for examination and discussion, what operating functions are performed on those objects, what constitutes 'evidence' and 'validity,' and what formulaic conventions are followed" (39). For instance, I would not knock on the door of a perfect stranger (who might be trying to get his kids in the car) to talk about religion. And even if, somehow, I were convinced to do this, I would not assume my interlocutor would be willing to simply glance at a few verses from a cryptic first-century Greek text, now mysteriously appearing on-screen in fluent, contemporary American English prose, and agree that this represented incontrovertible evidence of my views. The rainforest photo likely wouldn't have made the cut, either.

Individuals span different discourse communities. An oceanographer may also coach softball and volunteer at a substance abuse clinic, and the way she reasons and persuades in each setting will vary. Clearly, there are many instances where ways of speaking in one community

have no currency outside of it: I understood very little of what my brother would tell me, for example, during his first few visits home on leave from the Navy – acronyms, chains of command, operating procedures, all were lost on me. Likewise, though I understood the words Paul used (I think) in our brief meeting, his mode of reasoning, his framing of his claims all struck me as eerily simplistic, and disconnected to the world in which I lived. Paul’s religious community had settled upon certain forms of expression and argumentation which did not seem to fit my own, and I did not immediately know how I would have responded, even had time allowed.

Indeed, religious groups have been long known to develop their own particular logic and corresponding persuasive techniques. Susan Harding, in her now classic (1987) analysis of the “language of conversion” finds this to be characteristic of fundamentalist Christian proselytism. The process of “witnessing” to an (unsaved) listener enlists him or her through various strategies, all of which are designed to “insinuate” the believer’s “mode of interpretation into the mind” of the unbeliever (169). The evangelist in Harding’s study was the fundamental Baptist preacher Rev. Cantrell, whose interview with Harding, unbeknownst to her, would transform into an extended period of “witnessing” where she became the target of Cantrell’s conversion rhetoric. As she describes it, rational argument about doctrine, about “conscious beliefs and disbeliefs,” plays only a secondary role in reasoning as a fundamental Baptist. Foremost is telling a compelling story of God’s saving grace:

Reverend Cantrell’s testimony was a hodgepodge of stories sewn together with “the scarlet thread of redemption,” not a series of “logical” or “empirical” arguments. He persuaded me narratively. Disbelief is a conscious refusal to accept a particular version of reality, and believing involves the conscious acceptance of “doctrines,” of particular claims about reality and one’s relationship to it. But disbelief is also, in the case of evangelical Christianity at least, an unconscious refusal to participate in a particular narrative mode of knowing reality. Likewise, belief also involves an unconscious willingness to join a narrative tradition, a way of knowing and being through storytelling,

through giving and taking stories. You cannot give born-again stories, you cannot fashion them, without acknowledging belief, but you can take them, you can absorb them, and that's how you "believe" when you are under conviction. You get caught up in the stories, no matter what your conscious beliefs and disbeliefs are. (Harding, 1987:178)

Such narratives hold a privileged epistemological status in fundamental Baptist argumentation, but proved disorienting for Harding herself, who writes of "struggling mightily" to make sense of Cantrell's story of being born again, even as it was being deployed to convince her to give her own life to God. She recalls Cantrell's language as "so intense and strange, yet deceptively plain and familiar, full of complex nuances and pushes and pulls, that I had no time, no spare inner speech, to 'interpret' him, to rework what he said into my own words, as he talked. I just gripped my chair, as it were, and took it in straight" (1987:178).

On occasion, the stakes in such conversations are much higher than simply enduring an awkward moment of unwanted proselytism. Johnstone's (1986) analysis of a disastrous interview between Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and (secular) Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci which occurred soon after the Iranian revolution speaks to the potential for interpersonal conflict between parties who, partially as a function of their worldviews, do not recognize each other's ways of speaking as valid. Johnstone observed that Khomeini and Fallaci adhered to fundamentally different views of language as well as divergent modes of argumentation. The Ayatollah's aesthetic view of language, which presumed that language was a thing of beauty and could persuade thereby, clashed with Fallaci's (Western) conception of language as a tool, an instrument of logic. For Fallaci, this rendered vacuous many of the Ayatollah's statements such as "Islam means everything." In terms of argumentation, Fallaci questioned Khomeini aggressively on the notions of freedom and democracy, but never revealed her most basic *grounds* which explained why these were important. In contrast, the Ayatollah freely articulated the theological grounds for his political views – grounds which Fallaci simply rejected, short-

circuiting any meaningful dialogue. The tragedy in this case, according to Johnstone, was actually that such a miscommunication was not inevitable, but rather the product of a “basic lack of good will, [the] failure on the parts of two people, both of whom had access to a range of persuasive styles, to figure out what the other was doing” (186). It was the last interview Khomeini granted to a Western journalist.

This study also examines religious language – or at least language about religion (on this distinction, more below), but in a context somewhat different from the examples I have sketched above. Unlike the missionary at my doorstep, the fundamental Baptist Reverend Cantrell, or the Ayatollah Khomeini, the religious speakers examined here, a selection of contemporary American Protestant Christians, have adapted their talk about the divine to (or have had it shaped by) the larger, modern, Western, educated discourse community in which they live and communicate in so many other realms of life. As they speak of their faith, they make a conscious effort, occasionally struggling (aloud, and to each other), to reconcile how certain ideas from their religious tradition can be squared with established standards of reason and good sense – not to mention their own experience, their sense of right and wrong.

In his 2012 book, *The God Problem: Expressing Faith and Being Reasonable*, sociologist Robert Wuthnow meditates on precisely this group of religious believers. In some ways, the current study could be seen as an extension of this work, which asks a basic question: Wuthnow observes that belief in a supernatural God who intervenes miraculously in the world runs counter to the reigning paradigm of rationalism and scientific naturalism which has influenced Western thinking for a considerable time now (what he calls a “tacit epistemology” in the contemporary West). How, then, do intelligent, (sometimes highly) educated believers express their faith while still seeming reasonable? The answer Wuthnow offers does not center on formal, metaphysical

argumentation, the types of rationales for God's existence which theologians and religious philosophers have developed over time. Rather, it is a range of quotidian "linguistic devices" which believers employ that "provide ways to acknowledge the uncertainties about God that any reasonable person is likely to have and at the same time give expression to the convictions that people of faith hold dear" (40). *The God Problem* provides an account of these devices present in the speech of over 160 religious individuals – mostly of some Christian persuasion – interviewed by Wuthnow's team of researchers around the United States as they spoke about their faith, being questioned on subjects such as prayer, the afterlife, and natural disasters.

Some examples of the rhetorical strategies from Wuthnow's study will be instructive for contrasting the approach employed in *The God Problem* and that of the current study. In terms of prayer, for instance, Wuthnow finds that one strategy which helps believers communicate with the divine without seeming mentally unsound involves the use of "contingency referents," a device that "makes divine action contingent on human action or circumstances, and thus provides an explanation for apparent failures of the divine" (69). For instance, the commonly employed phrase "if it be your will" functions to insure against outright disappointment if God does not grant one's prayer. Contingency referents are manifest especially in the way petitioners describe their own responsibilities – fulfilling their end of the bargain, as it were – in order for God to answer their prayers. Thus, one man commenting on his struggle to discern whether or not to marry the woman he was dating reports, "It was not until I was willing to let go of the situation that God was able to work" (72); in other words, God's actions, as Wuthnow summarizes it, were "contingent on his own" (72).

When confronted with unfathomable human suffering resulting from natural disasters, on the other hand, believers resorted to several "scripts" making it possible to "believe God exists

and is in charge of everything that happens without having to assume that God intervenes specifically and deliberately in particular events” (124). One of these, which Wuthnow terms the “inscrutability script,” entails believers openly acknowledging that they do not know the specifics of God’s plans and purposes. Thus, respondents were recorded offering such rationalizations as, “I don’t know how God is involved in these big events. I just think that he is,” and “If we could really understand God’s mind, we’d be God” (125). One glimpses in such answers, as well as in respondents’ comments on prayer above, the contours of what Wuthnow terms a “legitimate religious discourse,” one which is “broadly bounded by the expectation that a reasonable person is not superstitious, unwilling to blame God when things go wrong, and not foolishly optimistic that everything will go right” (147-148). There is both a simplicity and complexity to the construction of this reasonable religious language, Wuthnow concludes, one explained by the place American believers occupy within a pluralistic, modern society:

In simplest terms, people avoid saying things that are unreasonable and learn to talk in ways that do seem reasonable. The complexity is involved in the content and structure of what passes as reasonable speech. Minimally, reasonable speech established an agreement between a speaker and a listener about what can or cannot be said, without becoming incomprehensible or casting the speaker in any of several socially undesirable roles, such as fanatic, bigot, or ignoramus. This implicit compact is not just a matter of being accepted, as might be the case in expressing a controversial view on social issues, but more about being understood. To be understood means that a listener can respond implicitly that the statement uttered by the speaker is intelligible and is the kind of statement that someone in the same general speech community might utter. Saying that God gives a person strength qualifies. Asserting that lucky horseshoes regenerate amputated limbs does not. The patterns of language that enable reasonable statements about God stem from the fact that being reasonable is expected within most religious communities themselves, and from the reality that religious communities are never insulated from the rest of society. (Wuthnow, 2007: 296-297)

While the current study, like Wuthnow’s, seeks to further elucidate the “complexity” – the content and structure – of what passes as reasonable speech in talk about the divine, there are significant differences between our approaches. Unlike in *The God Problem*, my focus does not

lie in condensed and simplified theological “scripts” such as “contingency referents” or “inscrutability.” Rather, I am interested in an aspect of religious talk which constitutes a ubiquitous feature of the “everyday language of the wider speech community” in which believers find themselves: the phenomenon of reported speech, or “constructed dialogue” as I will refer to it, following Tannen (2007; see Chapter Two). Constructed dialogue occurs when speakers represent the speech of others or of themselves – whether of some actual previous conversation or completely fabricated discourse – as if offering a direct quotation, and not merely a summary (the realm of so-called “indirect discourse”). The overarching argument of this study is that the act of representing the discourse of others in religious talk serves as a flexible resource in establishing the credibility of the faith, both in talk between believers and non-believers (what we might call “cross-creedal communication”), but also among co-religionists themselves. Specifically, I highlight various affordances of constructed dialogue which enables speakers to accomplish key argumentative and interpersonal work.

In exploring this thesis as a discourse analyst, I have chosen to pursue a detailed account of the micro-features of the talk of a relatively small number of subjects compared to the sweeping, more nationally representative interview-based survey of the sociologist. Additionally, in the place of formal interviews, the analysis centers on three different naturally occurring contexts (described more fully in the next section) where religious talk occurs, each involving participants with varying degrees of religiosity, as well as different “participant roles” (Goffman, 1981) in the interaction. As a result, this study’s contribution is primarily to the linguistic tradition examining constructed dialogue rather than the sociology of religion, though it will be apparent that the findings discussed here complement (and corroborate) such work.

In the remainder of this chapter I will first offer a brief overview of the study, the sources of data and their rationale, culminating in a reflection on the appropriateness of labeling the object of inquiry “religious discourse” in this case. I conclude with an outline of the remaining chapters, highlighting each’s contribution to our understanding of constructed dialogue.

1.2 The study

As mentioned, my analysis draws on three different contexts of religious talk where constructed dialogue plays a role in building arguments about the faith. Each context forms the focus of an analytical chapter (Chapters Three, Four, and Five). These are, respectively, a public interview between a prominent minister and a national journalist, a series of sermons preached by the same minister, and conversations from small-group Bible studies. My original design with these contexts in mind was to be able to compare patterns in the framing of knowledge claims via constructed dialogue across a gradient of public-to-private speech events: the interview between minister and journalist, for example, represents the most public orientation, a “front region” (Goffman, 1990) for talk about faith in that, continuing in Goffman’s terms, neither the minister’s *proximal addressee* (the interviewer), nor his *target* (the individual(s) to whom the discourse is ultimately directed – in this case, the audience) were assumed to be part of his community – indeed the interviewer took an oppositional stance toward the minister. In contrast, Bible-study participants all knew each other fairly well, and spent comfortable evenings in each other’s living rooms, often cradling small bowls of home-made desserts while they discussed passages from their common holy text, one whose status as God’s word was generally agreed upon (see Bielo’s [2009] ethnography of evangelical Bible reading for more on the “textual ideologies” common to such groups). These conversations, where participants

occasionally shared highly personal reflections or struggles, represent the opposite end of the public-private spectrum. Somewhere in between fell the sermons I was analyzing, where the minister was speaking in his own house of worship, to an audience he at least partially knew, though with a reasonable chance that someone unaffiliated with the faith would walk through the door.

It turned out that the degree of public vs. private orientation did not clearly influence the modes of reasoning speakers pursued via constructed dialogue. Or at least, categorizing each context only along an axis of “public” to “private” failed to explain the interesting variations which did appear, variations that were grounded more visibly in the local conversational goals than in the speech event’s situatedness as either a front-region / back-region performance. The value in the tripartite structure of the study, I came to see, resided in the way each context accentuated a different function (or form) of constructed dialogue uniquely suited to the type of argumentation called for in light of the different participants, and the task at hand. It is to both of these I now turn.

The pastor¹ whose talk I examine in Chapters Three and Four is named Timothy Keller. From 1989 until stepping down in the summer of 2017, Keller served as senior pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in the borough of Manhattan, New York City. Redeemer Presbyterian (or simply “Redeemer” as it is known), a congregation Keller helped to found as a “church plant” of the theologically conservative Protestant denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), has steadily grown over the years into one of the largest evangelical Protestant congregations in city. Several worship services around Manhattan draw roughly 4,500

¹ I use the terms “pastor,” “preacher,” and “minister” interchangeably, following standard Protestant usage.

people each week, with double that number thought to attend on a regular basis (“Redeemer History”, 2017). By 2006, *New York Magazine* had called Keller “the most successful Christian Evangelist in the city” (Heilemann, 2006), and his burgeoning movement, currently in the process of starting new churches around the city, has been covered by *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, among others. Author of fifteen books on subjects ranging from theodicy to church ministry, Keller marries an intellectual critique of modern culture with traditional, orthodox Christian teaching, drawing on Nietzsche and Foucault as fluidly as he does Jesus and St. Paul in his sermons.

Though he has largely sought to avoid media attention, Keller has made numerous appearances as a public speaker, especially following the success of his (2008) *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, which reached #7 on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for nonfiction in the year after it was published. He has given dozens of talks at universities, seminaries, non-profit groups and other venues – even Google headquarters (three times!). Some of these presentations purport to offer a Christian perspective on a given topic (suffering, injustice, etc.), but just as often Keller is called upon to advance more general arguments for Christian belief – an ancient rhetorical tradition in the faith, in both spoken and written forms, known as “apologetics.”² Keller’s public interview that I examine (described in more detail in Chapter Three), which I transcribed from video footage available on the sponsoring organization’s website, was filmed before a live audience at Columbia University in 2008. The interview, lasting about forty minutes, could reasonably qualify as an instance of Christian

² McFarland (2011) explains the origins of the term: “Apologetics (from the Greek *apologia*, the speech for the defense in a law court) refers to that branch of theology that seeks to offer a persuasive account of Christian faith without direct appeal to the authority of biblical revelation, in accordance with the biblical injunction that believers should ‘[a]lways be prepared to make a defence [apologian] to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you’ (1 Pet. 3:15).”

apologetic discourse; in fact, the interviewer's questions explicitly drew upon Keller's *The Reason for God* which had recently been published.

In Chapter Four I look at a "sermon series" – a series of sermons on a similar topic – which Keller preached between September and November 2006, entitled "The Trouble With Christianity: Why It's So Hard to Believe It." All six sermons (between 35-40 minutes each) were transcribed from audio files accessed from the Redeemer Presbyterian Church website. I chose this series for its similar thematic content to Keller's journalistic interview from the previous chapter: the series forms the basis of the first seven chapters of *The Reason for God*, the focus of the interview. While it perhaps seems odd that the pastor of a church would preach on topics that appear relevant exclusively to questioning or skeptical listeners, in numerous places in his writing (e.g., Keller, 2015) Keller emphasizes that the questions outsiders bring to Christianity represent formative challenges to the believer's faith as well, presenting him with an opportunity to strengthen the faithful even as he responds to skeptics. Additionally, non-members and non-believers are known to attend Redeemer services regularly (Hooper, 2009), meaning that Keller's sermons are always to some extent addressing a skeptical audience.

The choice of Keller has several motivations. The first simply springs from my own experience of hearing him speak: As a frequent visitor to New York City, I attended a number of Redeemer services in 2006-2007 and have followed, from time to time, his sermon series and other publically available talks online. I have always sensed (even before I had words to describe it) that he employed constructed dialogue extensively, and at times, dramatically. This might not in and of itself warrant formal study. But as a religious spokesperson, Keller has developed a well-attested reputation for constructively engaging audiences and individual interlocutors from different worldviews, speaking at numerous universities and on various

panels. And while the simple fact of an invitation to speak on a university campus is no guarantee of a speaker's competence (or good sense), in Keller's case, well-established scholars of either no religious or divergent religious backgrounds have engaged in serious dialogue with him – at Yale, NYU, Columbia, and elsewhere. In an age increasingly marked by polarizing rhetoric in which opposing groups mutually denounce each other with ad hominem invective and labeling (“secular elites,” “right-wing fundamentalists”) rather than wrestle with each other's underlying vision of the world – one recalls Johnstone's observations in Khomeini and Fallaci's case – those rare commentators who willingly engage the other side with intellectual charity deserve attention. And finally, whether or not we pay him that attention, a generation of theologically conservative Protestant American Christians will continue to see Keller as a key fixture in the contemporary evangelical³ intelligentsia; as recently as 2016, *New York Times* columnist Nicolas Kristof named Keller “among the most prominent evangelical thinkers today” (Kristof, 2016). The influence of his thought and approach to ministry over a generation of church leaders, pastors and parishioners is difficult to overstate.

The third context I explore in this study is small-group Bible study. Theologically, the group I examine here holds to a broadly similar evangelical form Christianity as that found in Timothy Keller's denomination, the PCA. Indeed, most members of the Bible study I discuss in

³ It is no longer straightforward to define “evangelical” in today's religious landscape. As a movement, Evangelicalism transcends denominational boundaries. Amy E. Black, professor of political science at Wheaton College, a well-known evangelical university outside of Chicago, has argued that the term means different things to different people, whether journalists, political pundits, or self-identifying evangelical believers themselves. But even this latter group represents a “fluid and diverse coalition that [has] developed over time, and continues to change in composition and character” (Black, 2017). Notable fault lines in the movement's recent history include political divisions, and a select few theological debates (especially those with political implications, such as homosexual marriage and the proper framework of “creation stewardship” or care of the Earth). Still, arguably at the group's core is a theological consensus around certain key issues. David Bebbington, a British historian whose definition of Evangelicals has served as a scholarly standard, identifies four hallmarks of the movement: “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and ‘crucicentrism,’ a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross” (Bebbington, 1989:16).

Chapter Five knew Keller's ministry, and had either read his books or heard him speak. Some from a second group I observed had attended Redeemer prior to relocating to Washington, D.C., where my fieldwork was conducted. I contacted both groups through my local church network, itself part of the Anglican Church of North America. In the end, however, the data examined here come from only one of the two studies, whose collective use of constructed dialogue far exceeded the other's (see fuller description of data collection in Ch. 5). Out of a corpus of eight study sessions, or roughly ten hours of audio-recorded data, I focus here on two particular evening sessions, each lasting about an hour, and which occurred several weeks apart.

But all of this begs the question: why include Bible study, this most "private" context, in the first place?

In the last major study of small groups in America, Wuthnow (1994) estimated that approximately 40 million American Christians regularly participated in some kind of small group Bible study. As Wuthnow observed, this is by far more people than are involved in any other type of small group in the country, religious or not – roughly 15% of the US population at the time of the study. Bielo (2011) offers the following commentary on the significance of this widespread phenomenon:

These groups constitute a unique activity in American Christian life because they offer a site for active dialogue. Small groups allow adherents to participate in open, reflexive, and critical discussion about core issues of belief, faith, and practice. Group Bible study is, in short, a crucial institution providing a regular, collective forum for scripture reading, interpretive discourse, identity performance, and cultural (re)production. (Bielo, 2011: 636-637)

In other words, Bible study represents a tremendous confluence of activities in which participants, through their interaction with each other's spoken words and the Scriptures' written ones, work to develop a coherent sense of self and worldview. These are formative events in the lives of the faithful, places where they sense and articulate, often in new ways for themselves,

what distinguishes them from the world outside. And yet, for all of the distinctives believers may conclude characterize their way of life and thinking, they do not, to repeat Wuthnow's observation, see themselves as "insulated from the rest of society." Their religious talk is thus porous to (at least some of) the constraints of standards of reasoning operant in the larger discourse community in which they find themselves, standards which, I argue, constructed dialogue enables them to meet.

1.3 Religious discourse?

My use of the terms "religious talk," "talk about the divine," and "religious discourse" to refer to the speech examined across each of our three contexts warrants some clarification. Scholars of language and religion employ disparate frameworks which construe religious language differently, as Darquennes and Vandebussche (2011) observe. But for two of the three contexts discussed here – Keller's journalistic interview and Bible study – the talk I examine does not fit neatly into any of these models. For instance, neither would qualify as "sacred language" (Bennett, 2017) or "religious classical" (Fishman, 1989) – varieties such as Latin, Sanskrit, Qu'ranic Arabic or ancient Hebrew in which sacred texts and ceremonial rites are performed. Nor would they count in the related category of "liturgical language" (Day, 2014), which, though it may be based in a vernacular variety, is often scripted and formulaic, and draws on archaic forms. Even under Keane's (2004) anthropological definition of religious language, which takes an emic view, the discourse examined here would mostly fall outside the bounds:

...I propose that an anthropological study of "religious language" concerns linguistic practices that are taken *by practitioners themselves* to be marked or unusual in such a way as to suggest that they involve entities or modes of agency which are considered by those practitioners to be consequentially distinct from more "ordinary" experience, or

situated across some sort of ontological divide from something understood as more everyday “here and now.” (Keane, 2004: 431)

The forms of constructed dialogue employed by the speakers examined here do not confer upon their talk any particularly “religious” qualities, it would seem. In one interview I conducted with a man from a Bible study whom I’ll call Mike, I explained my interest in how he had taken on the voice of a certain Biblical character to speak as him, using his (Mike’s) own words. When asked about this, he commented: “This is just how we talk as people... It’s a really common way to clarify.” Mike’s observation of the unmarked nature of interpreting a Biblical passage through constructed dialogue could be extended to the whole of Bible study discourse. In Keane’s terms, no features of these conversations would qualify as “consequentially distinct from more ‘ordinary’ experience”: The conversations are merely religious in content.

Yet under Keane’s definition, sermons, the subject of Chapter Four, would qualify, and indeed have traditionally been regarded as religious discourse by linguists (e.g., Malmström 2015a; Wharry, 2003). In many cases of sermonic discourse, as for example in African American preaching (Pitts, 1989; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Wharry, 2003), alternative “modes of agency” are claimed to be at work as propositional argument gives way to Spirit-filled exhortation. By Keller’s own account in his (2015) book on homiletics, *Preaching*, while the minister may play a role in crafting the message, God is ultimately responsible for “effect of the sermon on the heart” (11). Thus, sermons do not merely incorporate religious content, but also form part of a religious context, a worship service, in which participants expect the power of the divine to be manifest, and that some of this power will reach the congregation *through language*. It is important to point out, however, that this particular dimension of sermons, their perceived ability to convey God’s truth through human language, is not the focus of the current investigation. I am interested not in what distinguishes Keller’s sermons from his journalistic

interview and small-group Bible study but rather in what they have in common as speech events in which religious subjects elaborate arguments to explain or rationalize their faith. When I use the term “religious discourse,” “religious talk” and associated concepts, then, I have in mind the idea of “speech about religion” (as in “car talk,” “sports talk”).

1.4 Overview of chapters

Constructed dialogue has intrigued scholars for many years and there is now a wide body of research into the phenomenon, from a variety of theoretical perspectives. In Chapter Two, I briefly trace the intellectual origins of this work, and offer a survey of different contexts, forms, and functions of constructed dialogue in use, including the metalinguistic framework introduced by Goffman (1981) which offers a precise vocabulary through which multi-voiced speech may be analyzed. The survey devotes particular attention to two approaches to constructed dialogue which will inform my own discussion: the first explores the epistemological dimensions of the phenomenon, or how it relates to the framing of knowledge claims (e.g., Clift, 2006), and the second examines interpersonal dynamics created, maintained or altered by taking on another’s voice (e.g., Lamb, 2015).

Beginning with the first approach, Chapter Three explores constructed dialogue as integral to epistemic management in Keller’s interview with a journalist. By “epistemics” in discourse, I refer broadly to “the knowledge claims that interactants register, assert, and defend in and through turns at talk and sequences of interaction” (Heritage, 2013: 370). This chapter asks how constructed dialogue serves as a resource for Keller to frame knowledge claims about a supernatural worldview eschewed by an increasing proportion of American society, as well as by his immediate interlocutor. I show that constructed dialogue, and specifically Keller’s “taking on

voices” (Tannen, 2009) functions not merely to provide evidence *for*, but also as a simulated challenge *to* the overhearing audience, where figures not physically present nonetheless (appear to) speak directly to the audience, pressing them for a response. Attention to this dialogic dimension of knowledge assertion, management and contestation shows clearly that how one makes certain claims can be deeply intertwined with whom one embodies as speaker. Additionally, in highlighting the role of phonology in recontextualizing others’ speech, this chapter makes an important contribution via its integrated vision of contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) and constructed dialogue as epistemic phenomena which function together.

In Chapter Four on Keller’s sermons, I shift to explore interpersonal dynamics associated with constructed dialogue. Here I investigate a special form of this phenomenon known as “ventriloquizing,” or speaking as a co-present other (Tannen, 2007). I show that Keller’s ventriloquizing his audience serves three interrelated functions, united by their effects on dynamics of power and solidarity (Brown & Gilman, 1960; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Tannen, 2005): First, constructed dialogue serves as an interpretive aid that the preacher proffers to his listeners to help them parse complex messages. Second, ventriloquizing enables Keller to construct what I call the “ideal listener,” a process which serves two distinct, and important functions. On one hand, this strategy, which positions the listener as intelligent and morally upright, creates solidarity between preacher and audience, opening up opportunities for his message to resonate. On the other, the ideal listener serves as an advantageous foil through whom Keller can best showcase the strengths of his arguments. Ventriloquizing this figure sets up debates between pastor and skeptic that the pastor is predetermined to win.

In developing these arguments, I identify a type of ventriloquizing previously undocumented wherein a speaker not only voices a co-present listener, but actually simulates a

conversation between himself and his silent interlocutor, a phenomenon I call “colloquizing.” Colloquizing, I argue, creates what Tannen (1986) calls “conversational involvement” in particularly vivid ways by inviting the actual listener to see herself engaged in debate with the speaker, and not simply as a passive, overhearing member of the audience. As Tannen argues, constructed dialogue increases conversational involvement both by creating a sense of “immediacy, portraying action and dialogue as if it were occurring at telling time and (...) [by] forcing the hearer to participate in sensemaking” (1986: 324). To continue in these terms, I argue that colloquizing increases the “coercive force” enlisting the listener in the sensemaking process. She is addressed directly, often with a question prompting what Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) call a “second-pair part” (a response) for which she would be accountable in normal conversation, and then must attend to – and evaluate – the speaker’s ventriloquized version of her: Would she really respond in such a way? What are the implications of agreement? Does she even accept the premises of the question directed at her? And so on.

Both interpersonal and epistemic considerations bear upon the analysis in Chapter Five, the final analytical chapter on small group Bible study. In this chapter I demonstrate how constructed dialogue serves as a flexible interpretive device which Bible study members employ in order to more fully understand the ancient Biblical text. Specifically, I show how constructing the inner mental states of different Biblical figures – their thoughts, motivations, feelings, self-talk – enables study participants to identify with, and derive meaning from the texts they study. Building upon previous ethnographies of American Protestantism (including Bible study), this chapter reveals how constructed dialogue facilitates the construction of a life-like psychological profile for Biblical figures, not merely summarizing what the figure must have felt, but actually demonstrating – incarnating – these feelings by giving them a voice. As Clark and Gerrig

(1990:769) maintain, the act of quoting another is by definition a *demonstration* of some speech event, as opposed to simply a description thereof. This process has the effect of rendering the ancient Biblical text more accessible – more identifiable, understandable, relatable – to modern sensibilities. Additionally, constructed dialogue proves advantageous in its tendency to blur what Hill and Irvine (1993) term “responsibility” or what Goffman (1981) calls “principalship” of an utterance; the figure who stands behind the message.

I conclude the study in Chapter Six with a distillation of the primary insights each context offers for our understanding of constructed dialogue. There I synthesize evidence that this linguistic resource serves as a powerful rhetorical tool in the construction of arguments both in framing knowledge claims as well as in establishing involvement and solidarity with listeners. I also discuss the study’s limitations and suggest future areas for research.

CHAPTER TWO: CONSTRUCTED DIALOGUE, TWO VIEWS

2.1 Introduction

My goal in this chapter is to situate the current study of constructed dialogue in religious talk within the broader field of research about represented discourse in interaction. To begin, I briefly trace the origins of this strand of inquiry in linguistics, culminating with a discussion of the notion of constructed dialogue itself, as distinct from the more common term “reported speech.” In the next overview section on constructed dialogue, I describe various methodological approaches to its investigation, including Goffman’s (1981) notion of production format, and the problem of what has been called “responsibility” in discourse that representing others’ words presents. I then describe two traditions which view constructed dialogue as serving different, though not mutually exclusive functions, both of which play important roles in the overall construction of reasonableness in the religious discourse under examination here. These are what I call its epistemic and its interpersonal functions. Put briefly, the epistemic dimension of constructed dialogue denotes its use as a knowledge-framing device, whether by standing in as evidence for a claim (e.g., demonstrating first-hand access to something someone else said) or appropriating the authority of a quoted party. Interpersonally, constructed dialogue functions to establish any number of different alignments between interlocutors, allowing a speaker, for example, to reframe a serious rebuke as play (an example drawn from Gordon [2002]).

While the literature I discuss related to these aspects of constructed dialogue may (unintentionally) give the impression that each is isolable from the other, there are numerous cases in which it is obvious that the two become quite intertwined (see Tannen [2010], discussed

below). I doubt, as well, that many of the authors I mention below would deny this occasional interpenetration, though it is often true that one or the other dynamic appears more salient in a given conversation. It is also important to add that the epistemic and the interpersonal are not the only ends to which speakers employ constructed dialogue. There is, for instance, a considerable literature which explores its use as a resource for identity construction (e.g., Carroll, 2013; Hamilton, 1996; Trester, 2009, among others), but which lies beyond the scope of this review. Here I focus on the two perspectives, the epistemic and the interpersonal, which most significantly inform my analysis of constructed dialogue in religious talk.

2.2 Origins

In his classic works on the novel, Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) explores the dialogic nature of discourse and its tendency to be shaped by prior voices while simultaneously anticipating future ones, whether in “hidden” or explicit fashion. A central idea running through Bakhtinian thought is that meaning is created in language not merely or even principally through combinations of “dictionary” meanings of words, but rather through the myriad relationships existing between utterances and preceding or anticipated utterances. Utterances are not mere abstract “sentences” of the kind dreamed up by language philosophers: they are language in its “concrete living totality” (1984:181), and the basic unit of communication, associated with particular subjects (1986: 71). In this sense, language is dialogical.

Thus, a major component of any “instance of language” for Bakhtin is the social actor conventionally associated with the discourse, one whose “dialogic angle” (1984: 182) or stance is perceptible to some degree. Additionally, “dialogic relationships are also possible between language styles, social dialects, and so forth, insofar as they are perceived as semantic positions”

(1984:184). That is, references to prior “instances of language,” which more broadly may include accent, register, lexis, etc., bring with them associations with previous authors. This accounts for what Bakhtin calls the *heteroglossia* of language, the fact that an individual constantly employs “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (1981:324).

While originally the domain of literary theorists, Bakhtin’s “metalinguistics” eventually found resonance in a wide variety of disciplines after having been translated for Western scholars by the Bulgarian-French literary critic Julia Kristeva (1980), whose original term *intertextualité* (intertextuality) encompasses the Bakhtinian notion of dialogicality. For Kristeva, intertextuality implies a view of language in which “[e]ach word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read...any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (66). Linguists studying ordinary conversation have profitably employed insights from this body of work in their analyses. For Tannen (2006, 2007, 2009), intertextuality represents another mode of describing *repetition* in discourse. This includes both what she terms “synchronic” repetition, the recurrence of words and phrases within a bounded conversation or text, and also “diachronic” repetition, the construction of dialogue or represented speech where previous discourse is remolded according to the communicative ends of the current speaker.

2.3 Constructed dialogue

Tannen (1986, 2007) submits that what is traditionally called “reported speech” is a misleading term in its suggestion that we transmit others’ words (and our own) as purely neutral reproductions of the original utterances. Rather, speakers create dialogue attributed to people to

fit current conversational needs, regularly transforming everything from lexicon to prosody, even to the point of fabricating dialogue *ex nihilo*, as when there was no original utterance to begin with. In any “constructed dialogue,” even when the words really were spoken, Tannen argues, “...the words themselves have ceased to be those of the speaker to whom they are attributed, having been appropriated by the speaker who is repeating them” (105). Voloshinov (1973) recognized this intrinsic property of representing another’s discourse when he wrote, “Reported speech is speech within speech, message within message, and at the same time also speech about speech, message about message” (149). When appropriating others’ words, individuals rarely have as their chief aim the faithful reproduction of the original speaker’s exact intention, linguistic realization, or original context, all of which could only be approximated in any case (assuming there was an original utterance). Rather, even if no serious distortion is intended, the “old words” are called upon to do new work, in a new context – they are a message about a message. In this sense, speakers are partial in their reproductions: they have different goals for recontextualized discourse, goals which are usually manifest in the particular ways that discourse is realized.

Scholars have analyzed these “particular ways” of constructing dialogue from different perspectives. However, any analyst must reckon with the basic methodological problem of delimiting the object of inquiry from surrounding discourse. As Bakhtin notes, all speech contains echoes of others’ voices, vestiges of another’s “word” (1984: 202):

Our practical everyday speech is full of other people’s words: with some of them we completely merge our own voice, forgetting whose they are: others, which are taken as authoritative, we may use to reinforce our own words; still others, finally, we populate with our own aspirations, alien or hostile to them. (Bakhtin, 1984:195)

How, then, are others’ words recognized in talk, when they are recognizable as such at all? Holt (1996: 222-225) identifies several design features of represented discourse. First, deictic

markers from the reported context are employed (e.g., the pronoun “I” is understood to refer to an original speaker; “here” to the original speaker’s locale, etc.). Second, represented discourse is often preceded by overt quotative markers (“say,” “yell,” etc.). Finally, phonological processes play an integral role in identifying other voices representing prior or hypothetical speech. Holt refers to this as the current speaker’s “retention of the original’s prosody” (1996: 223), a slightly misleading descriptor for a phenomenon that often involves the *creation* of intonational contours by the reporting speaker. As Clark and Gerrig (1990:774) note, speakers may select from a wide range of linguistic features including voice pitch, quality, emotional states, and gestures in seeking to offer their interlocutors a simulated direct experience of a prior speech event.

Gunthner (1999) provides a thorough overview of the phonological processes involved in recontextualizing utterances to suit different contexts and purposes, arguing that in everyday conversation, the Bakhtinian notions of heteroglossia and polyphony are realized primarily through prosody and voice quality. As she puts it,

...recontextualized utterances are stylized, exaggerated, and caricatured and are made to accommodate the reporter’s evaluations. These kinds of polyphonic utterances, simultaneously expressing both the intention of the character who is being quoted, and the refracted intention of the reporter, are not restricted to literary texts, but are frequently used in everyday interactions as well. (Gunthner, 1999:686)

For example, a German woman in conversation with her friend is sharing her disappointment that a talk she gave was not better advertised. In doing so, she constructs the dialogue she had had with the event organizer, stylizing her own voice as she questions the organizer about why the speech had not been promoted in the local cultural magazine, the “Kulturanzeiger”:

warum! `STE:HT! DAS NI:CHT IM KUL TUR AN ZEI GER.
why wasn’t it announced in the Kulturanzeiger?

The speaker's sudden increase in volume, combined with exaggerated, descending pitch movement, as well as the question's "dense accentuation" with its metrical beat (notice the regular, repeated stress as each syllable of "Kulturanzeiger" is realized separately) indexes the speaker's determination (688), and stands in stark contrast to the whiny, high-pitched response she then animates for the organizer (not shown). As I shall show in Chapters Three and Four, Timothy Keller's polyphonic defense of Christianity occasionally features heavy "refractions" of the characters quoted, depending on the interactional needs of the moment.

Another key framework commonly employed in the analysis of represented discourse is Goffman's (1981) notion of "production format." Goffman's tripartite distinction between *author*, *animator*, and *principal* permits a more precise description of the speaker constructing dialogue: the principal is the individual responsible or accountable for the content of what is spoken, the one whose views are understood to be expressed; the author is the individual who composes the form (words) of the message; the animator is the one who actually conveys the message – whether through speech, writing, signing, etc. These various roles within the production format can, of course, coincide. However, whatever the actual division of labor in terms of Goffmanian production format, constructed dialogue often has the effect of presenting speakers as animators only, thereby obscuring, or at least attenuating, their "authorial" or "principal" connection to the propositions or stances they articulate. As Tannen notes:

Americans tend to take literally the act of what is accordingly called "reported speech." They assume that when quotations are attributed to others, the words thus reported represent more or less what was said, the speaker in question being a neutral conduit of objectively real information. The conveyor of information is seen as an inert vessel, in Goffman's (1974) terms, a mere animator: a voice giving form to information for which the quoted party is the principal, the one responsible. (Tannen, 2007:110)

Indeed, responsibility (or lack thereof) for an utterance represents a core consideration in understanding how constructed dialogue works in the discourse I analyze here. It is one of many

facets of the various arguments Keller makes concerning the plausibility of faith in contemporary life, as well as an important element in Bible study participants' interpretive moves.

Distancing oneself from responsibility for an utterance in many cases, of course, may be intentional. Speakers may have myriad reasons to frame their remarks as originating somewhere else rather than from themselves: the message may be face-threatening to the recipient, it may be somehow illicit or secret, it may be of dubious reliability, etc. Regardless of the reason, representing the speech of another has long been recognized to attenuate the connection between speaker and message. As Goffman remarked,

When a speaker employs conventional brackets to warn us that what he is saying is meant to be taken in jest, or as mere repeating of words by someone else, then it is clear that he means to stand in a relation of reduced personal responsibility for what he is saying. He splits himself off from the content of the words by expressing that their speaker is not he himself or not he himself in a serious way. (Goffman, 1974: 512)

Accordingly, the process of taking on another's voice has been observed to diminish the speaker's accountability for the message conveyed in numerous settings (e.g., Carroll, 2013; Johansen, 2011; Kuo, 2001; Smirnova 2012; Tannen 2010). Shuman (1993) is an early example from Hill and Irvine's seminal edited volume *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse*. Her study explores how authority is negotiated as teenagers reveal and conceal information by means of constructed dialogue in the context of telling "fight stories," which either recount or foreshadow disputes in an American inner-city middle school community. When recontextualizing offenses, accusations, or threats via reported speech, narrators of fight stories claim entitlement not only to use others' words, but to reinterpret them from a particular perspective, thereby deflecting responsibility for any potential (or actual) violence.

Kuo (2001) finds that Taiwanese political candidates distance themselves from criticisms they level at their opponents through constructing dialogue of external sources. They thus limit

their liability for the truth of their critiques, while simultaneously lessening their face-threatening nature. Johansen (2011) explores the relationship between agency and responsibility in the represented discourse employed by Danish children during dinner-table narratives of “problematic events” (e.g., stopping a classmate from breaking a rule). She finds that representing their peers’ speech functions to create a “position of participation” for the storytellers from which they either mitigate, or in some cases augment, their agentive roles (and thus, responsibility), in order to avoid blame. Also in the realm of family discourse, Tannen (2010) illustrates how deflecting responsibility for a face-threatening action (such as an order) is facilitated by “taking on the voice” of an (absent) family member via constructed dialogue, as when a father tells his daughter, with whom he is making a salad, “Now your mom would say, *Oh, you need more lettuce!*” (2010: 311, emphasis mine). In fact, this example, to which we shall return in Chapter Three, nicely illustrates the multifaceted nature of constructed dialogue, which is employed here not only to mitigate the impression of giving an order, but also as supporting evidence for a claim (about exactly how much lettuce a salad needs). Indeed, as Hill and Irvine’s (1993) volume *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse* suggests, “responsibility” connects directly to an analysis of how knowledge claims are framed and managed in conversation. This leads us to the first of the two dimensions of constructed dialogue I will discuss: its epistemic function.

2.4 Epistemics and constructed dialogue

Before discussing the epistemic or evidential dimension of constructed dialogue, I would like to define more precisely what I mean in using these terms. Heritage (2013:370) defines the study of epistemics as concerned with “the knowledge claims that interactants register, assert,

and defend in and through turns at talk and sequences of interaction.” That is, the ways one shows that and how one knows something, as well as how reliably. Constructed dialogue has been identified as a resource in this enterprise. However, I begin with a brief overview of *other* knowledge framing devices to better locate constructed dialogue’s place among them.

A longstanding approach to the study of epistemics, one which predates even the term itself, has been to focus on lexical and morphological encoding of knowledge in discourse. Bednarek (2006), following Chafe (1986), notes that studies in this domain fall into two categories. The first, usually classified as “evidentiality,” focuses narrowly on expressions indicating *source* of information such as sensory evidence, inference, or reported information. This approach is commonly adopted by language typologists (e.g., Aikhenvald, 2004) who conceive of evidentiality as encoded morphologically as a grammatical category. For example, Caddo, a Native American language of western Oklahoma, uses the prefix *kán* to indicate that an event is not known through the speaker’s own experience but via another’s report, as in the following example from Chafe (2013:508):

Kánníwdichah.
kán=ní-widi-chah
hearsay=carrying-arrive-intention
“I understand he’s going to bring it.”

English, of course, lacks any such morphological marking scheme, and as a consequence of the traditional view of evidentiality has historically been underrepresented in such studies. Recent exceptions, however, re-examine English evidentiality at the word and phrase level, including studies of scientific discourse (Viechnicki, 2003), news (Bednarek, 2006), and legal settings (Grund, 2012). Such non-grammaticalized evidential phenomena, a category in which we may include devices such as constructed dialogue in many cases, have come to be referred to as “evidential strategies” (see Hanks, 2014), a term I will use as well.

A second strand of research at the lexico-morphological level encompasses both the source and degree of certainty (i.e., reliability) of information presented, creating close ties with the study of epistemic modality. One of the foundational treatments of the latter comes from Chafe (1986). He delineates several modes of knowing: belief, induction, hearsay and deduction, noting that each derives from a different source. For example, *induction* relies on “evidence” while *hearsay* relies on “language”— something one has heard or read. Though Chafe does not address represented discourse directly when discussing hearsay, Willett’s (1988) classificatory system for modes of knowledge, a close contemporary, qualifies it as “indirect evidence.”

At the discourse level – that is, beyond the lexical and morphological perspective of knowledge in discourse described above – another strain of inquiry in epistemics comes from the Conversation Analysis paradigm, which has contributed rich descriptions of how individuals manifest their relative epistemic positions not only with respect to a topic, but also with respect to other speakers present. Much of this work has focused on interlocutors’ assessments (e.g., Pomerantz, 1984; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006; Heritage, 2012). For example, Heritage and Raymond (2005) examine how, even when interlocutors agree on an idea, they are “concerned to establish the independence of the positions that are asserted in accomplishing agreement” (36-37). That is, speakers routinely demonstrate primary access to information seen as belonging to them by, for instance, upgrading a second position assessment – an evaluation following someone else’s evaluation – with some indication that the assessment was previously held (e.g., “Oh, of course”). Importantly, here we can glimpse for the first time the manner in which knowledge claims are socially situated; interlocutors do not express their degree of certainty or source of information in a vacuum.

Indeed, Fox (2001) describes a shift in perspectives on epistemics beginning in the early 1990s from what she calls “grammatical evidentiality,” which understands evidentiality as it relates to an individual speaker’s knowledge of the world, encoded in lexico-grammatical categories, to a more socially embedded view which sees knowledge claims as sensitive to local, interactive exigencies. Hence, such features of what CA researchers call “turn design” embody claims to differential epistemic “rights” or “territories,” with putatively less knowledgeable speakers “downgrading” their assessments while more knowledgeable speakers “upgrade” theirs, as above. Heritage (2013), for example, distinguishes epistemic status, the actual degree of knowledge a speaker possesses about a given thing, from epistemic stance, defined as the way a speaker positions him or herself in terms of status. While often status and stance correspond, speakers may occasionally choose to appear (by their stance) to know more or less than they actually do (given their true status), or vice-versa.

In sum, the conversational practices typically studied within the epistemics literature, whether in the CA or lexico-morphological traditions described above, encompass a wide variety of discursive phenomena, related to both the source and reliability of knowledge claims. Though it has not been the dominant object of inquiry in such research, scholars interested in represented discourse have long noticed its role in framing knowledge claims. In fact, we may speak of *two* roles this conversational device plays in connection to epistemology in discourse: the way in which it constitutes evidence for a claim, and the way in which it establishes authority or credibility. I will reserve a more in-depth treatment of authority and credibility for Chapter Three, which of the three analytical chapters most predominately illustrates this function. For the rest of this section, I review work examining constructed dialogue as a form of evidence, or “evidential strategy” (Hanks, 2014).

As Estellés-Arguedas (2015) notes, “[t]he inclusion of reported discourse as an evidential, or as a potential source of evidentials, is widespread” (141). Clift (2006) traces the view of quotation as an epistemic modal form at least as far back as Whorf’s (1938) discussion of Hopi verbs, though points out that in its non-grammaticalized, interactional form, “the evidential status of reported speech (...) might not be immediately apparent” (2006: 571-572). Nevertheless, many have taken an interest in precisely this function of such “non-grammaticalized” represented discourse. In research on psychic mediums, Wooffitt (2001) reveals the evidential role of constructed dialogue in establishing the authenticity of spirits’ voices animated by the medium during a séance (or “sitting”). For instance, a medium (M) uses direct reported speech to reveal what the spirit (referred to as “he”) thinks of the sitter (S), that is, the client:

M: he says **she can be quite stubborn at times y’know**
(.)
M: is that true
S: yes

(Wooffitt 2001: 352, emphasis mine)

As Wooffitt explains, “Mediums thus may introduce the spirits’ very words into the sitting as a way of presenting knowledge claims about the sitter as evidence of post-mortem survival of some form of conscious spirit entity” (352). While in this case the spirit’s voice itself is construed as evidence of a supernatural interaction, Wooffitt’s other research has shown that represented discourse reinforces claims of paranormal experience in more mundane ways, as when a storyteller draws on the voices of individuals who have had similar experiences. In the following example, the speaker has just finished recounting something her husband experienced while living in a hut on the Samoan Islands:

A: And, well, what is even more fascinating about the story is, that he's telling the experience to other people and they said "**Oh, that wasn't too strange an experience**" because they had heard it before about this particular hut.

(Wooffitt 1992, cited in Holt, 2009: 196, emphasis mine)

Turning from the paranormal to the thoroughly normal, represented discourse has been found to bolster claims contested in interaction on the most ordinary of subjects. Holt (1996) reveals the evidential value of constructing dialogue to settle simple disputes, as when two sisters, Lesley and Vanna, debate about whether or not their mother is becoming confused. Lesley suggests this after a conversation with their mother on the phone in which she believes the mother called her the wrong name. Vanna, who was present, objects, "No:: she said would you like tuh talk tuh Va:nna" using this line of constructed dialogue as the evidence to support her claim that the mother did not use the wrong name (228).

Clift (2006) integrates this evidential perspective of represented discourse with research on assessments in interaction. She demonstrates how reported speech functions as a "powerful evidential display" of having reached an assessment before one's interlocutor. Following Heritage and Raymond (2005), she notes that the sequential order of assessments generally implies greater epistemic rights for the party making the first assessment. However, when following an initial assessment, reported speech upgrades one's epistemic rights to the assessment by displaying, or serving as evidence for a specific stance toward a given proposition in a way in which mere paraphrase of the speaker's stance could not. For example, a British woman, Lesley has just told her mother (Mum) that the phone company British Telecom has shut off her service for non-payment of a bill, something that has happened to others in her area in recent days:

53 Mum: Oh love. That's a nuisance isn't it.
54 Lesley: Ye[s.]

55 Mum: [They're getting terrible.
56 Lesley: Wel[l I I said]
57 Mum: [I mean look what]
58 Lesley: I said to them. This is British Telecom for you.
59 Mum: Yes. An' look what they charge

(Clift 2006: 573-574)⁴

The mother is first to comment on the predicament in line 53. Lesley's own assessment, begun in line 56 and completed in line 58, uses constructed dialogue, evidence that she has greater epistemic prerogative to evaluate the ordeal. Clift explains,

By reporting a past event which displays her own prior engagement with what has just been raised, the speaker indexes her stance by laying claim to primary rights to do the assessing. She claims priority – in a sense, pulling rank – on the basis of sheer chronology: she was there first. (Clift, 2006: 578)

Clift calls this use of reported speech an “interactional evidential,” one only manifest in sequences of talk, a category distinct from well-documented “stand-alone” evidentials which index epistemic position without reference to the interlocutor, and are traditionally studied in terms of their lexicon or modality.

The evidential use of represented discourse has also been studied in more institutional contexts. Reber (2014) examines quotations as evidentials in online political discussion forums, showing how the inclusion of a quotation from a transcript of a political speech under discussion heightens the epistemic authority of comments which include them. However, to do so can come at a social cost, as the combination of taking an overt stance on a political issue and using a direct quote from the transcript tends to increase, simultaneously, one's accountability for that position. Indeed, controversial claims often rely on reported speech to unburden the speaker

⁴ Line breaks and transcription notations adjusted for clarity.

from full responsibility for his or her position, as Myers (1999) found in examining focus group conversations.

Baffy & Marsters (2015) show how a trial attorney animates the voice of a defendant during cross-examination to bolster his argumentative claims. By evoking an alternate reality where the defendant (a jail deputy) articulates concern (e.g., “Did you say... ‘Are you okay?’”) for the deteriorating condition of an inmate who eventually died in custody, the attorney “provides evidence for his claim that the defendants acted with deliberate indifference” in ignoring the prisoner’s condition (160-161). In this case, constructed dialogue not only furnishes “evidential weight” to the attorney’s claims, but also invites the jury to adopt a critical stance toward the defendant’s inaction.

Taking a step back now, it is worth considering *why* represented discourse functions so frequently as an evidential strategy. As Tannen (1986) points out, linguists have observed as far back as Labov (1972) that “narration is more vivid when speech is presented as first-person dialogue (‘direct quotation’) rather than third-person report (‘indirect quotation’)” (311). In a more expanded formulation, Tannen argues that constructed dialogue increases conversational involvement both by creating a sense of “immediacy, portraying action and dialogue as if it were occurring at telling time and (...) [by] forcing the hearer to participate in sensemaking” (324). Clark and Gerrig (1990:793) describe this effect of direct quotations as “engrossment”: the speaker intends for the audience “to experience part of what it would be like to hear” the original, thus transforming the listener into, in Noy’s (2007) terms, a “second-order witness.” Thus, when constructed dialogue is employed as an evidential strategy, there is an implicit message to the interlocutor about the neutrality, and therefore credibility, of evidence presented, as if the speaker were saying, “Here is what happened; judge for yourself. I am simply [to repeat

Tannen's phrase] an inert vessel, reproducing talk for your evaluation." Of course, this is often far from the case.

2.5 Relational work and constructed dialogue

Along with its epistemic dimension, an equally salient feature of constructed dialogue which has attracted scholarly attention is its potential to mediate social relations between speakers. In employing represented discourse rather than speaking "on record" as themselves, speakers accomplish diverse interactional work, from diminishing their responsibility for troublesome messages to building rapport with or even insulting their interlocutors. My review here, complemented by others (see Holt, 2009; Holt & Clift, 2007; and the introduction to Tannen 2007), highlights various contexts of and objectives for such work, further explored especially in Chapters Four (on sermons) and Five (on Bible study) of this study.

Tannen (2004) investigates an interesting use of constructed dialogue employed by family members as a resource in their interactions: talking as the family pet to one another. She demonstrates the considerable flexibility of this device as it is used at different times to buffer criticism, deliver praise, and diffuse or avoid conflict, among other functions. Family members speaking *as* their pets represents a special instance of constructed dialogue Tannen calls *ventriloquizing* in which one speaker "animates another's voice in the presence of that other" (Tannen 2007:22), simultaneously creating or effecting shifts in the alignments speakers adapt toward one another, what Goffman (1981:128) refers to as "footing." For instance, Clara, who is home with her son Jason, chooses to indirectly rebuke him for not putting away his toys by voicing the family dogs, Tater and Rickie:

Clara: Tater and Rickie! You guys, say,
 <extra high pitch> "We're naughty,

but we're not as naughty as Jason,
he's naughtiest.
We- we just know it!"

(Tannen 2004: 408)

In this case, Clara's humorous performance as the dogs blunts the potential impact of chastising her son for his failure to fulfill his domestic responsibilities. Instead, her ventriloquizing registers as teasing, which "conveys affection on the metamessage level, whereas, the words are hostile or adversarial on the message level" (409).

Parental reproach is also reframed via constructed dialogue in Gordon's (2002) study of role-reversal in mother-daughter discourse. Gordon's study, which develops a model for integrating Goffman's (1974) frame theory with linguistic analyses of intertextuality, demonstrates how shared prior texts serve as a resource for framing. She highlights how spontaneous role-plays initiated by an almost-three-year-old girl, Natalie, with her mother, Janet, consists of multiple embedded frames (e.g., literal, play), created through constructed dialogue of previous real-life situations. For instance, in reenacting an episode from two days prior when she had been threatened with a "time out" for trying to speak to Janet while she was on the phone, Natalie uses the voice of her mother as she engages her (real) mother in a role-reversal game (the transcript reproduced here is printed in column format):

Natalie (Child)

I'm on the phone right now!
Shh!

<laughing> Shh!>
[<laughs>]
If you scream,
You will have a time-out.

Janet (Mother)

<high-pitched> No!>

[<screeches, high-pitched>]

(Gordon 2002:686)

In this fleeting episode, multiple frames are embedded within one another, each associated with particular metamessages: within the “real-life” frame, there is a broad “this is play” frame. This is further specified by a “role-reversal” frame (“I’m playing you”), itself particularized by the use of an established family script – in this case, that of discipline (“I’m playing you, Mommy, when you are playing the role of disciplinarian in real life”) (708). While what we might call Natalie and Janet’s “co-constructed dialogue” reframes serious real-life episodes as play, they nonetheless “leak” into serious frames, and represent a non-trivial parenting resource for Janet, who uses such play frames to convince Natalie to accomplish daily tasks (689). In addition to smoothing interactions around their daily routines, Gordon (2006) notes important rapport-building work accomplished in this episode. In engaging in the role-reversal, Janet “indicates that she had paid attention to Natalie’s words in the (difficult) interaction two days prior, and was willing to re-frame that conflict-laden interaction as something playful and fun” (568). What is more, the game serves as the basis for interactional work beyond the bounds of their family, as Janet recounts her amusing role-reversal to a group of female friends – a retelling of a reenactment of an original episode. In constructing dialogue of herself constructing dialogue of Natalie, Janet entertains her friends and offers them a glimpse of her daily life at home. At the same time, however, she aligns with her professional, working friends by evaluating her time mothering at home as frustrating, for example by framing her participation in the role-play as an obligation (*So I have to go “Mommy!”*) (566).

In another instance of constructed dialogue reinforcing family connections, Creese and Blackledge (2017) explore conversations between a mother and daughter of Indian descent living in the UK. Their discussions build solidarity between the women as they distinguish themselves from a non-present relative, “Mami Ji,” the mother’s sister-in-law (“Mami Ji” is a Panajabi

kinship term). As the daughter, Parneet, questions her mother about various subjects related to their family's ancestral language and customs, the mother evokes the figure of Mami Ji, her brother's wife, as a model of whom *not* to emulate. At a certain moment, after Parneet asks her mother about her own use of their native Panjabi, the mother uses both indirect reported speech and constructed dialogue to animate her sister-in-law's critical view of her linguistic practices (constructed dialogue in bold):

Mami Ji was saying to me that when she
was talking to me that I was using a lot of Hindi words hana? <right?>
and I said **am I?** she goes **yeah.** so

(Creese & Blackledge, 2017: 192)

The mother frames Mami Ji's dislike of code-mixing as overly rigid (even the line in which the critique is leveled against her contains a Hindi tag question, *hana*, right?), reenacting for Parneet a brief disagreement between the two women. As Parneet is socialized into her community of Punjabi immigrants in the UK, her mother's modeling of her absent sister-in-law via constructed dialogue in this and other examples serves as a reference point for how Parneet's family does *not* approach their cultural heritage, and ultimately bolsters her trust in her own mother's judgment.

Matsumoto's (2011) study on what she calls the "quotidian reframing" of painful events in narratives told between older Japanese women friends showcases another way in which constructed dialogue lubricates social interaction. When telling a putatively painful story, for example, about the death of a spouse, the Japanese women in her study alleviate some of the tension of such a weighty subject by drawing attention to mundane details of the event which recall a sense of normalcy. Thus one woman named Akiko, in speaking of the moment of her husband's death as he drifted to sleep in a hospital bed, laughed as she remarked that his parting words to her were "You're noisy, so shush up" (60). As Matsumoto observes:

Shifting conceptual alignment to (a figure in) a scene associated with ordinary life and low psychological intensity, in the middle of a conversational narrative on a psychologically intense topic, gives an opportunity for the participants of the conversation to be relieved of the gravity of the surrounding narrative and speech situation, and frees them to talk in a more relaxed manner and even to laugh.
(Matsumoto, 2011: 602-603)

Constructed dialogue has also been found to mitigate the impact of troubling messages in institutional contexts. Gordon et al. (2002) examine how genetic counselors describe procedural pain to clients by voicing previous patients who have experienced the procedure. For instance, one counselor compares the feeling of amniocentesis to menstrual cramping:

Counselor: But people say,
“yeah there’s a sensation,”
and the best words,
I’ve asked women to describe it is,
“a little pressure,
MAYBE like a mild menstrual cramp?”
I mean everybody’s experience is a little different but that’s how it’s explained.

(Gordon et al. 2002:255)

The use of colloquial vocabulary (“a little pressure”) and similes likening the procedure to other common experiences (menstruation) appear to describe the experiences of women who are similar to the patient, as opposed to members of the medical institution. The resulting metamessage to the patient, “You’re not alone,” thus serves her positive face needs (Brown & Levinson, 1987) – to be like others – during a potentially unsettling encounter. In this manner, despite the intrinsic asymmetry and distance of the counseling session, counselors still manage to develop rapport and solidarity with their clients, an accomplishment facilitated by constructed dialogue (257).

In addition to medicine, education represents a site for analysis which has proven particularly rich for the study of constructed dialogue as an interactional tool (e.g., Helmer, 2013;

Jaspers, 2014; Moore, 2014). For instance, Lamb (2015) explores both affiliative and disaffiliative uses of reported speech in the talk of a caucasian, mainland American teacher, “Mr. Cal,” who works in a Hawaiian high school. He finds that, in adopting certain phonological elements of Hawaiian Creole (HC), Mr. Cal’s stylization, an instance of what Rampton (1995) terms “crossing,” alternatively identifies with and mocks his students as he speaks as them in their local variety. Lamb demonstrates that the impact of Mr. Cal’s ventriloquizing with respect to footing depends upon the contemporaneous “framing” (Goffman, 1974) of the interaction: if occurring in an already playful frame, Mr. Cal’s stylization builds rapport, most noticeable by the laughter it provokes. However, in rare instances where it occurs in a serious frame (e.g., as when he has invoked his institutional authority to critique his students’ language), Mr. Cal’s ventriloquizing his students in HC registers as insulting.

2.6 Summary

Constructed dialogue lends itself to investigation from multiple angles. Even after delimiting two broad categories of use, to fully capture its diversity in either remains an elusive goal. For instance, to examine represented speech an evidential strategy quickly reveals further ramifications in its use as such: As Hanks (2014:4) points out, “[B]ecause speakers’ ends are usually multiple, it is unavoidable that an evidential strategy will arise in the context of other ends” – marking a stance, agreement or disagreement, managing one’s own credibility or defending one’s rights to knowledge – the list goes on. And yet the categories I have discussed, the epistemic and the interpersonal, are at least helpful lenses through which to view the broad contours of constructed dialogue’s contributions to reasonableness in religious talk. This is especially true in contexts of religious discourse like those examined here – an interview, a

sermon series, and Bible study – where elaborating or defending an account of the faith represents a key goal of the speech event.

We shall see, for instance, that in Timothy Keller’s journalistic interview, theological principles are never simply asserted as matters of fact or the products of Keller’s own on-the-spot reckoning. Rather they are presented as reasoned positions of others whose views Keller presents in their own voices, a polyphonic testimony for the case he advances. A version of this use of represented-discourse-as-evidence occurs in Bible study as well: members voice the hypothetical inner-speech of Biblical figures, submitting their interpretive renditions to the group for scrutiny as they discuss the meaning of their holy text. At the same time, relational dynamics remain (as ever) to be navigated, and in many cases speakers’ use of constructed dialogue serves these needs as well. In his sermons, for instance, Keller often ventriloquizes skeptical listeners in the pew in such a way as to portray them as perceptive and savvy, but also of high moral character, all gestures which address the audience’s positive face wants (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

This interpersonal dimension represents an important component of the construction of faith’s reasonableness, for the latter is an affair of both the head and the heart. I was once told a story by someone who was present for a presentation on Christianity delivered for a large college audience. The presenter, a Christian evangelist, was apparently rather obnoxious, for the person telling me the story overheard one woman say to her friend as they were leaving, “I don’t care if he’s right. He’s an asshole.” Though the thresholds are admittedly relative, it is still fair to say that faith must pass the tests of both intellect and affect: it is just as “unreasonable” to commit oneself to a worldview one finds odious as it is to one that seems irrational. In the chapters that

follow, we shall see how constructed dialogue enables people talking about their beliefs to avoid the appearance of both.

CHAPTER THREE: THE POLYPHONIC PASTOR

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the use constructed dialogue as integral to epistemic management in the talk of a prominent religious figure engaged in a public conversation with a skeptical interviewer. By “epistemics” in discourse, I refer broadly to “the knowledge claims that interactants register, assert, and defend in and through turns at talk and sequences of interaction” (Heritage, 2013: 370). I ask: how does constructed dialogue serve as a resource for a popular, contemporary Christian minister to frame knowledge claims about a supernatural worldview eschewed by an increasing proportion of American society⁵, as well as by his immediate interlocutor? Attention to the dialogic dimension of knowledge assertion, management and contestation shows clearly that how one makes certain claims can be deeply intertwined with whom one embodies as speaker. In this chapter I show that constructed dialogue, and specifically the minister’s “taking on voices,” (Tannen, 2009) functions to bolster his credibility as an otherwise unknown religious figure. Additionally, I describe how the vivid use of represented discourse increases the immediacy of the minister’s challenge to his overhearing audience, where figures not physically present nonetheless (appear to) speak directly to them, pressing them for a response. Finally, drawing on Goffman’s (1981) notion of production format, I illustrate how constructed dialogue enables the minister to deflect responsibility for potentially troublesome messages.

⁵ A trend attested in the Pew Research Center’s (2015) report “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Represented discourse has previously been identified as an epistemic or evidential strategy (e.g., Holt, 2009; Estellés-Arguedas 2015), and its study as such has complemented more formal, lexico-grammatical treatments of epistemology in discourse. Attention to intertextual phenomena such as represented speech in studies of epistemics represents a growing scholarly awareness of the importance of context, both local and global, in the way meanings are interactionally constructed. As Fox (2001) has demonstrated, individuals employ various strategies to frame propositions differently depending on the immediate relationships being navigated in conversation. Given the rich semiotic affordances of constructing dialogue – lexical, grammatical, prosodic – constructed dialogue constitutes a powerful knowledge-framing resource in this enterprise.

A key contribution this chapter makes to our understanding of epistemics and constructed dialogue lies in its integrated vision of epistemic phenomena and contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982), those paralinguistic features such as gaze, gesture, prosody, code-switches or the use of conversational rituals which serve to create the intersubjective understanding of the “speech activity” in which interlocutors are engaged. In this chapter, I highlight in particular the minister’s use of prosody, which I argue functions as a kind of embedded evidential strategy *within* the dialogue he constructs, already a kind of evidence. While a few studies of epistemics have dealt with either paralinguistic signaling mechanisms (e.g., Borràs-Comes et al. 2011; Roseano et al., 2016) or represented discourse (e.g., Clift, 2006; Holt, 1996; Wooffitt 1992), these two dimensions of talk have not, to my knowledge, been examined in conjunction. To take a previously cited example, recall Clift’s (2006) analysis of a woman (Lesley) asserting her prerogative over her mother to evaluate a troublesome situation with Lesley’s phone company (reported speech in bold):

53 Mum: Oh love. That's a nuisance isn't it.
 54 Lesley: Ye[s.
 55 Mum: [They're getting terrible.
 56 Lesley: Wel[l I I I said]
 57 Mum: [I mean look what]
 58 Lesley: I said to them. ↑**This is British Telecom for you.**
 59 Mum: Yes. An' look what they charge

(Clift 2006: 573-574)

Clift points out that Lesley's constructed dialogue (line 58) serves as an "upgraded" assessment – an "interactional evidential" – because it implies access to the original events, and therefore the primary right to evaluate them. But Lesley's emphatic intonation (indicated by the arrow) within her representation of her own speech passes unremarked in the analysis, even though it is further evidence of Lesley's previously held stance.⁶ In this example, and more generally in studies of represented discourse and evidential strategies, recontextualized speech is analyzed only at the message level; metamesages conveyed through paralinguistic channels such as gesture or prosody are not taken into account, even though they often contain epistemic stance-marking elements. In this chapter, however, I show how the presence of various contextualization cues within stretches of constructed dialogue contribute significantly to the framing of a given claim as authoritative or reliable (or else the opposite).

In addition to its evidential role, discussed in Chapter Two, another major epistemic function of represented discourse consists in its potential to establish the speaker's *authority* with respect to the claim(s) being advanced, a dimension I shall explore at length in this chapter. As many have pointed out (Buttny & Cohen 2007; Hill & Irvine, 1993; Parmentier, 1993; Smirnova, 2012), drawing on the voices of others represents a common rhetorical device to bolster one's

⁶ Indicating that a stance or assessment was previously held represents one way of claiming relative epistemic primacy in the domain being discussed (see, for example, Heritage & Raymond, 2006).

own credibility – at least, when one has chosen an advantageous voice with which to align oneself.

Explored here is the talk of a prominent American Protestant minister, Timothy Keller, in a public interview with a nationally known journalist, Martin Bashir, that occurred in 2008 at Columbia University organized by a non-profit organization called the “Veritas Forum.” Throughout the interview, Bashir presses Keller with a series of adversarial questions which Clayman (2010) describes as typical of journalistic interview discourse. Taken together with the mix of religious and secular views in the audiences Veritas Forum events regularly draw, this interview constitutes an ideal setting in which to examine evidential strategies. Keller and Bashir’s wide-ranging conversation revolves around the justifications for and defects of the Christian faith, with Keller aiming to expand on the former, and Bashir to explore the latter. However, I should emphasize that Keller’s contributions form the primary focus, while Bashir’s talk, proportionately far less in the interview, functions more to introduce various topics than elaborate arguments. In examining how this Christian spokesperson presents his faith as meeting the “epistemic criteria or standards of the knowledge community” (van Dijk 2012) to which he is appealing—an educated, modern, Western audience – I show how constructed dialogue emerges as a primary resource for framing arguments, and that in three ways.

The first I call “enlisting allied voices,” in which Keller animates the talk of respected moral or intellectual figures whose religious worldviews align with his own, thereby borrowing some of their cultural and ethical capital. Despite enjoying a certain amount of popularity within his own religious circles, Keller remains largely unknown to the general public, and so faces an acute problem of credibility when addressing a “mixed” audience in a public forum. Enlisting high-profile voices addresses this liability, and in fact represents a common theme in

the other two functions of his constructed dialogue that I discuss as well. I term the second function “appropriating opposing voices,” one which, paradoxically, involves Keller taking on the voice of secular, sometimes anti-religious thinkers in a kind of discursive jujitsu which ends up furthering Keller’s arguments in favor of religious belief. The anti-religious orientation of the figures animated here is leveraged as proof of the objectivity which their observations about faith are supposed to demonstrate – observations which turn out to align with various arguments Keller makes. In this way, Keller adds an extra layer of objectivity to that which is implied by directly quoting from them in the first place. Finally, I discuss Keller’s technique of “creating an ambiguous voice,” where the formal features signaling clear shifts into reported speech have disappeared, leaving an (advantageous) ambiguity about whether or not the arguments being advanced originate with Keller or the thinker he had most recently referenced, a paradigmatic case of the sort described by Hill and Irvine (1993) in which reported speech complicates the attribution of responsibility for a given position. The sum total of these discursive maneuvers works to establish Keller’s credibility, and, by extension, that of religious belief.

In what follows, I first review theoretical background related to the epistemic functions of constructed dialogue, particularly its role in establishing authority or credibility. I then turn to previous research in which constructed dialogue plays such a legitimizing role in religious discourse. Next, I provide additional background on the data under examination before proceeding to the analysis. In conclusion, I distill the contribution of an approach to epistemics which takes account of what Bauman and Briggs (1990) term the “social dimensions” of recontextualization.

3.2 Voices of authority

In Chapter Two I distinguished two epistemic functions of constructed dialogue: its use as evidence on one hand, and on the other, its tendency to establish the credibility or authority of the speaker. Considering the role of constructed dialogue as an evidential strategy, we saw that by representing discourse as it was purportedly uttered in the original speech event, the speaker “demonstrates” what it would have been like to experience the situation first-hand (Clark & Gerrig, 1990). In a narrow understanding of the word, this implicit claim to primary access to the original speech event could be seen to function as a claim to “authority,” when authority is simply conceived of as being a first-hand witness of talk, especially as compared to those interlocutors not present for the original conversation (see Ingrid & Aronsson [2014] for an example of this conception of “authority”). However, in the non-technical sense of the word, the simple fact of constructing dialogue from previous (or hypothetical) talk would not automatically confer an “authoritative” status to the speaker (or her utterance). When we think of an “authority,” we always have in mind some *domain* in which the authority is knowledgeable, what Raymond and Heritage (2005) a “territory of knowledge”: molecular biology, Byzantine art history, checkers, etc. And with reference to a given domain which forms a topic of talk, in order for constructed dialogue to establish a speaker’s credibility, *the recontextualized speech must itself emanate from a recognizable authority* – some type of expert – who may be a Nobel Prize winner or a young child, depending on the domain and one’s interlocutor.

Tannen (2009) explores a dimension of constructed dialogue important for understanding its second epistemic function related to authority/credibility. She notes that constructed dialogue allows speakers to embody other figures by “taking on voices”: People construct “not only dialogue but personas, speakers who take on voices can then borrow characteristics associated

with those personas” (2). On one hand, this borrowing of others’ characteristics enables speakers to negotiate the ever-present conversational dynamics of power and solidarity – an observation that accords well with our previous discussion in Chapter Two of the interpersonal work constructed dialogue accomplishes— for example, by “downplay[ing] the relative hierarchy between themselves and interlocutors or creat[ing] closeness with interlocutors or with those whose personas they reference” (6). But among the characteristics speakers borrow, an important trait – *expertise* – allows constructed dialogue to function not only along the axis of power and solidarity, but also in terms of epistemic management. Consider again Tannen’s (2010) example of a father and young adult daughter preparing a salad first seen in Chapter Two. In suggesting she add more lettuce, the father takes on the voice of his (absent) wife, the mother:

Father: Oo! And olives, oo.
 Now, your mom would say,
 “Oh, you need more lettuce!”
Daughter: Yeah, I was just gonna put more lettuce into it.

(Tannen, 2010: 8)

Two advantages accrue in voicing the mother in this case. First, the father avoids the full responsibility for issuing a potentially face-threatening command to his daughter (i.e., “Add more lettuce”) as he borrows his wife’s voice to point out the problem. Second, and simultaneously, the father arrogates to himself both his wife’s “expertise to decide how much lettuce a salad needs and [...] authority, because she is the one who usually prepares dinner, to direct the culinary actions of their daughter, an apprentice cook” (8). As used here, “expertise” and “authority” designate two related but separate attributes of the mother which the father has

appropriated for himself in taking on her voice.⁷ My focus is on the former, expertise, which represents a feature of the conversation's epistemic landscape, what Heritage and Raymond (2005) call its territories of knowledge. These are domains of information to which interactants may lay differential claims of access or ownership. As Heritage and Raymond observe, the "rights to evaluate states of affairs are indeed 'ordinarily patrolled and defended' by individuals in routine conversational practices through which these rights are ranked by speakers relative to one another" (2005:34). In the salad-making example, the father's "patrolling and defending" occurs through constructed dialogue, as he borrows (through what Tannen, following Bateson [1979], calls "abduction") expertise from his absent wife by taking on her voice.

As mentioned, the authority whose voice has the kind of currency a speaker would seek to borrow depends on both the topic and the audience. In Kuo's (2001) exploration of televised debates leading up to a Taiwanese mayoral election, candidates recruited the voices of esteemed public figures or the international news media to frame the positive self-presentation that formed part of their on-screen performances. In a different political context, Parmentier (1993) analyzes the speech of a high-ranking chief in Belau, Micronesia, who quotes from traditional proverbs as he seeks to resolve a political crisis about proposed constitutional reforms on the archipelago. The chief uses constructed dialogue to "induce legitimacy" (263) on his speech – in fact, not only on the content of his immediate, quoted message, but more generally, since the "speaker

⁷ The latter, authority, involves relations of power between participants, in the sense of Brown and Gilman's (1960) definition of the term: one's ability to "control the behavior of the other" (255). Clearly, an explicit or implicit claim of expertise may position one as relatively more authoritative than another, but expertise and authority remain distinct social properties.

who can recite proverbs is judged to be likely to report other utterances with the same transparent objectivity” (280).

Moving from Micronesia to upstate New York, Buttny and Cohen (2007) explore the relationship of represented discourse and authority in their investigation of two public hearings about the construction of a Super Walmart. In the hearings, called by the local town board to gather public input on a proposed zoning change which would allow for the store’s construction on a sensitive environmental site, residents voiced concerns about the risks such construction posed to their community. Buttny and Cohen show how, in light of the fact that the risk was largely seen as a technical/scientific matter, ordinary citizens drew upon a plethora of voices ranging from technical experts to older family members, venerated repositories of “local knowledge,” to bolster the credibility of their case.

As we shift now from the technological to the theological, we shall see that religious practitioners also borrow a multitude of voices in constructing authoritative discourse about the divine.

3.3 Constructed dialogue and religious language

At the intersection of language and religion, the locus of the current study, linguists and linguistic anthropologists have attended to epistemic strategies for some time (e.g., Cheong et al., 2011; Du Bois, 1986; Harding, 1987; Johnstone, 1986; Lempert, 2008; Wolfgram, 2010).

However, constructed dialogue has remained underrepresented as an epistemic resource. Some important exceptions deserve mention: One is Kuipers’ (1993) study of Weyewa divination. In this community in eastern Indonesia, professional diviners perform traditional “words,” or recitations of ancestral wisdom comprised of constructed dialogue that are framed by what

Kuipers calls “locutive” verbs –special lexical forms dedicated to reported speech. These performances channel voices of spirits possibly behind various calamities, serving to identify the responsible parties, and discover how they may be placated by holding dialogues with them. As ceremonies move from divining a calamity’s spiritual source to prescribing a traditional propitiation, the diviner’s reported speech employs fewer and fewer locutives, though it is still understood as representing the ancestors’ words. The diviner’s voice eventually blends seamlessly with that of the channeled “words” of placation and blessing, indexing consensus or unanimity on the part of the ancestral tradition, as opposed to the uncertainty characteristic of the earlier stages in the ceremony. There is thus a gradient in the reliability of knowledge claims arising out of ritual speech, signaled through the particular form of its constructed dialogue.

A similar merging of voices is found in Lempert’s (2008) study examining represented discourse in diasporic performances of Tibetan Buddhist debate. In this case, monks performing traditional debates where a “challenger” presses a “defendant” on points of authoritative Buddhist doctrine take on an impersonal “voice of tradition” by using a quotative clitic (-s) to mark the boundary of represented speech. If debating skillfully, this would indicate a posture of fidelity or obedience to the tradition, indexing the debater’s expert knowledge of doctrine, and even lending an “aura of historical objectivity and representational naturalness” to the propositions expressed (263-264). Interestingly though, in the case of the monks Lempert observed, who were relatively less expert in the tradition by virtue of living in exile – and, what is more, performing in front of Lempert’s videocamera, the “bright light of cultural objectification” (264) – the attempts to invoke tradition proved strained. For instance, over the course of the monks’ faltering and dysfluent interchange, even semantically empty discourse

markers received the quotative clitic. Lempert explains this compensatory strategy as an effort to mark the event as authentic:

If we consider this flagging competence together with the objectifying environment I unwittingly helped create, it would appear that the monks strenuously invoke tradition in a context where their command of it seems both questioned and questionable. They merge their voice with the voice of tradition in a bid to reflexively stamp the real-time event-in-progress as canonical, a token of a type. (Lempert, 2008: 265)

By subsuming the voice of the animator into the voice of tradition, monks engaging in ritual debate are able to “distress” (as in “to distress a piece of furniture”) their discourse, indexing it as traditional, or “conspicuously past.”

Baron (2004) offers another compelling example of the power of drawing on the divine voice in the evangelical Protestant Tzotzil community of Chiapas, Mexico. She analyzes the narrative of an indigenous woman named Lucía who invokes God in a bid to legitimize certain actions she has taken, actions which, in the social structure of Tzotzil society would normally be prohibited for her as a female. In her story Lucía recounts how, defying various social conventions, she arranged a marriage for her son by declaring God’s favorable judgment on her plans to the village elders (rather than asking them to intervene), and then praying to God together with the bride’s parents as a way of announcing to them the nuptial arrangement (rather than asking their permission, which might not have been granted given the son’s desire to marry the younger daughter while the older remained unmarried). Her invoking and addressing God secures her a form of agency which levels the hierarchical power structure of her male-dominated community: by “creat[ing] the illusion that God is in fact present; he becomes an addressee or an invisible companion whose spoken presence has the ability to transform circumstances absolutely” (275). Interesting in this case is the fact that Lucía never animates God’s voice directly, but merely constructs dialogue (or perhaps, “constructs a dialogue”) with

him through prayer, suggesting his imminence and his approval of her message even without his verbal confirmation.

God's voice clearly resounds, however, in Besnier's (1994) account of the construction of pastoral authority in sermons delivered by preachers in the Nukulaelae Atoll (Polynesia). These sermons, in which specially commissioned lay preachers take on the divine voice, temporarily arrogating to themselves great authority over their congregations, represent exceptional moments in the otherwise communal, egalitarian social life of the Nukulaelae. Three formal qualities of the sermons foreground the preacher's powerful status: his (or on rare occasion, her) use of singular first and second-person pronouns which highlight the individual (I, preacher; you, parishioner) as the basic social unit, instead of the vastly more common inclusive dual pronouns (i.e. "we [two]"); alternations in voice quality between a normal voice and a strident, expressive one; and, the use of constructed dialogue where the preacher quotes from Scripture. In many instances, these episodes of represented discourse are unmarked by any quotative prefaces or reported speech markers, creating a context in which "[t]he voice of the preacher and the voice of divine authority are essentially blurred" (357), an ambiguity that has parallels in Kuipers' (1993) and Du Bois' (1986) studies of ritual divination.

The question of "whose voice is whose" arises in the conversation I analyze here as well, albeit in a very different context. And while talk of the supernatural also comprises a core component in Timothy Keller's interview with Martin Bashir, it would be misleading to speak of the interview as an example of "religious discourse" in the same category as ritual divination or even sermons. The two men in conversation are speaking *about* religion, from two different perspectives, one religious, and one not. Additionally, they are sitting in front of an audience which likely includes a mix of the two positions. Yet this configuration presents its own,

interesting epistemic landscape in which arguments for and against faith may be developed.

Whose voices *are* appropriate sources of expertise or authority under such circumstances? And how are such voices to be incorporated?

3.4 The study

The conversation I analyze between pastor Timothy Keller and journalist Martin Bashir took place at Columbia University in 2008 as part of a series of talks sponsored across the country by a non-profit organization called “The Veritas Forum.” Veritas, founded by students, faculty, and chaplains at Harvard University in 1992, has organized a mix of more than 2,000 talks, debates, and panel discussions on American university campuses to date, centered on questions of worldview, and featuring a speaker of some Christian persuasion, often with another (or others) from different theological backgrounds (“What is Veritas?”, 2017). The organization draws well-known public intellectuals: past presenters include New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, Princeton philosopher Peter Singer, novelist Marilynne Robinson, cultural critic Christopher Hitchens, and National Institutes of Health director Francis Collins, as just a few examples.

At the time of the interview, Keller had recently published what quickly would become a New York Times bestseller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (2008). This modern work of apologetics (or “defense of the faith”) served as the basis for several of the questions Bashir asked during their conversation. Bashir is an award-winning journalist and filmmaker who has worked for national networks such as NBC and ABC news, as well as the BBC in the UK. I transcribed the 30-minute conversation, where the two men were seated on

stage facing each other, from video footage available through the Veritas Forum website, footage still available as of this writing (see “Reason for God?”, 2017).

One reason this conversation merits attention from the standpoint of epistemic analysis resides in the potential clash it sets up between what van Dijk (2012) would call the two different “knowledge communities,” or what Porter (1986) labels “discourse communities,” represented in the interaction: that is, communities with agreed upon criteria or standards of reasoning where members share “assumptions about what objects are appropriate for examination and discussion, what operating functions are performed on those objects, what constitutes evidence and validity and what formal conventions are followed” (Porter 1986: 39). As is typical of any instance of cross-creedal communication, we shall see that Keller and Bashir operate with different premises concerning the nature of truth, knowledge, and how to interpret (religious) history.

Interestingly, though, a major resource Keller draws upon in marshaling his case are the ideas and voices of respected, often secular thinkers. In this, Keller diverges sharply in his epistemological bases from other religious figures and individuals described in previous studies of Christian religious discourse. Already mentioned in Chapter One, Harding’s (1987) analysis of the “language of conversion” also deals with epistemicity indirectly via its exposition of Biblical intertextuality in fundamentalist Christian proselytism. Examining the talk of Fundamental Baptist preacher Reverend Cantrell, Harding concludes that the rhetoric of “witnessing” enlists the (unsaved) listener through various strategies, all of which are designed to “insinuate” the believer’s “mode of interpretation into the mind” of the unbeliever (169). The epistemological foundation for these strategies is the Bible, whose stories are either the source of those Cantrell tells Harding or else the hermeneutic lens through which he interprets his own life’s narrative to her.

Likewise, Shoaps (2002) explores discursive resources employed by Pentecostal worshipers to maintain an undercurrent of spontaneity and personal involvement in their spiritual practice despite the need to incorporate authoritative, immutable, prior texts (e.g., Scripture, hymns), a different context from Harding, but which features a familiar blend of epistemics and intertextuality. For the believers Shoaps studied, prior texts must be explicitly reinterpreted, usually by the pastor, to demonstrate that they have been adequately re-appropriated, giving the a-contextual, timeless (and authorless) quality of certain religious texts (e.g., songs) a new deictic center, if not a new co-author. As in Harding's case, however, the Holy Scriptures remain the intertextual foundation or *grounds* from which any reinterpretation can arise: Any new message, whether homiletic or coming in the context of worship, must trace its roots back to an agreed upon source of wisdom.

Given the tendency of Christian discourse to reference supernatural sources of knowledge such as the Holy Spirit or the inspired Scriptures as a basis for understanding, one might predict a degree of dissonance, or perhaps more bluntly, a train wreck of incommensurable modes of argumentation when devout apologist meets secular skeptic. Johnstone's (1986) stunning account of just such a breakdown between a western journalist and the Ayatollah Khomeini discussing the (then recent) Iranian revolution provides a clear precedent, the clash of worldviews being exacerbated in that case by dramatically different styles of expression. However, in the interview between Keller and Bashir, a facile dichotomy of "faith vs. reason" never materializes.

3.5 Believe it or not: The voices of faith

To briefly recap: the goal of this chapter is to show how a Christian minister, in a public interview with a journalist, employs constructed dialogue to manage the epistemic demands of defending his faith to a skeptical audience. Through an examination of pastor Timothy Keller's use of constructed dialogue to animate the voices of various intellectuals and public figures, I show how this strategy creates an immediacy to his arguments which would otherwise not obtain, as well as lending Keller's own words a credibility he might not otherwise have achieved.

In this section, I discuss the three main functions of constructed dialogue which appear in Keller's talk. The sum total of these discursive maneuvers may be interpreted as working toward the end of establishing Keller's credibility, and, by extension, that of religious belief. The first I have labeled "enlisting allied voices," in which Keller animates the talk of respected moral or intellectual figures whose religious worldviews align with his own, thereby appropriating some of their cultural and ethical capital. In contrast, the second function, which I call "appropriating opposing voices," paradoxically involves Keller constructing dialogue from secular, sometimes anti-religious thinkers in a kind of discursive jujitsu which ends up furthering Keller's arguments in favor of religious belief.

Herein lies a different strategy for establishing credibility: Keller animates reputable secular thinkers who concede weaknesses in their own worldviews, or else strengths in Keller's. If the allied voices Keller borrows serve to show that his views are not isolated, personal interpretations of Christianity, then these opposing voices demonstrate his engagement with the most sophisticated critiques of his own position.

Finally, I discuss Keller’s technique of “creating an ambiguous voice,” where the formal features which normally signal clear shifts into constructed dialogue have disappeared, leaving an (advantageous) uncertainty about whether or not the arguments being advanced originate with Keller or the thinker he had most recently referenced.

3.5.1 Enlisting allied voices

In the following excerpt (A)⁸, journalist Martin Bashir has been pressing Timothy Keller on the credibility of faith given the terrible history of crimes perpetrated by religious believers, having cited violence between Israelis and Palestinians as well as Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (the “two examples” referenced in line 2). In lines 5-6, Keller references a previous comment Bashir made emphasizing the egregious behavior of many Christians. As his response unfolds, Keller’s argument hinges on a reconstructed pronouncement of Jesus, and concludes with an emphatic injunction from Martin Luther King, Jr. Here we see how Keller takes on the voices of two figures aligned with his message to reinforce the legitimacy of his arguments:

(A)

1	Bashir:	I’m looking at the church and
2		I’ve just given you two examples...
3		you’d be hard-pressed to deny
4		that those are pretty appalling examples for so-called...religious faith
5	Keller:	Of course I agreed more with you the first time you said it
6		that is that th- the behavior of Christians is a great...
7		no-it’s a great argument against the truth of Christianity
8		⌈I don’t agree with you,
9		when you sa:y uh
10		look there’s the Protestants and there’s the Catholics
11		and they’re killing each other in Northern Ireland

⁸ Transcription conventions appear in Appendix 1.

12 or they have.. uh ...and
 13 th-you háve to say that religion has poisoned that situation
 14 but.. m-at the heart of Christianity is a man dying on the cross...
 15 and he's praying for his enemies..
 16 and when his ^Γfollowers get out their swords,
 17 he says **PUT them away,**
 18 **this is not what I'm about.**
 19 Now you can say...
 20 you ^lHAVE to say that Protestants and Catholics
 21 that are killing each other in the name of Christ..
 22 have no idea... what Christianity's about
 23 you ^lháve to ^lsàý that
 24 Me-me I'm ^Γnot talking about some abstract theological esote-
 25 I'm ^Γnot pulling out some abstract kind of doctrine here on you.
 26 I'm talking about something ^lèverybody in the ^lwórlð knows is the heart of
 27 Christianity.
 28 and that's what Martin Luther King Jr. was doing
 29 he was saying
 30 **if you get even in touçh with real Christianity**
 31 **you ^lCAN't do this sort of thing.**
 32 So the ánswer to...violence [...]

We see in this example two different voices Keller takes on in rebuffing Bashir's implied claim that religion leads to violence. Though he overtly disagrees with Bashir starting in line 8 ("I don't agree with you..."), Keller does not produce evidence for his counterclaim until a miniature narrative he tells in the historical present, starting in line 14, and culminating with constructed dialogue attributed to Jesus. Referring to swords which his disciples have drawn to fight their enemies, "he says PUT them away/ this is not what I'm about" (lines 17-18).

Several points may be made with reference to the epistemic work accomplished in this fleeting moment of constructed dialogue. First, Keller has employed the voice of Christ to introduce, simultaneously, his key evidence and claim. The claim, which counters Bashir's, is that Christianity properly understood does not promote violence ("this is not what I'm about," line 18). The evidence should be incontrovertible: it is, after all, the central figure of the faith and normative standard for Christian behavior who emphasizes restraint in this brief exhortation.

Importantly, both claim and evidence reach Bashir and the audience in the voice of Christ which Keller has taken on.

Various formal features of these two lines create the dramatic, rhetorical effect of the quote. The historical present quotative “he says” (line 17) introduces the constructed dialogue and this tense is maintained throughout Jesus’ brief pronouncement. As Schiffrin (1981: 58) notes:

[Historical Present] with direct quotes increases the immediacy of an utterance which occurred in the past by allowing the speaker to perform that talk in its original form, as if it were occurring at the present moment... It is through a combination of deictic and structural changes that direct quotes have this effect: the narrative framework replaces the situation of speaking as the central reference point—becoming the locus for time, place, and person indicators, as well as the arena within which speech acts are performed.

The combination of this quotative verb and Keller’s emphasis on “PUT” in line 17 (“he says PUT them away”) demarcates Jesus’ voice from his own, one of several prosodic strategies employed throughout the conversation to draw in other voices. As the constructed dialogue concludes and the deictic center of the speech event shifts back to the onstage interview, Keller signals this new phase with the discourse marker “now” (line 19, “Now you can say...”), delineating his current turn from the constructed dialogue begun two lines earlier. “Now” is a marker which “emphasize[s] the sequential nature of a discourse whose cumulative nature is important for the establishment of a particular point” (Schiffrin, 1987: 238), but also maintains an intuitive connection with the deictic temporal adverb “now,” as argued by Schourup (2011), accentuating the chronological frame shift between Jesus’ speech and Keller’s.

Similarly, Keller reinforces his argument about the fundamental incompatibility of Christianity and violence by animating the voice of Martin Luther King, Jr. in a second instance of constructed dialogue several lines later: “he was saying / if you even get in touch with réal

Christianity / you ^lCAN't do this sort of thing" (lines 29-31). As with the first example, King's voice is here transmitted in the historical present, delivered with emphatic prosody, bookended by a quotative verb ("he was saying," line 29) and a discourse marker ("So," line 32) which shifts the argument back into Keller's own voice. Though quite different, both King and Jesus represent respected moral figures (see Fuller [2001] for more on Americans' view of Jesus as a venerated moral, though not divine, teacher) seen as aligned with Keller's position, and who are enlisted to bolster the force of his argument through constructed dialogue. Here, and throughout this analysis, it is noteworthy that we are not merely dealing with *references* or *allusions* to authoritative figures with ethical cachet, but rather a particular kind of intertextual phenomenon whereby the speaker draws on parties not present in the conversation, "taking on" their voices (Tannen, 2009) – momentarily borrowing their personas – to advance his arguments.

One final, allied voice introduced into Keller's conversation with Bashir is noteworthy: the Bible. In his thirty-minute conversation with Bashir, Keller quotes from the Bible only once, citing a few verses which appear in stark relief against the backdrop of intertextuality which Keller favors far more frequently, that of academic writing/argumentation. The preference makes sense, however, if one considers the Christian scriptures to have less symbolic capital than contemporary intellectuals for the secular audience. Arguing from the Bible could easily be seen as begging the question of faith's reasonableness: if one can only manage to argue from one's holy scriptures in defense of faith, how robust can faith be?

In the following example, we see how Keller's lone scriptural reference, when recontextualized in a stretch of constructed dialogue, carries the endorsement of a trusted moral

authority, once again MLK. In (B), which occurs slightly after the exchange analyzed above, Keller is still responding to the question of Christian complicity in violence. He again takes on MLK's voice to clarify the authentic Christian position, which he opposes to a proposal Bashir previously attributed to Christopher Hitchens, to abandon religion. In line 14, "Amos" refers to the Old Testament prophetic book of Amos, from which MLK quotes (through the voice of

Keller):

(B)

1 Keller: And the perfect example of this is Martin Luther King Jr
2 Martin Luther King Jr looks out at a racist South
3 and he sees to a great degree
4 all these white
5 Christian believers
6 uh...oppressing his people.
7 So what does he say to them.
8 does he say what Christopher Hitchens says
9 and that is
10 **let's get more-let's get less religious.**
11 **Let's stop going to church let's admit the fact that**
12 **you know... everything is relative cuz there really is no God?**
13 No: what he actually says is
14 **let justice roll down like waters and...**
15 **righteousness like a mighty stream**
16 which is Amos...
17 and what he's doing is
18 he's say-he's saying
19 **what you need is not less religion but real true Christianity.**

This is no simple "Bible thumping": in Goffmanian terms, Keller has animated Martin Luther King Jr., who in turn has (according to Keller) animated the prophet Amos in this multi-layered segment of constructed dialogue. King himself had evoked the Hebrew prophet indirectly in his 1963 "Dream" speech:

We cannot be satisfied so long as the Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and the Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied and will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.
(King, 1968)⁹

Keller's response to the charge that Christianity has promoted violence is to take on the voice of a well-known religious and civic leader who himself cites Scripture as he encourages his followers facing resistance from what Keller describes as "all these White/Christian believers/ uhh...oppressing his people" (lines 4-6). That is, instead of quoting the Bible directly, Keller animates speech from a figure who, unlike himself, has an established, respected moral legacy. Thus, what is perhaps the greatest "intertextual liability" of Keller's conversation with Bashir is bolstered by the character of the original speaker, MLK. Keller is able to leverage the original animation by MLK, which had accomplished the work of making Amos' exhortation (lines 14-15: "let justice roll down like waters and.../ righteousness like a mighty stream") relevant to 20th century American racism, in the service of his current point in the interview. Namely, Amos' exhortation applies more generally to all situations of injustice, and the response to such situations is emphatically not, as lines 10-12 suggest, to stop going to church and "admit the fact that you know... everything is relative 'cuz there really is no God."

In the foregoing examples we have seen how argumentative claims may be bolstered when one speaker incorporates supporting voices into his own (monologic) speech through constructed dialogue. Taking on voices allows for both propositions and the evidence supporting those propositions to appear to be introduced by other, more trustworthy speakers. Additionally,

⁹ The Biblical verse alluded to is Amos 5:24: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (New King James Version). The verse itself is pregnant with intertextual resonance to King's situation in the 1960s, surrounded by complacent (and, often enough, complicit) white churches in the South: in the book of Amos, these are God's words to the people of Israel which promise his judgment on their false religiosity.

it functions to preempt skepticism when a questionable source of evidence (i.e., the Bible) is cited, since the citation itself is at a remove from the speaker, belonging rather to a more credible interpreter. Yet constructed dialogue's epistemic reach extends further still, not merely preempting skepticism, but in fact recruiting the skeptical thinker to strengthen the believer's claim.

3.5.2 Appropriating opposing voices

Not only does Keller draw on allied voices in defending the faith, but he also appropriates supporting arguments taken from secular, if not anti-religious thinkers as well. And, as in the former case, the figures he incorporates into his own response are made to speak for themselves. In (C), he appeals to one of these unexpected defenders while taking a different approach to the challenge of Christian duplicity. Responding to Bashir's argument (which references atheist cultural critic Christopher Hitchens) Keller eventually takes on the voice of Mark Lilla, a Columbia University professor who had recently participated in another Veritas Forum event in which Keller had also taken part. Taking on Lilla's voice, Keller constructs dialogue to show how even a thoughtful critic acknowledges strengths in the Christian faith:

(C)

- 1 Bashir: Christopher Hitchens in his book God Is Not Great makes the
2 point.
3 that religious FAITH as evidenced by ordinary followers
4 and I quote
5 **is the SINGLE strongest proof that there is no God.**
6 That actually, the behavior of so-called Christians
7 followers of Christ
8 has been so reprehensible over the centuries
9 that it in and of itself.deNIES the very existence of this God of LOVE
10 that you talk about in your book
11 Keller: Mm-hmm

12 Bashir: How do you respond to that?
 13 Keller: Well he's *right* that it's actually..
 14 umm..
 15 the greatest argument against the the
 16 truth of Christianity.
 17 He's absolutely right
 18 I would say of all the..objections..it's the strongest one.
 19 However, um.
 20 I am so delighted that-
 21 that some of you were here two weeks ago when we did uh
 22 the ve the first part of the Veritas Forum with
 23 uh Andy Delbanco and Mark Lilla.
 24 Mark Lilla um. who is uh
 25 quite critical of the church.
 26 Mark Lilla points out...
 27 that Christianity has got self-corrective...
 28 uh...resources in it...that are extremely strong.
 29 Uh and you see in the Óld Testament prophets
 30 the Old Testament prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures are álways criticizing
 31 religion.
 32 Jésus is àlways criticizing the religious leaders and the religion of the day.
 33 He sees the móralism,
 34 he sees the uh the hypócrisy,
 35 he sees the bígotry he sees the opprèssion.
 36 (inhales) A:nd Mark Lilla says... the uhm...
 37 **you-you can criticize Christianity...**
 38 **until you begin to realize that criti-Christianity has sélf-critical resources**
 39 **way beyond your ability to criticize.**

Keller here borrows the voice of Mark Lilla, an outspoken critic of the church, to deflect a criticism of the very same institution: that the behavior of Christians invalidates the faith they claim. Appropriating Lilla's bona fides as both academic and skeptic, Keller maintains that Christianity is intrinsically self-corrective, and so much so that it "has sélf-critical resources way/beyond your ability to criticize" (lines 38-39).

Again, we see in this example Keller's preference for constructed dialogue over merely referencing an outside source. On one level, it could be argued that he repeats himself, comparing lines 26-28 ("Mark Lilla points out.../that Chrístianity has got self-corrective.../uh

...resources in it...that are extremely strong”) to lines 37-39 (“...Mark Lilla says...the uhm.../you-you can criticize Christianity.../until you begin to realize that criti-Christianity has self-critical resources way/beyond your ability to criticize”). Yet despite their roughly equivalent meanings, these arguments function quite differently. In the first case, Keller cites a secular thinker critical of institutional religion, a move which might surprise the educated audience at Columbia University given the positive opinion of Christianity then attributed to Lilla. The voice of the argument, though, clearly remains Keller’s own: the quotative phrase “Mark Lilla points out...that” (line 26) can only introduce indirect discourse, as opposed to a direct quotation.

The second iteration of this argument employs constructed dialogue. In line 37 (you-you can criticize Christianity...), Keller’s pitch rises at the onset of the word “criticize” and has dropped again by the end of “Christianity” to such an extent that this intonational unit (line 37) emanates from Lilla’s voice as opposed Keller’s, whose steady pitch up until that point provides a backdrop. Lines 37-39 are filled with what Bakhtin (1984: 196-197) calls a hostile “sideward glance” at potential contrary voices, both in their prosody and meaning: “you begin to realize” presupposes the skeptic has been ignorant, and “way beyond your ability” presumes the inferiority of the skeptic’s critique. To continue in Bakhtinian terms, we are not dealing with mere propositional content that Keller has appropriated in a monologic paraphrase, but rather with the double-voiced portrayal of a symbolically important intellectual through which Keller’s own message is refracted.

In appropriating an opposing voice, the fact that Keller frames Lilla’s argument as a conversational move is rhetorically significant as its immediacy is greatly increased. Clark and Gerrig (1990) describe this effect of direct quotations as “engrossment”: the speaker intends for

the audience “to experience part of what it would be like to hear” the original, quoted party (793). In the present case, the deictic ambiguity of “you” is intensified by virtue of its situation in a conversational turn, as opposed to an abstract, monologic argument. If conversational framing is key to this ambiguity, and phonological cues are integral to the conversational framing, then this small example appears to support Gunthner’s (1999) characterization of phonological adaptations as the primary vehicle for heteroglossia in everyday conversation.

In addition to indexing the presence of another voice, though, phonological modulations also serve as contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982), influencing the meaning of that voice’s utterance. In Keller’s case, not only do the voices he takes on articulate (and putatively endorse) his arguments on a propositional level, they also do so on an affective or evaluative level by expressing emotion or certainty. We have already seen constructed dialogue accomplishing both before; in (A) for example, Keller takes on Jesus’ voice (the “he” of line 17) telling his disciples to put away their swords (i.e., not to resist those who would capture him):

17 he says **PUT them away,**
18 **this is not what I’m about**

Here the figure of Jesus not only voices a non-violent position, but does so emphatically, with word stress on “PUT” (line 17). This voicing gives the impression that the actual, historical Jesus not only agrees with Keller’s point about Christianity’s aversion to violence, but that he agrees strongly. That is, in addition to being cast as the author and principal of the message in this instance, Jesus is also positioned as responsible for the metamessage simultaneously conveyed (something like “I thoroughly disapprove”), or what Ingridis and Aronsson (2014:72) term “reported affect.” If we see constructed dialogue as the creation of miniature “dramas” in conversation (Tannen, 1986), then this phonological embellishment can be understood to render

the moment more vivid, and to increase interpersonal involvement between speaker and audience.

The same process occurs in a second example of appropriating an opposing voice. In (D), we see how taking on the voice of another enables Keller to borrow not merely the personas of the figures he voices, but also to animate them, prosodically, in such a way as to emphasize key concepts and evaluative stances. His polyphonic performance communicates both the fact *that* respected intellectuals hold certain positions (consonant with his own) and simultaneously *how* they hold these positions with particular stances which accord well with his rhetorical goals. As this example begins, Bashir is summarizing an argument of the atheist French philosopher Michel Onfray as he interrogates Keller about the possibility of psycho-pathology in religious believers. In response, Keller takes on the voices of both allied and opposing thinkers (Paul Vitz and Thomas Nagel, respectively) as he answers Bashir:

(D)

1 Bashir: the point that Michel Onfray's making is that.
2 atheism is actually an intellectually
3 and psychologically clearer [position] to be in
4 Keller: [right]
5 Bashir: and a healthier position because
6 you're NOT projecting...
7 some kind of image of God..
8 out of your own circumstances
9 into your head
10 into the heavenly place
11 or wherever you imagine him [to be]
12 Keller: [Well le]t's see...
13 I- two responses
14 and I don't know...
15 I don't know how adequate everybody will think they are...
16 Paul Vitz who used to teach at NYU
17 I believe he's retired now...
18 uh said
19 I y'know in one of his books he said uh...

20 **the idea that people *need* to believe in God.**
 21 **they have a psychological need to believe in God**
 22 **always works another way and that is...**
 23 **there *surely* are people who**
 24 **psychologically need not to believe in *God***
 25 **there's all *kinds* of reasons why people *don't* want there to be a God**
 26 and Thomas Nagel at NYU wrote a book uh
 27 y'know he's a great philosopher
 28 he wrote a book called The Last Word in which he admitted...
 29 >he says<
 30 **I *don't* want there to be a God...**
 31 >he says<
 32 **I I'm coming right out of the closet and admitting that**
 33 **though I *try* my best to be objective**
 34 **I've got all kinds of personal reasons why I wouldn't want that to be *true*...**
 35 **Y'know I want to be able to make my own decisions**
 36 **I don't want to have to submit?...**
 37 and so
 38 Paul Vitz's whole point is
 39 [...]

Focusing first on Keller's animation of psychologist Paul Vitz, what is striking in this example is how taking on the voice of a scholar not only confers epistemic authority on his argument, but also allows Keller to emphasize certain key concepts relevant to his rhetorical objectives. That is, just as Keller suggests that Vitz is responsible for the content - the words - of the argument, so too he suggests that Vitz is responsible for the meta-content. For example, in line 23 ("there *surely* are people who"), the word "surely" (itself an evidential marker) is pronounced with high pitch and emphatic stress; "*kinds*" and "*don't*" also receive emphatic stress in line 25 ("there's all *kinds* of reasons why people *don't* want there to be a God"). These paralinguistic features contribute a metamessage of certainty to the arguments expressed, a certainty for which Keller, as animator, is responsible.

Similar contextualization cues accompany the voice of philosopher Thomas Nagel, a skeptical figure who appears in lines 30-37. For example, line 30 ("I *don't* want there to be a

God...”) is a verbatim quotation from Nagel’s book (1997:130), but one which is given new emphasis (on the word “don’t”) in Keller’s recontextualization. The same holds for line 33 (“though I *try* my best to be objective”), whose stress on the word “try” suggests Nagel’s sense of futility in attempting to adopt a neutral perspective. Lexically, too, Keller’s constructed dialogue conditions Nagel’s voice. To “come out of the closet” and “admit” something (line 32) acknowledges its being unfashionable, or perhaps even shameful. Given the putative skeptical commitment to objectivity, reason, and a fair balancing of evidence, for Nagel to admit that he has an underlying bias would be damaging to his case. In this case, appropriating his voice has enabled Keller to draw attention to problematic aspects of the skeptical position.

In sum, this section has demonstrated how constructed dialogue can be used as a conversational resource to appropriate arguments drawn from individuals with opposing positions. Additionally, phonological markers such as pitch contours and stress serve not only to demarcate moments of constructed dialogue from monologic speech, but also to reinforce, as contextualization cues, the epistemic work being accomplished.

3.5.3 Creating an ambiguous voice

I would like to explore, finally, a strategy of Keller’s somewhat at odds with the foregoing phenomena. Until now in the analysis of constructed dialogue I have maintained, following Gunthner (1999), that phonological cues enable the neat separation of voices in Keller’s speech. Significant changes in intonational contour relative to preceding turns, often immediately following quotative verbs, have served as indicators of new voices being introduced. Yet for all Keller’s clear-cut shifts into another’s voice, there are instances where the shift back to his own remains quite nebulous. There is occasionally what one might call a

“polyphonic residue” that lingers, clouding the picture of exactly whose words are being spoken – a phenomenon that I argue, again, furthers Keller’s situated conversational interests.

The first example comes in response to this question Martin Bashir asks on the cultural relativity of religious belief:

Bashir: Isn’t it true that
 the notion of God is simply a projection
 of our own cultural circumstances.
 For example...if I
 if you were brought up in Pakistan,
 you might well call yourself a Muslim as my parents were...
 if you were brought up in India, you might call yourself a Hindu or a Sikh

I have omitted the beginning of Keller’s lengthy reply, returning to the transcript at the point where he references a book, *Rumor of Angels*, by Peter Berger (1969) which allegedly addresses this argument (“he” refers to Berger). Noticeable about this example is the ambiguity of whose voice is whose (Keller’s or Berger’s?) at various points:

(G)

1 Keller: now here’s what he s-says then..
2 he says **ónce you decide that**
3 **áll beliefs are.. to a grèat degree socially constructed**
4 **you have to realize that *that* belief... must be...**
5 **not immune to what you just said...**
6 that is... **thát belief must be to a great degree socially constructed...**
7 **I’m an academic**
8 he was saying
9 **I live in a certain uh miliéu**
10 **I’ve got all kinds of other péople that I admire and respèct that I---yy**
11 so he says
12 as ^r*soon* as you realize
13 **that the idea that all views are relative it’s a**
14 **would álso be relative**
15 **that áll views are socially constructed is àlso s-socially constructed,**
16 **we’re back to square óne.**
17 **we’re ^l*chastened*...**
18 **we now know of course, yes, uh we’ve gotta be careful**
19 **it’s *hard* to find the truth**
20 **but the fact is we’re ^rbáck to square òne**

21 **we still have to decide which of all these competing claims...**
22 **is more reasonable than any óther**
23 **and so the-we may not be as *haughty* now,**
24 **but we stíll have to make that decision**

As with previous examples, establishing that Keller has shifted to the skeptic’s voice is relatively straightforward. While phonological features remain ambiguous around line 2, (the semantically logical location, after the quotative verb – “he says ónce you decide that”), one finds clues in deictic markers that Berger’s voice has been integrated. For example, in lines 7, 9-10, the first-person pronoun is explicitly interpreted to refer to Berger. The question is: after line 11 (“so he says”), does Keller have another turn in the sequence in which he is the undisputed author, animator, and principal? Prosodically, and in terms of voice quality, there are no hints that the constructed dialogue has ended at any point from lines 12-24 (Keller’s turn continues after line 24, but the quoted section is enough to suit present purposes). Lexically, no further shifts or re-centerings are encoded – at least not explicitly (e.g., no more quotative verbs, etc.). Indeed, little else seems noteworthy about the rest of the constructed dialogue in terms of formal and functional features; nothing that has not been already said. This would mean that one should hear the rest of the passage as Berger’s voice.

However, taking account of the exchanges up to this point in the interview, lines 17 and 20-21 introduce a measure of dissonance. It was Keller who had originally used the expression being “chastened,” with the same emphatic intonation not long before in a similar context of discussing the difficulty of knowing with certainty, with no reference to Berger (see line 17 in (G) above, and line 1 in (H) below). Further, the admonition in lines 21-22 in (G) (“we still have to decide which of all / these competing claims.. is more reasonable than any óther”) sounds

vaguely familiar when compared to lines 2-3, 5 and 7-9 in the chronologically earlier excerpt

(H):

1 Keller: you have to in a *ji- chastened* way move ahead...
2 and see these different positions that people have
3 and you have to decide which one's better.
4 knowing you can never absolutely prove...uh...
5 one over the other
6 but knowing some make more sense than others...
7 and that is a choice you have to make.
8 you have to decide which of these various positions about God or non-belief in
9 God make more sense?
10 [...]

If we consider the ideas of being intellectually “chastened” as well as needing to choose between alternative worldviews without perfect certainty as Keller’s own, it would appear that Berger’s voice in (G) has subsequently served to endorse these positions. In Fairclough’s (1992a) terms, we can say that Keller’s voice has *merged* with that of Berger, introducing an ambivalence as to the source of the wording. Of course, Keller’s overarching aim in drawing upon various intellectuals throughout has been to show how his own reasoning is consonant with that of respected thinkers. What is different about this example, though, is that Berger’s constructed voice has “recycled” (Tannen, 2006) a previous argument of Keller’s, employing nearly identical phraseology. The intertextual link suggests an overarching coherence in Keller’s message, one which is potentially (if vaguely) traceable to a respected sociologist of religion. This polyphonic residue, I argue, confers a more diffuse or general sense of credibility than in previous instances where constructed dialogue was more clearly demarcated. In the epistemic landscape of Keller’s interview with Bashir, the ambiguous principalship which Keller creates around his own ideas upgrades their legitimacy in ways which his own rhetorical style could not accomplish.

3.6 Conclusion

The task of examining epistemics specifically as a feature of religious discourse deserves increasing attention given religion's nature, as Watt (2012) so vividly puts it, to “mingle and collide” with other cultural forms and worldviews. The foregoing analysis has taken a few very modest first steps in pursuing such an agenda, in this case by seeking to elucidate the means by which a religious figure employs a particular intertextual device – constructed dialogue – to manage epistemological considerations with the goal of presenting his faith as meeting the epistemic criteria or standards of a particular (skeptical) discourse community. I have demonstrated how Pastor Timothy Keller employs constructed dialogue in three different ways, each of which contributes uniquely to the overall project of bolstering his credibility, while also increasing conversational involvement. First, Keller borrows voices of thinkers and historical figures aligned with his own positions, appropriating their ethical or intellectual cachet. He also, however, animates respected figures known to have critical views of religion. In doing so, Keller shows not only that he is conversant with the most sophisticated forms of counterargument, but also *demonstrates* for his audience the shortcomings of those positions in the critics' “own” voices. In a sense, Keller's various voicings constitute a sort of embodied “appeal to authority” in the same family of appeals to experts which Wuthnow (2012: 298) classifies as a discursive strategy in constructing the reasonableness of religious faith. In the case of skeptical academics, it is their very agnosticism which lends credence to anything positive they may have to say (through Keller) about Christian belief.

Finally, and more subtly, the polyphonic residue emerging from Keller's interweaving of his own arguments among those of the thinkers he animates makes the attribution of certain ideas ambiguous, but in such a way as to bolster their overall credibility by association with more

established thinkers. Recycling key expressions at a later point in the conversation in the voice of an outside “expert” implied that Keller’s original use of these concepts was at least consonant with, if not endorsed by this authoritative figure.

Throughout his interview, we have seen, Keller’s use of constructed dialogue figuratively brings the interlocutor and audience face to face with renowned thinkers who challenge various assumptions dear to skeptics. Phonological modulation, including conversational pitch and stress, as well as deictic terms such as “you,” whose nebulous reference might include the audience, combine to create a sense of immediacy and involvement. These contextualization cues additionally serve to reinforce the evidential force of the claims Keller makes through the figures he animates. They often convey certainty or conviction, suggesting that the individuals Keller animates are not only aligned, but *strongly* aligned with his arguments.

In the burgeoning pluralism of late modernity, individuals with deeply divergent perspectives on everything from the origins of the universe to the place of faith in politics interact with unprecedented – and yet what seems to most of us, probably – unremarkable regularity. Such societal shifts imply new foci for the study of religious discourse: while the traditional preoccupation with talk within a single faith community remains important, research in religious language must increasingly reckon with “cross-creedal communication,” that between people of different faiths, or no faith at all.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PASTOR IN THE PEW

A sermon is, by nature, a monologic genre, whereby no response from the listeners is expected or would be deemed appropriate. The preacher is able to capitalize on this inherent quality in order to draw his listeners into a position of complicity with his point of view.

Howard-Malverde (1998: 581)

Come now, and let us reason together.

Isaiah 1:18

4.1 Introduction

As evidenced in the previous chapter, Keller's constructed dialogue takes on various forms, serving distinct ends, in building a case for faith during a journalistic interview. The same holds true of his use of constructed dialogue in his Sunday preaching, the second context this study examines. In his sermons, Keller "takes on the voices" (as Tannen [2009] describes it) of myriad Biblical figures as well as authors and thinkers ranging from Dostoevsky and C.S. Lewis to Camus and Freud. Also animated are generic voices which summarize different theological positions, such as the voice of moral self-righteousness, one which Keller frequently denounces as a false version of the faith (constructed dialogue is in bold throughout the chapter):

...religion and morality says
**If you work hard,
and you're really good,
and you
y'know
obey the ten commandments,
and you read the Bible
and you m-pray
God'll
y'know
then God'll have to take you to heaven.**

Indeed, Keller employs a wide variety of forms of constructed dialogue from across the taxonomy developed by Tannen (1995, 2007): “summarizing dialogue” (above), “choral dialogue” wherein dialogue is attributed to multiple speakers (e.g., “New Yorkers,” or “modern people”), “inner speech” (the subject of the next chapter), and beyond. In this chapter, however, we will focus on a more restricted use of constructed dialogue, one which distinguishes Keller’s sermons from his more public remarks in the journalistic interview. Our analysis centers on what Tannen (2003, 2004, 2009, 2010) calls *ventriloquizing*. Ventriloquizing is a form of constructed dialogue in which one speaker “animates another’s voice in the presence of that other” Tannen (2007: 23), simultaneously effecting shifts in footing (Goffman, 1981) between the participants. Often, ventriloquizing serves to give voice to participants who could not ordinarily speak, such as dogs or unborn children (Tannen 2004, 2010). Numerous studies of ventriloquizing have established that, regardless of who is ventriloquized, this conversational strategy enables the *ventriloquizer* to manage relationships of power and solidarity between interlocutors, two of the most basic social dimensions of human interaction. The same holds true for pastor Keller, though as we shall see, these dynamics become enmeshed with other conversational goals for his Sunday homilies.

One particularity of Keller’s ventriloquizing which stands out, and which has not yet received attention in work on constructed dialogue, is his tendency to not only animate his co-present addressee(s), but also to then *respond* to these animations in his “own” voice. These sequences, sometimes featuring several comment-response pairs in a row, have the net effect of enacting a conversation between preacher and listener, something which the participation

framework (Goffman, 1981) of the speech event, a sermon in a church service, precludes.¹⁰ I argue that this special case of ventriloquizing, which I have called “colloquizing,” transforms an otherwise monologic speech event into a virtual dialogue, heightening conversational involvement as listeners are alternatively affirmed and challenged by the preacher’s message.

In this chapter I will show that Keller’s ventriloquizing his audience serves three interrelated functions, united by their effects on dynamics of power and solidarity as part of the “interpersonal” dimension of constructed dialogue evoked in Chapter Two: First, I show that constructed dialogue serves as an interpretive aid that the speaker proffers to his listeners to help them parse his lengthy, and often complex message. I will then demonstrate how ventriloquizing enables Keller to construct the ideal listener, a process which serves two unrelated, but important functions (the second and third functions of the analysis, respectively). On the one hand, this strategy creates solidarity between preacher and audience, opening up opportunities for his message to resonate. On the other, the ideal listener Keller depicts affords him a potent defense in preempting critique. The combined effects of Keller’s “ordinary” constructed dialogue along with his ventriloquizing listeners in the pews result in a fascinating, multifarious, polyphonic performance which operates in equal measure on the mind and on the heart.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, I will situate the current analysis with respect to previous literature on sermonic discourse, with particular attention to constructed dialogue. I will then review work on representations of dialogue in traditionally “monologic contexts” which bear similarities to the analysis undertaken here. The following section features a description of the data, with Timothy Keller’s background having been discussed in Chapter One. I then

¹⁰ While it is true that certain Christian communities allow, and even expect oral participation from the congregation during sermons in the form of back-channeled responses such as “Amen!” and “Hallelujah!” (e.g., Wharry 2003), none allow substantive rejoinders to the pastor’s remarks – for obvious reasons.

proceed to an analysis and discussion of the sermons, followed by a conclusion which distills the contributions of the analysis.

4.2 Sermons

Linguistic inquiry into sermonic discourse remains limited, but the work that has been done draws from a range of theoretical perspectives and methods. While some focus on the written form only (e.g. Clark, 1977; Ethelston, 2009; Malström 2015a,b,c, 2016), the majority examine audio-recorded sermons (e.g., Gumperz, 1982; Dzameshie, 1995; Smith, 1993; Wharry, 2003), often as part of a larger ethnography of the religious community (e.g., Besnier, 1994; Malley, 2002, 2004; Howard-Malverde, 1998; Tomlinson, 2012). In this review, I will synthesize key insights into this form of institutional discourse, which varies considerably as a function of denomination, cultural and geographic context, and even the stage at which the sermon is analyzed.

Clark's early (1977) comparative generic analysis of American sermons attempts to discern what discursive features distinguish sermons from other types of persuasive speeches. Comparing manuscripts of fifteen sermons from across Christian traditions to equally sized corpora of political campaign speeches and other "speeches of social concern" (e.g., speeches addressed to the N.A.A.C.P, the American Bar Association, etc.), he examines the "movement" of arguments from data to claims, considering "types of claims, warrants,... judgments...sources of argument...[and] number and type of quotations" (385-386). He argues that sermons display a high degree of certainty in terms of adverbs (e.g., "inevitably") and unqualified or unhedged declarative statements using the verb "to be." Especially relevant to this investigation, Clark (1977) also notes a comparatively high frequency of quotation, usually of the Bible, which he

speculates reinforces “the image of the speaker’s subordination to the authorities he is citing” (388). This tendency, combined with relatively fewer self-references (e.g., “I think,” “I feel”), constructs an authoritative, impersonal identity for the preacher, whose personal responsibility for the arguments he advances is attenuated, and who comes across as an agent “of the Word rather than of human wisdom” (390).

This early study by Clark bears mentioning primarily because of how drastically Western preaching appears to have changed in the past forty years. For instance, Smith’s (1993) study of framing in sermons preached by pastors in training shows evidence that an authoritative (or authoritarian) expository style is not uniformly employed; instead, she finds that the degree of certainty varies as a function of the footing that the particular preacher seeks to establish with his or her audience, as well as the preacher’s gender. Additionally, Malmström (2015a) describes a dramatic shift away from authoritarian preaching that has taken place in the past several decades, noting, for example, that contemporary ministers use extensive hedging in their sermons as a means for soliciting active listenership, communicating an egalitarian footing to the congregation which is construed as partner.

Another interesting point of contrast with Clark’s (1977) findings and the data examined here is his observation that many sermons Clark analyzed presuppose a common worldview shared by the listener and minister. He notes:

The types of concrete proof essential to the process of establishing a conclusion probably appear less frequently in sermons than in other genres, because sermons aim to reinforce accepted theological conclusions among believers rather than to establish these conclusions as products of well-reasoned empirical arguments. (Clark, 1977: 392)

Keller, as we shall see, seems particularly sensitive to where his listeners’ presuppositions likely diverge from his own; these, in fact, are key moments when constructed dialogue comes into play.

Though overlooked in Clark (1977), African-American sermons have nonetheless attracted significant attention for their highly interactive, and often dramatic appropriation of an “old school tradition of oral performance” as Rickford and Rickford (2000) describes it. Pitts (1989) synthesizes evidence which traces the tradition back as far as animist West African praise-poetry and its performance by griots. While a comprehensive overview of the literature on African-American preaching is beyond the scope of this chapter (but see Wharry, 2003), several key insights deserve mention to better locate the style of preaching which will be examined. African-American preaching represents perhaps the most striking counter-evidence to the claim made in the first quotation of this chapter’s epigraph, according to which sermons should be seen as “a monologic genre, whereby no response from the listeners is expected or would be deemed appropriate” (Howard-Malverde, 1998: 581), an argument with which this chapter will also take issue.

Among the defining features of African-American preaching are its three-stage progression (from conversational introduction, to emotional build-up, to intense climax, with occasional shifts between the stages), its rhythmic dependence on a backchanneling audience (“call and response”), and its frequent register shifts between the sacred English of the King James translation, standard American, and African American Vernacular English. For instance, with respect to backchanneling, Pitts considers the preacher’s volume a contextualization cue (Gumperz, 1982) meant to alert listeners to important points in his argument. In so doing, though, the preacher “offers—even risks—his face in debate with his hearers who are responsible for assessing the logic and strength of the preacher’s propositions” (142). It is always possible that the listeners would not reply; a silence which, far from representing a respectful, enthralled audience, announces a clear, unenthused judgment on the sermon (this

point is stressed by various authors, including Rickford and Rickford 2000; Pitts, 1989; and Wharry, 2003). We are far indeed from the untouchable preacher that Clark (1977) evoked.

Another component of Black preaching mentioned above is register shifts, a phenomenon which presents certain points of intersection with this chapter's focus on represented discourse. In a study demonstrating how dialect switching relates to the structure and rhetorical ends of a speech event, Gumperz (1982) considers African-American preaching a "dramatic interchange between speaker and audience" (189). As Gumperz shows, Black preaching exhibits a high degree of heteroglossia as it involves the pastor alternating between song and speech, as well as shifting styles, as mentioned above through the preacher's shifting voices: God's, the preacher's own, and the congregation's. Respectively these are: a declamatory style, which divides the message into short, falling tone groups, introduces the sermon theme as Biblical quotations (including God's voice); an expository style, which covers a range of longer intonational units, and is used for special emphasis or to foreshadow an important point; and, a folk style, most recognizably associated with AAVE (prosodically and lexically), is woven throughout to qualify or comment on a point made in one of the other styles. However, as the sermon progresses, rhythmic intensity builds along with growing audience participation, accompanied by "stylistic cross-overs," where "content appropriate to one of the characters is spoken with the stylistic characteristics of the other" (190). In one example of such a crossover, the minister, in a trance-like state as he reaches the climax of his sermon, speaks in God's voice using a style that belongs to the people:

God/..has an outreached hand// and he is calling/from the
end of the earth // and he says come on to me/..all ye that
labor/ come on/..come on to me//ye have been
mistreated/..come on to me/ye been ostracized/..but come
on to me//
I'm standin by/..I'm ready/ I'm ready/to come/to yo

rescue/ Your sins may be astounding/

(Gumperz, 1982:195, diacritics removed)

Commenting on this third climactic stage of the sermon, Pitts (1989:143) argues that the preacher's language has ceased to serve primarily a referential function but rather an aesthetic, or poetic one whose goal is "arousing the Spirit" in the congregation (138). As Gumperz notes, all of the stylistic particulars which remained distinct before this stage have now collapsed. "Symbolically" he writes, "the minister, the congregation and the Lord are now one" (1982:196). Indeed, the collapsing or blending of the ministerial voice with either that of the congregation or God represents a ubiquitous theme in the discourse analysis of sermons, cutting across Christian traditions and geographical contexts.

From a different angle, Wharry's (2003) analysis of African American sermons considers the functions of what Schiffrin (1987) calls discourse markers within sermons. Examples of such religious discourse markers include interjections such as *amen* and *hallelujah*. While often considered elements of the "call and response" speaking style in religious contexts, a style which characterizes not only African American religious discourse but African American conversation more broadly (205), these discourse markers, Wharry argues, serve different ends when employed by the minister. Through her analysis of a series of transcribed sermons, Wharry shows how these discourse markers serve as "textual boundary markers" (i.e., signaling text type change, topic boundary, or topic continuity), as well as to "maintain spiritual discourse" where silence might have occurred at transitional moments, and finally to establish a "rhythmic balance," almost the equivalent of an underlying drum beat, as the minister approached the more intense, climactic moments of his or her performance (female preachers, incidentally, were found to produce a wider variety of discourse markers).

In the foregoing, one may already note an emergent interest in the social situatedness of sermonic discourse, its responsiveness to and dependence on the co-present listeners who, as it turns out, may occasionally become speakers themselves. Another way of examining this interpersonal dimension of talk, which has a long tradition in sociolinguistics, is through the lenses of power and solidarity (Brown & Gilman, 1960). For instance, Dzameshie (1995) applies insights from Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory in a study on American Protestant sermons which demonstrates how face threatening acts are mitigated through various types of politeness strategies. Face threatening acts such as admonition are, on the one hand, integral to the authoritative role which American Protestantism expects in pastors and critical to the *raison d'être* of sermons: to move the congregation to action. On the other hand, in order to gain a favorable hearing, the "prudent" pastor mixes powerful language with various solidarity-building moves, both of a positive politeness sort (for example, using inclusive pronouns to show that he and the parishioners are in the same boat), and a negative politeness variety (for instance, hedging critical statements).

In an interesting exception to the consensus among previously mentioned studies concerning the preacher's use of Biblical quotation, Dzameshie does not characterize such represented discourse as an attempt to appropriate greater authority (i.e., a power move), but rather qualifies it as a form of negative politeness in specific contexts. Notably, when the pastor intends to admonish the congregation, a quotation from the Bible serves as a "distancing technique," a commonly identified function of represented discourse (see, for example, studies in Hill and Irvine, 1993). For example, one pastor exhorts his congregation: "'Repent of your sins and return to me', these are His words to us today; and He adds, 'Believe in the gospel'"

(Dzameshie 1995: 205). Maintaining that “these are His words” implies, of course that “they are not just mine, your pastor’s” – in a similar fashion to Tannen’s (2009) example of the father’s salad-making quip to his daughter “Now your mom would say *You need more lettuce!*”.

Of course, given the orthogonal relationships of power and solidarity, Dzameshie’s analysis does not preclude an interpretation whereby one might understand the preacher’s quotations as reinforcing his hierarchical position above the lay parishioner. In our discussion of constructed dialogue in religious talk in Chapter Three we saw how specially commissioned lay preachers in the Nukulaelae Atoll in Polynesia temporarily arrogate to themselves great authority over their congregations despite the normally egalitarian social life of the Nukulaelae (Besnier, 1994). In many instances, these episodes of reported speech are unmarked by any quotative prefaces or reported speech markers, creating a context in which “[t]he voice of the preacher and the voice of divine authority are essentially blurred” (357), a phenomenon also observed in Gumperz’s (1982) study.

This conflation of roles in what Goffman (1981:145) calls a speech event’s “production format” is also at the center of Howard-Malverde’s (1998) and Tomlinson’s (2012) studies, which examine ministers speaking to and as their congregations, the configuration most closely resembling that examined in this chapter. And yet in these studies the minister’s speaking as the congregation – ventriloquizing them – functions rather differently than in the case of Keller’s ventriloquizing.

In examining a bilingual Spanish-Quechua sermon delivered by a Catholic priest in the Peruvian Andes, Howard-Malverde (1998) takes a critical approach to elucidate how this type of religious discourse functions as a means of social control, another common theme among various analyses of sermonic discourse. The priest’s code-switching from Quechua, used for

commenting on the immediate social context and concrete examples, into Spanish, often signals a shift of topic to a moral lesson or even chastisement.

Additionally, the priest's pronominal shifts function to create multiple voices, with him sometimes speaking as himself addressing the congregation, sometimes as himself alone, addressing God, sometimes including the congregation in petitioning God, or else distancing himself from them. One particularly effective type of voice, prominent in my own data discussed in this chapter, is that of the listeners themselves. The listeners are animated in this case by the priest in what Howard-Malverde calls "projected direct speech" in which "the priest's words can be taken as a supplication on behalf of the individual members of the congregation, using the first-person singular to put the words into their mouths" (584). For example, he prays to a revered local saint, Señor de Huanca, first using "we" to align himself with parishioners before shifting to "I," which Howard-Malverde argues is at least possible to understand as the voice of the parishioners:

muyurishaykiyku
we are surrounding you
qunqur chaki mafakuykiku
on our knees we pray to you
Señor de Huanca taytay
Lord of Huanca my Father
Rikch'ariy
awaken
wawayki ripushani
as your child I am going away
karunchashani
I am getting distant

(Howard-Malverde, 1998:485)

As Howard-Malverde points out, the potency of this strategy resides in its overlaying "an essentially monologic genre of discourse [with] a polyvocal veneer, thereby increasing its

persuasive power and subtly inciting in the listener a personal commitment to the sentiments expressed by the speaker” (584).

So too, we see highlighted in Tomlinson’s (2012) analysis of a Pentecostal preacher’s sermon on the practice of “speaking in tongues” at a large gathering in a public park in Fiji the strategy of the minister speaking for and as the congregation. In instructing the crowd, the American missionary pastor demonstrates for the audience how to embrace the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues – also called glossolalia (Samarin, 1972) – which in Pentecostalist Protestantism testifies to the believer’s authentic, Spirit-filled faith. Before the gift is bestowed on the believer, however, the latter must repent and be baptized. During his sermon, the pastor, Brother Colegrove, models how to repent by ventriloquizing the listening audience. His use of the first person “I” in the process refers to the individual believers present:

...Halleluja. Everybody repent of
every word
every thought
every deed.
“Jesus I repent.
I’m sorry, Lord.
I want you to change my life.
I want what Brother Colegrove has
preached about tonight.
I want the power of the Holy Ghost
to come into my life.”

...

(Tomlinson, 2012: 280, emphasis mine)

A significant difference between the current study and Tomlinson’s and Howard-Malverde’s work is that the minister in question here does not ventriloquize his audience in prayer, but rather during the sermon itself. And rather than simply model piety for his listeners, Keller’s ventriloquizing serves primarily as a means for creating involvement with them.

In this vein, few linguists have done more to advance our understanding of pastoral strategies for soliciting listener involvement in recent years than Hans Malmström, whose series of studies (2015a,b,c; 2016) based on interviews with eleven preachers, as well as a corpus of 150 contemporary Easter sermon manuscripts gathered from British ministers across Christian traditions, has brought to light a panoply of discursive maneuvers associated with the “turn-to-the-listener” in Western preaching. This ongoing shift in homiletic practice away from “argument centered, and deductive peaching *at* listeners” has gradually given way, over the past four decades, to a paradigm of preaching as “a sermonic conversation with listeners...a communicative event motivated by interpersonal ambitions and characterized by extensive use of interpersonally oriented language” (2016:562). For instance, Malmström (2016) shows how different forms of “metadiscourse”¹¹ increase the sense of interactivity during the sermon. The use of engagement markers (e.g., “you can see that...”), pastor self-mention, and attitude markers (“I agree...”), among many other so-called “interactional resources,” all “help preachers turn sermons to listeners” (Malmström 2016: 565). Malmström (2015a) finds ministers’ appropriation of various voices an important strategy for enlisting the listener by providing a sense of inclusiveness through mutual intertextual recognition, while his (2015b) study of interrogatives in sermons concludes that preachers use questions strategically “to mimic conversation” (2015b:270). As one Baptist preacher Malmström interviewed about his use of questions reports,

I need to recognize the actual, physical presence of the listeners in the hall. That is, I think, a precondition of good preaching, which is a strange kind of conversation. Questions are useful in that respect because that way I can involve them in a mock

¹¹ Hyland (2017:17) describes metadiscourse as “how we use language out of consideration for our readers or hearers based on our estimation of how best we can help them process and comprehend what we are saying.”

dialogue. They are not going to answer me, not these folks, but recognizing them like that at least creates that appearance. (Malmström 2015b: 263)

In sum, an important strain of the literature on sermon discourse foregrounds processes – of which there are many – by which preachers invest dialogic qualities in an otherwise monologic speech event. And it is worth mentioning that though this chapter centers on the minister ventriloquizing his co-present audience, he actually deploys a much wider variety of such devices in his sermons. For instance, Keller’s use of the second person pronoun “you,” which Malmström (2016:571) argues serves as a means for preachers to “place listeners in the room” exceeds, by more than double, any other personal pronoun in his sermons, and nearly surpasses all others combined in the corpus:

*Table 1: Subject Pronoun Distribution Across Sermons*¹²

Pronoun	Total
I	450
We	264
You	1126
They	259
He	293
She	22

Looking beyond pronoun usage, however, the most significant process by which Keller engages his listeners is by *speaking as them*. The current chapter extends our understanding of constructed dialogue, and in particular ventriloquizing and colloquizing, as conversationalizing¹³ forces in monologic speech – forces consonant with the “turn-to-the-listener” which has

¹²This tally excludes uses of “you” as a direct object, since equivalents in other persons (e.g. “him,” “them”) were not included.

¹³ As used here, this term – by which I simply mean “turning into conversation” – is not synonymous with Fairclough’s (2001) use of “conversationalization,” with its associations of a larger, market-driven societal shift in mass-media discourse. The ideas are related, though, in a way that will become clear in the following section.

gradually taken hold in Western homiletic practices (Malmström, 2016). Before proceeding, however, we must briefly distinguish this phenomenon from other documented cases of simulated direct interaction with a non-participant addressee.

4.3 Dialogue in monologue

First, a brief word on how the words “monologue” and “monologic” are intended here. Bakhtin (1986) has long since put to rest the idea that any speech is monologic in an absolute sense, but rather always carries with it the traces of prior talk. In his classic formulation, he observes that “[a]ny speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe” (69). By using various forms of the term “monologic” here, then, I do not mean to imply that talk is ever perfectly isolable and attributable to a single speaker. Rather, I use “monologic” in its ordinary sense, as a short-hand for describing that specific participation framework (Goffman, 1981) wherein a speaker addresses one or more ratified listeners who, for any number of reasons (social convention, physical absence, etc.), cannot respond. Examples which appear below include the speech of radio DJs, television show hosts, as well as print media. To these we can add, notwithstanding the previous discussion of “call and response” style of certain African-American churches, the case of sermons.

Numerous scholars have investigated the simulation of interactivity within monologic contexts. In an early investigation, Montgomery (1986) explores how British radio DJs offer listeners multiple “participatory possibilities” which mimic co-present conversation. For instance, DJs employ expressives, or articulations of one’s own psychological state and one’s attitude toward others (e.g., congratulating, criticizing, apologizing). Montgomery provides the

example of a DJ who selects a particular professional group to mention and congratulate – with equal parts sympathy and irony – on air:

Anyone who's a typist in a hospital and has to read that
writing by doctors
congratulations

(Montgomery, 1986: 430)

DJs also directly address the audience, not only with the second person pronoun *you*, but also with a host of “identifiers” including names and regions (“Yeah okay then Bob Sproat in er Worcestershire er...” / “some information for anyone listening in Edinburgh”). Finally, and with interesting parallels in the current chapter, DJs interject “response-demanding utterances” in their talk, interrogatives or imperatives (“...can you see that?” ; “...stop that it's dirty”; “what's the gossip today?”) which often imply second-pair parts, simulating co-presence. As Montgomery explains, “[t]o treat the audience as if they were...capable of responding to the discourse is to construct a sense of reciprocity even in its absence” (430-431).

Indeed, the representation of solidarity engendered by this “simulated reciprocal discourse,” as Talbot (1995) later calls it, figures in myriad monologic genres. Talbot observes analogous interpersonal overtures in a British teen-magazine's attempts to create involvement with its readership. Response-demanding utterances (e.g., instructions for putting on lipstick) combine with representations of dialogue that position the reader either in conversation with another figure, or as a ratified listener to a simulated exchange between others. As an example of the latter, the magazine presents various testimonials of girls' use of lipstick:

RHONA (18)

“I like pinks and deep reds. I don't wear it all that often. My first lipstick? I stole it from my sister's drawer—I was about 12—dying to look grown up even then!”

(Talbot, 1995: 579)

These quotations only make sense, Talbot points out, if one posits an interviewer who has provided the first-pair parts – the questions – corresponding to these answers. Inviting the magazine’s readers to eavesdrop on such gossip-like commentary plays an integral role in constructing “synthetic sisterhood,” the publication’s market-driven attempt to ingratiate itself with its young readership by creating an aura of sameness, and by extension, friendship.

A comparable attempt at simulated intimacy, Matwick and Matwick (2014) finds, also pervades celebrity-chef cooking shows. Personality chefs regularly speak to their audience (or as is often the case, two audiences – one live, one televised), respond to questions, show and request empathy (“Ugh, not good” / “You know?”), and demonstrate attention to listeners’ face via politeness strategies (see Lakoff, 1973; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Combined, these discursive maneuvers work together to “induc[e] the audience to believe that there is a dialogic form of equality between the chef and the viewer...” (155), an insight which highlights another important dimension of talk affected by the use of simulated reciprocal dialogue: power.

Building on Talbot’s notion of simulated reciprocal discourse, Candelas de la Ossa’s (2016) study on sexual consent guidance for gay, bisexual and trans men explores the phenomenon in online advice pages from various local and national British organizations. In this context, again a case of the written word, Candelas de la Ossa notes that the “question and answer sequence” represents a commonly used strategy for conveying information:

(5)/What if I go home with someone – am I consenting to sex?/

If someone invites you back to their home or hotel room – or they come to yours – it doesn’t mean that you are automatically agreeing to sex. You have the right to say no at any time. Similarly, if someone you’ve met agrees to come back with you, don’t assume they are consenting to sex. (Galop, Help & Advice, Your Rights & the Law, Consenting To Sex, Some Questions About Meeting Partners)

(Candelas de la Ossa, 2016: 370)

In this case, the first and second pair-parts both appear, with the first (the question) standing in for the reader's (the addressee's) voice. One could argue that this represents an attenuated form of ventriloquizing; attenuated because it is neither spoken, nor does it clearly affect any type of footing between participants which the process usually does (see Tannen 2007: 21). And, stripped as it is of any traces of actual conversation (e.g., identifiable speakers, prosodic contours, false starts, hesitations, pauses, division into intonation units, etc.) the online advice does not exhibit the same degree of orality as in other examples. Indeed, one might argue that this type of question and answer sequence constitutes a genre unto itself in today's internet discourse: that of "Frequently Asked Questions."

The constructed dialogue evoked so far, occurring in venues as diverse as radio programs, television shows, official websites from various organizations, and teen-magazines, could all be said to participate in what Fairclough (1989; 1992a) calls the shift toward "synthetic personalization," itself part of a larger process of "conversationalization" (1994:242) which involves "a restructuring of the boundary between public and private orders of discourse," underway for several decades now in institutional forms of discourse. Synthetic personalization signifies "the simulation of private, face-to-face, discourse in public mass-audience discourse" (Fairclough 1992a:98), which Fairclough (1989a) further elaborates as "...a compensatory tendency to give the impression of treating each of the people 'handled' *en masse* as an individual" (62, cited in Talbot, 1995). For Fairclough (and others within the Critical Discourse Analysis tradition), such a transformation subserves the interests of powerful social actors, and especially for-profit industries which stand to benefit from their targeted consumers' believing

themselves to be more intimately linked with the producers than they might otherwise feel. Obviously, though, there are exceptions to the market-based incentives for synthetic personalization, as Candeals de la Ossa (2016) makes clear. And while the forces of marketization do not ultimately bear on the content of the sermons analyzed here either, we shall see advantageous shifts in footing similar to those accomplished in these other domains through ventriloquizing, only this time to argumentative (rather than financial) ends. It is to these that we now turn.

4.4 Data

For this analysis I transcribed a “sermon series” – a series of sermons on a similar topic – which Timothy Keller preached between September and November 2006, entitled “The Trouble With Christianity: Why It’s So Hard to Believe It.” All sermons were transcribed from audio files accessed from the Redeemer Presbyterian Church website. Keller does not generally use prepared, written remarks, but rather preaches spontaneously (Keller, 2015), perhaps with the aid of a few notes or long quotes that he reads. The series included six sermons preached by Keller listed in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Sermon Series on “The Trouble with Christianity”

Sermon #	Title
1	“Exclusivity: How can there be just one true religion?”
2	“Suffering: If God is good, how can there be so much evil in the world?”
3	“Absolutism: Don’t we all have to find truth for ourselves?”
4	“Injustice: Hasn’t Christianity been an instrument for oppression?”
5	“Hell: Isn’t the God of Christianity an angry Judge?”
6	“Literalism: Isn’t the Bible historically unreliable and regressive?”

The sermons, all of which endeavor to respond to their eponymous questions, typically last between 35 - 40 minutes. This includes an introductory reading of a Biblical passage by a member of the Redeemer congregation, a passage which Keller uses as the basis of his remarks in addressing that week’s theme.

I chose this series for its similar thematic content to Keller’s journalistic interview with Martin Bashir (Chapter 3). In fact, the series forms the basis of the first seven chapters of Keller’s (2008) *The Reason for God*, the book under discussion in Bashir’s interview. While it perhaps seems odd that the pastor of a church would preach on topics that appear relevant exclusively to questioning or skeptical listeners, in numerous places in his writing Keller emphasizes that the questions outsiders bring to Christianity represent formative challenges to the believer’s faith as well, presenting him with an opportunity to strengthen the faithful even as he responds to the skeptic. Additionally, non-members and non-believers (“seekers” in

evangelical parlance) are known to attend Redeemer services regularly (Hooper, 2009), meaning that Keller's sermons are always to some extent addressing a skeptical audience.

4.5 Constructed dialogue in sermons

My central argument is that Keller's use of ventriloquizing is vital in serving both social and argumentative ends as he promotes the Christian faith. On one hand, Keller's major argumentative objective is to present a clear and convincing case for religious belief which can cope with the various challenges represented in each sermon's thematic question. On the other, he seeks to build rapport with an audience full of potentially undecided listeners in addition to the members of his church who may also grapple with the same issues. Toward these ends Keller's constructed dialogue fulfills three main functions: serving as an interpretive aid to the listener, constructing an ideal "model" listener, and constructing an ideal "listener-as-foil." I sketch each of these here in outline form before developing them more systematically in this section.

At the purely textual or propositional level, I describe four ways in which ventriloquizing serves as an interpretive aid to the listener, helping her to process the sermon as a series of arguments: first, by clarifying the semantic/propositional meanings of expressions or ideas; second, by orienting the listener in the scheme of the overall argument; third, by walking the listener step-by-step through stages of argumentation to prepare him for a forthcoming point; and fourth, by modeling how a skeptical listener could accept such arguments. Yet even at this propositional level, constructed dialogue begins to accomplish key relational work in establishing an egalitarian relationship between the pulpit and the pew. In the next two sections I show that Keller's "taking on the voice" (Tannen, 2010) of the skeptic plays an integral role in

constructing what I call the “ideal listener,” and this in two senses. First, this ventriloquized figure, who stands-in for actual audience members, is a sympathetic, plausible, model addressee. Implicitly attributing these qualities to his actual listeners, Keller establishes a foundation of solidarity, one on which he will at times construct a (ventriloquized) demonstration of intellectual assent to his points. Second, however, the ideal listener serves as a flexible foil through whom Keller can best showcase the strengths of his arguments; ventriloquizing this figure sets up debates between pastor and skeptic that he is predetermined to win. We shall see that in doing so, Keller does not always pursue collaborative footing with his audience, but actually simulates confrontation at times. Throughout, Keller seamlessly transforms his monologue into dialogue through colloquizing, both objecting *as* and responding *to* the ideal listener in this particularly interactive form of ventriloquizing.

4.5.1 Constructed dialogue as interpretive guide

As mentioned, Keller’s sermons, which come roughly half-way through the worship service, typically last between 35 and 40 minutes. Speaking quickly, and taking few lengthy pauses, Keller generally devotes equal time to expounding two or three main points which he announces at the outset, each point often including multiple sub-points. In addition to announcing his progress through various arguments throughout the sermon (“Point one,” “Here we go, point two” – examples of what Malmström [2016:566] calls “frame markers”), Keller employs constructed dialogue at key moments which serves to guide the listener in interpreting his message, by which I mean helping them understand the message in both its structure and content. Occasionally these meta-textual voicings prepare a transition to a new major or minor point; at other times, they draw explicit attention to a (potentially) problematic concept or

unexpected conclusion. This use of ventriloquizing the co-present congregation differs significantly from examples found in Tomlinson (2012) and Howard-Malverde (1998) in that they occur not in the pastor's prayers, as a way to model piety for the faithful, but within the preacher's expository message to a presumed skeptical congregation.

Part and parcel with its facilitative role in understanding the sermon, constructed dialogue also – and simultaneously – effects changes in footing (Goffman, 1981) between pastor and listener which are more or less pronounced, and usually oriented toward increasing solidarity between the two.¹⁴ Key in the construction of these alignments is Keller's tendency to transform conventionally monologic discourse into a virtual dialogue, speaking for and responding to the addressee. My argument is that this process of colloquizing, in line with other forms of constructed dialogue, increases a sense of vividness and involvement in the speech event, in this case by modeling for the (necessarily) passive addressee what it would be like to be involved in conversation as an active participant with the speaker. These episodes range in duration from fleeting adjacency pairs to extended interchanges.

First, I briefly present three examples, (A), (B) and (C), which I will discuss in detail together afterward. In these examples, the listener's ventriloquized voice operates at the most basic "processing" level, simply to clarify the meaning of something said immediately prior. In (A), Keller is summarizing the argument of the Biblical writer John about early critics of Christianity (the "they" of line 2), a summary that is eventually interrupted by the skeptic:

¹⁴ However, as we shall see later in the chapter, collaborative alignments are not always the goal: there is, on occasion, direct confrontation set up between pastor and listener via constructed dialogue. What is most essential for Keller, it seems, is that the listener follows him point by point through his argument, and that she decide on her own what to make of the message. In the context of the constructed dialogue presented in this section, whose function seems primarily centered on aiding the listener to comprehend and situate the various points Keller makes, the alignments created remain largely collaborative and solidary.

(A)

1 But interestingly the writer John
2 says that they are coming from
3 a religious faith viewpoint as well
4 They've got a viewpoint
5 They've got a vantage point
6 They have a faith position
7 even as they are criticizing ours
8 you say
9 **What does that mean? What do you mea- what do you mean by that?**
10 Well le- here let let's go
11 Let's go with these two things that people say
12 Number one
13 People say
14 Let's all agree that all religions are equally valid paths to God

In (B), Keller is explaining the reason for the Bible's fiery imagery of hell. However, the skeptic, again, breaks in and asks for clarification:

(B)

1 you may o-obey the *laws* of the God of the Bible,
2 but your *faith*
3 the justification of your life,
4 the roots of your identity
5 what you *really* worship
6 in other words
7 is something else.
8 And that starts in your heart
9 a spiritual cosmic fire.
10 That's what the metaphor for fire is about
11 you say
12 **What are you talking about it starts a fire?**
13 Alright.
14 We know a lot about the devastation of addiction.
15 We know about the inward and outward devastation that addiction wreaks.
16 And it it consists of things like this,
17 first of all there's the *disintegration*

In (C), Keller has just concluded a lengthy exposition of a point (not shown). He then offers his

listeners a chance to re-orient themselves in the overall scheme of his message in the sermon with a light-hearted imitation of the bewildered listener:

(C)

- 1 Now here's where we are.
- 2 Somebody's saying
- 3 **Where are we?**
- 4 I'll tell you where we are.
- 5 /audience laughter/

All three examples (A-C) demonstrate Keller's tendency to voice his audience's inner thoughts as a means of clarifying the meaning of his message, whether particular expressions or ideas (A and B) or the larger arc of his thinking (C). And yet even this most prosaic function of constructed dialogue also introduces subtle shifts in footing between pastor and listener.

Specifically, in examples (A-C) Keller positions himself as an approachable conversation partner, an interlocutor with whom one is engaged in a back-and-forth exchange as opposed to a lecturer advancing imperviously through a lesson. In each case, the ventriloquized listener's clarification questions are delivered in a casual, conversational register, and (B) even appears to challenge the metaphorical imagery Keller has introduced. And yet, Keller responds to the question or challenge by conceding that he needs to elaborate on or better situate his claims, a concession delivered in an equally informal, conversational register indexed through the discourse markers "well" (example A, line 10: "Well le- here let let's go") and "alright" (example B, line 13). Additionally, one notes a shift in pronouns after the constructed dialogue which reinforces the collaborative alignment that these brief episodes introduce: in both (A) and (B) Keller employs the first person plural as he begins his attempts at clarification, either urging his audience to consider new information together with himself as in (A) (lines 10-11: "Well le- here let let's go/ Let's go with these two things that people say"), or else appealing to the

listener's prior knowledge as the common ground on which he will build his case as in (B) (lines 13-14: "Alright./ We know a lot about the devastation of addiction."). Even Keller's didactic rejoinder in (C) (line 14: "I'll tell you where we are") is delivered with an intonation of mock-admonishment and receives a laugh from the congregation. The idea that he would be angry at them for not following the lesson – perhaps plausible for a certain, severe type of minister – strikes a comic note.

Occasionally the "message-processing" constructed dialogue we've been considering not only draws attention to the content or structure of Keller's argument, but does so in a way as to highlight its unexpectedness or uniqueness. The listener is portrayed as surprised at something the pastor has just said. For example, after explaining that the heart of the Christian message – what Keller refers to simply as "the gospel" – should lead Christian believers to the counterintuitive conclusion that they should expect to encounter non-Christians who are naturally better people than they, Keller ventriloquizes the listener in (D):

(D)

1 Each group looks down their nose at the other
2 but the *gospel*
3 is the only...
4 faith system I know
5 that leads you to *expect* that people
6 who don't believe like you believe will be *better* than you
7 ...**WHAT!**
8 Yes.
9 Because the gospel says
10 You're not saved because you're *wise*,
11 You're not saved because you're good,
12 You're not saved because you're virtuous

A pause (line 7), arguably the skeptic's pause as she reflects on the idea just proposed, precedes an emphatic "WHAT!" – simultaneously a prompt for more information and an expression of

disbelief (presumably at the notion that Christians should expect to find non-Christians who are better people). Thus, at the level of processing the sermon message, constructed dialogue not only draws listener attention to concepts which require intellectual unpacking, but also to the salience of ideas which might go otherwise unremarked.

Our two final examples of this section exhibit some of the more complex “processing” work that constructed dialogue accomplishes. Specifically, we see how Keller’s voicing of his skeptical listeners not only clarifies, situates, or highlights an argument, but also *leads* listeners, intellectually, through the stages of his argumentation, as well as modeling how they might accept his arguments. One could think of this function of constructed dialogue as Keller’s providing a “roadmap for thought,” enabling him to chaperone the listener step-by-step through the interpretive process. In (E), from a sermon addressing arguments against Christianity because of injustices which the church has perpetrated or allowed, the skeptic protests Keller’s abstract defense of Christianity as an ethical system (from the preceding minutes, not shown), including the idea that God prioritizes the poor as a group (the “them” of line 1):

(E)

1 /breathy/ God chooses them.
2 /breathy/ He delights to empower the people that the world disempowers.
3 So that’s point one.
4 But you say
5 **Well that’s very nice.**
6 **Very inspiring.**
7 /laughter/
8 **But you know that’s God,**
9 **we’re talkin’ about Christians here today?**
10 Y’know you don’t let me
11 don- y’know don’t let me wiggle out from under this objection
12 and he says
13 **y’know maybe God chooses the poor**
14 **but the church is the problem here**
15 **the reason I have trouble believing Christianity is the church!**
16 **It’s Christians,**

17 **it's people that name the name of Christ,**
18 **look at what *they* have done to races and classes over the years**
19 But don't forget
20 OK let's keep going because
21 The argument is *not*
22 I'm certainly not going to say

Lines five and six (“Well that’s very nice./ Very inspiring.”) convey a sarcastic meta-commentary on Keller’s message, so exaggerated as to cause laughter. It is noteworthy that these turns indirectly acknowledge audience knowledge schemata for the speech event “sermon,” an event at which one might expect to be inspired, moved, or roused to action. This type of verbal “wink” at the normally-unmentioned frame of the interaction is a resource in building rapport with the audience. In so doing he demonstrates an awareness of both listener expectations of his performance as preacher and the attendant risk of coming across as merely sanctimonious, a pusher of empty pieties. After a lofty claim, Keller cuts himself back down to size, as it were, via constructed dialogue: the skeptic protests Keller’s evasion of the core problem with Christianity – the *church’s* injustice (lines 8 and 9: “But you know that’s *God*, / we’re talkin’ about Christians here today?”).

Keller then briefly relapses into his own pastor’s voice, reinforcing a collaborative footing with his audience (lines 7-8):

Y’know you don’t let me
don- y’know don’t let me wiggle out from under this objection

Addressing his interlocutors directly, Keller positions them as his examiners or judges who have a duty to hold him accountable to higher standards of argumentation than what he has so far displayed. The exhortation, which takes the form of a command to keep the pressure on him – like a boxing coach urging his protégé to hit him harder – again creates a collaborative alignment

between preacher and audience. Keller does not present his claims as unassailable or unquestionable; rather, he solicits audience involvement in critiquing them.

But Keller's constructed dialogue also takes on a function here which we have not yet observed: the animated voice retraces Keller's argument, *conceding* his previous point (line 13, "y'know maybe God chooses the poor"), before pressing the issue of the human institution – the church – whose problematic history is the true problem (lines 14 and 15, "but the church is the problem here/the reason I have trouble believing Christianity is the church!"). On the interpretive level, one of the functions of constructed dialogue in this episode is to prepare his audience for a transition to an upcoming topic (in this case, talking about the church).

Significantly, though, these types of transitions often begin with just the kind of concession observed here: the skeptic's voice grants the foregoing point before raising an objection to another idea. In fact, the skeptical listener occasionally grants multiple points, simultaneously recapitulating large portions of the sermon, before steering the topic to an unexplored objection. For example, as he nears the end of a sermon on objections to Christianity on the basis of its exclusivity, Keller prepares the transition to one of his final points in (G):

(G)

1 Now a lotta people would say
2 **Well now OK**
3 **At that point though**
4 **I can understand why the distinctive of gospel grace**
5 **would humble you.**
6 **And the distinctive of gospel resurrection and the purpose of salvation**
7 **would lead you to serve people who disagree with you and *humble* you.**
8 **But that's...**
9 **If you really believe that Jesus is God,**
10 **that's gonna lead to self-righteousness huh?**
11 **You're gonna say**
12 **Oh! you go to another religion do you?**
13 **Your founder is only a human being,**
14 **My founder is God.**

In this case, before objecting that Christian belief in a divine savior leads to self-righteousness (line 10), the skeptic accedes to two of Keller's main points in the sermon – that Christianity's message (the "distinctive gospel of grace," line 4) is humbling and that its historical claim of Christ's resurrection (the "gospel resurrection and the purpose of salvation," line 6) would lead to both humility and serving one's opponents. Only after these arguments are granted does the animated voice protest that a view of Jesus as God would lead to Christians being self-righteous (lines 9-14), the focus of the final portion of the sermon. As Keller constructs the skeptical listener's experience, these endorsements of various points made throughout the sermons constitute an important element of their dialogic texture. The hypothetical listener's reactions that Keller animates model those he is recommending for the actual listener in the pew: at certain points, then, it is in Keller's interest to demonstrate that and how such a listener might agree with his arguments.

In this section we have seen how Keller's constructed dialogue serves as an interpretive aid for the listener in multiple ways: by signaling the overall progression of the sermon, by drawing attention to problematic or unexpected points before elaborating on them, and by "chaperoning" the listener through the steps of his argumentation. Occasionally in this latter process Keller demonstrates how skeptical listeners might concede earlier points of the sermon even as they remain circumspect about the current claim. Additionally, alongside its role in facilitating audience comprehension and acceptance of the sermon, constructed dialogue also – and simultaneously – creates favorable alignments between pastor and listener, with Keller positioning himself as if in friendly, or at least open conversation with the skeptical listener who interjects from the pew. Keller's colloquizing his audience, engaging them in a virtual dialogue,

not only permits such shifts in footing, but also increases a sense of conversational involvement, offering listeners a sense of what it would be like to actually speak to him.

4.5.2 Constructing the ideal listener, Part One: The listener as model

Beyond leading his listeners through the intellectual paces of his sermons, Keller's constructed dialogue plays an important role in preparing his audience to embrace the arguments presented. The remainder of this chapter will examine two ways in which this happens, both of which are implicated in the portrayal of what could be called Keller's "ideal listener." I mean "ideal" in two senses: the listener embodies various admirable traits, but as a foil she¹⁵ allows Keller to best showcase the power of his ideas in arguing against her. In so doing, I argue, Keller develops a potent defense against critique, anticipating and preempting potential objections to his message. Talbot's (1995) exploration of "synthetic sisterhood," a pseudo-intimacy constructed by a British girl's teen magazine with its female readers, notes a similar opportunity (and advantage) in the ability of print media to portray their readership however they want:

The need to construct an ideal subject bestows a position of power on the producers of the mass-media texts. They have the right to total control over production, such as what kinds of representations of events are included, and how they are presented. In the construction of an ideal subject as addressee, the mass media are in a position to present assumed shared experiences and commonsense attitudes as givens to a mass audience.

Actual addressees in the targeted audience are likely to take up the position of ideal subject sharing these experiences, attitudes, etc. (Talbot, 1995: 573-574)

We shall see, however, that while Keller does attribute "assumed shared experiences and commonsense attitudes" to his idealized listener at times, he does not uniformly affirm her

¹⁵ I use the singular, third-person feminine pronoun throughout the analysis for the sake of clarity. Keller's simulated conversations often imply a single interlocutor in dialogue with him; using the feminine form allows for a clearer discussion that distinguishes Keller from the hypothetical interlocutor.

positions in their constructed colloquies. Indeed, we will observe drastic differences in the alignments Keller pursues with his audience, differences which operate as complementary angles from which he seeks to spotlight the interlocutor's need for his message.

In terms of the positive traits of the ideal, model listener, this section centers on two facets: feeling and intelligence. As to the first, I argue that Keller depicts his skeptical listener as experiencing a range of plausible, "normal" emotional reactions to his message which enable him to create an embodied empathy: a demonstration of his own ability, as a preacher, to identify with the affective responses to his message experienced by his actual listeners. In terms of the second, intelligence, I will show that Keller portrays the skeptic as a serious, thinking person – one with whom an actual skeptical listener in the pews might reasonably (want to) identify. In other words, in terms of both emotion and intelligence, Keller's constructed dialogue presents a model subject, as opposed to a straw man. I begin with the robust emotional profile Keller constructs for the skeptic.

So far in this chapter we have seen that constructed dialogue serves as an interpretive aid, a resource Keller offers to listeners to help process his message, in at least four ways: clarifying the meanings of expressions or ideas, signaling the progression of the sermon's overarching argument, guiding the listener through detailed argumentation in preparation for a forthcoming point, and modeling how to accept the arguments put forth. Taking a step back, we could group these four functions as operating on an "intellectual" or "interpretive" level: they enable the (actual) listener to better grasp the content and form of a sermon. And given the cognitive demands of attending to, much less engaging with a complicated sermon of thirty-five to forty minutes, one immediately understands the important role such interpretive aids play for the audience. But to analyze Keller's use of constructed dialogue merely at this cognitive level

would be to overlook one of its most vital contributions to his talk: to put a human heart inside an intellectual skeleton. It would be to miss the forest of emotion for the trees of ideas. This section as a whole argues that constructed dialogue plays a vital role in constructing the ideal opponent with whom Keller can best make his arguments. That opponent's emotional profile forms a crucial component – if an actual listener is truly to see herself in the hypothetical listener Keller animates, then the more realistic the latter, the better.

In its reception of his message, audience constructed dialogue ranges from surprise to impassioned rejection or else hesitant acceptance, with many shades in between. We have already caught glimpses of this dimension in previous examples: Keller rarely animates the skeptic as a neutral, dispassionate interlocutor. Instead, she exclaims in surprise (D), demurs sarcastically (E), voices outrage (E), and mockery (G) (the lines below have been excerpted from the full examples above):

(D)

WHAT!

(E)

**Well that's very nice.
Very inspiring.**

(E)

**the reason I have trouble believing Christianity is the *church!*
It's Christians,
it's people that name the name of Christ,
look at what *they* have done to races and classes over the years**

(G)

**Oh! you go to another religion do you?
Your founder is only a human being,
My founder is God.**

Herein lies a major resource on which Keller relies to buttress the footing of solidarity he normally maintains with the circumspect listener: he not only acknowledges, but actually *enacts* the strong reactions which his audience likely will have to his claims about faith and human existence. In these moments, constructed dialogue functions as a kind of embodied empathy, a demonstration of the pastor's consciousness of the potent emotional responses his arguments are want to elicit. In Bakhtinian terms, we may say that the construction of Keller's listener-as-ideal-model exemplifies the more conciliatory (or "cringing") version of "internally polemical discourse":

Internally polemical discourse – the word with a sideward glance at someone else's hostile word – is extremely widespread in practical everyday speech as well as in literary speech, and has enormous style-shaping significance. Here belong, in everyday speech, all words that "make digs at others" and all "barbed words." But here also belongs all self-deprecating overblown speech that repudiates itself in advance, speech with a thousand reservations, concessions, loopholes and the like. Such speech literally cringes in the presence or the anticipation of someone else's word, reply, or objection. The individual manner in which a person structures his own speech is determined to a significant degree by his peculiar awareness of another's words, and by his means for reacting to them. (Bakhtin, 1984: 196)

Keller's "peculiar awareness" of others' words infuses his reaction to them, a reaction which often *recreates* them as a first move before responding in his own voice.

Two additional examples at opposite ends of the affective spectrum will help complete our picture of this phenomenon. In the first, (H), which comes from a sermon on objections to the Christian idea of hell, we see Keller voicing a skeptic whose forceful reaction verges on disgust. After briefly reviewing earlier arguments from the sermon (lines 1-3), Keller broaches

his final point, that to know the love of God presupposes a true understanding of the Christian doctrine of hell, at which point the listener's voice breaks in:

(H)

1 So hell's necessary to understand
2 your heart,
3 Hell's necessary for living in peace on Earth
4 and last of all
5 the doctrine of hell is necessary for knowing the love of God.
6 **Say what?**
7 **Wait a minute**
8 somebody says
9 **now this is the worst one of all!**
10 **Uh you're**
11 **the whole idea of a God of *judgment and hell***
12 **seems *opposed* to the idea of a God of love**

In terms of footing, we again see Keller here modeling a listener who addresses him as an approachable figure, as if in casual conversation, with the markedly familiar, telegraphic question "Say what?" (line 6), indicating confusion or surprise (or both). Keller pursues his rendition of the stunned listener in line 7 ("Wait a minute") who by line 9 ("now this is the worst one of all!") has forcefully condemned the idea, protesting in lines 11-12 that a "God of *judgment and hell*" – with emphatic stress on the final phrase – cannot be reconciled with, indeed is "*opposed*" (again, emphatic stress) to a God of love. While pragmatically this sequence prompts the pastor for further explanation, a kind of extended request for clarification that began with "Say what?", an equally obvious function is to indicate disapproval – and to do so as much, if not more, from *feeling* than out of intellectual rigor.

Here we see a new dimension to the alignment Keller has been constructing with his audience, one which goes beyond merely establishing pastor and listeners as casual conversation partners. In its dramatic portrayal of their hypothetical responses, Keller's constructed dialogue

establishes an important foundation of solidarity, cemented in a sense of shared norms, upon which later arguments will build. With all other things being equal, to see that my interlocutor identifies with my emotional reactions – empathizes, in a word – provides a greater impetus to identify with and trust that person than if I never sensed he was “on the same wavelength” emotionally. The conversation partner who never laughs at the same joke or recoils at the same horror story will inevitably seem foreign, and perhaps even suspect. Keller thus shows that he understands that his claims evoke strong emotional responses and are not experienced as merely intellectual exercises. Rosen (1988, cited in Tannen, 1995) highlights constructed dialogue’s potential to reflect precisely this type of “felt sense” of drama in contrast to the arid articulation of the same idea in a different genre – for example, how scientists retell the story of making a discovery versus how the idea appears in an academic journal.

Far removed from the outraged response attributed to the skeptic above, our next example sees Keller portraying the listener as vulnerable and apprehensive about the consequences of abandoning herself to God. In (I), Keller has been likening the believer’s relationship to God to that between human lovers, and in particular the necessity in human love of giving up certain freedoms and independence in order to experience what Keller calls the “freedoms of love.” He acknowledges how daunting a task this may appear before voicing what he believes to be the inner thoughts of many of his listeners:

(I)

1 Now we’ve come to the place,
2 where New Yorkers really start to freak out.
3 /laughter/
4 Because first of all we saw what.
5 That you’ve gotta know the truth
6 You’ve gotta know the truth,
7 and you have to surrender to the truth,

8 you have to surrender your freedoms to the truth,
9 to get the richer deeper freedom.
10 In every area
11 and a lot of you are saying
12 and here you are being
13 I understand
14 You're saying
15 **Look.**
16 **I have done that in a couple of love relationships,**
17 **where I gave up my independence...**
18 **I gave up my independence.**
19 **I started sacrificing.**
20 **But the other person didn't.**
21 **And I felt dehumanized and exploited...**
22 **And I'm afraid of going back into those kinds of relationships,**
23 **and I'm *certainly* afraid of what you're trying to get me to:**
24 **Y-I know who you d-what you're doin'**
25 **>You're a minister,<**
26 **>You're a preacher,<**
27 **>It's a church,<**
28 **>You're trying to get me to say<**
29 **>You need to surrender to< the truth of God.**
30 **And I'm *afraid*...**
31 **I'm afraid of being *exploited*.**
32 **I'm afraid of being *used*...**
33 Point three...
34 Jesus is more liberating that you thought.

Striking about this example is its articulation not only of inward thoughts, but its narration of significant events in the life history of the listener. Again, Keller initiates an informal conversation with himself as the skeptic, ("Look." line 15). But then, rather than merely animating an opinion as in other examples, the skeptic recounts a personal narrative of unrequited love (lines 16-20), whose external evaluation (Labov 1972) comes in line 21 ("I felt dehumanized and exploited") resulting in a fear to commit to "those kinds of relationships" (line 22).

The skeptic continues, reiterating a fear of commitment, especially a faith commitment of the sort that Keller the pastor has been intimating (line 23: "I'm *certainly* afraid of what you're

trying to get me to?”). Keller then again draws attention to the normally unmentioned sermon frame of this hypothetical conversation as the skeptical voice becomes increasingly agitated in lines 24-30, whose disfluency (line 24, “Y-I know who you d-what you’re doin’”) and quickened pace (lines 25-30: You’re a minister,/You’re a preacher,/It’s a church,/ You’re trying to get me to say/ You need to surrender to the truth of God.”) index a rising a level of emotional arousal, understood most naturally as anxiety or apprehension. The pinnacle of this extended segment of constructed dialogue comes in line 30 where the skeptic begins to repeat that she is “*afraid*,” with emphatic stress, followed by the first noticeable silence in fifteen intonation units (line 17). She repeats the expression in line 32 (“I’m afraid of being *exploited*.”) with identical stress on the last word, and yet again in line 33 (“I’m afraid of being *used*...”); again, we see stress and pause. The skeptic’s dramatic self-revelation echoes through the hushed sanctuary.

In (I) the construction of embodied empathy, the demonstration of the pastor’s affective awareness, reaches its zenith. Keller has combined the use of contextualization cues (quickened speech, emphatic stress), elements in his *demonstration* of the listener’s response, with an explicit diagnosis of the listener’s emotional state (the repeated use of “I’m afraid”), his *articulation* of that response, all framed by a painful story he presumes to tell of his listener’s experience, a paradigmatic “B event” in Labov and Fanshel’s (1977) terms. In multiple ways, he has communicated that he understands, to a high degree, the psycho-emotional background against which his audience hears his message.

We can imagine Keller leading the listener through this latest “quotation as demonstration,” to borrow Clark and Gerrig’s phrase, not so much to clarify or situate his claims (the role of the “cognitive level” animations discussed earlier), but rather in order to prepare her to accept them by showing that he understands the strong emotional responses they may produce.

In other words, Keller, as pastor, cannot be (easily) written off as a disconnected religious idealist, incapable of seeing how his worldview might seriously clash with his audience's – including the strong emotional fallout such a clash produces. Of course, such a move does not guarantee that his arguments will prevail in the minds of his listeners. It does, however, undercut the potential objection that this pastor simply has no idea how outrageous or controversial he sounds, that he must be out of touch with those outside the faith.

An equally salient feature of the skeptical figure voiced by Keller is her intellectual sophistication. Keller's ideal opponent is no simpleton, oohing and aahing as the master preacher dazzles her with argument after argument. She is, rather, informed and on guard against facile proselytizing. At the simplest level, as the following examples show, the skeptic's academic register serves as index of her intelligence:

(I)

And I felt dehumanized and exploited.

(K)

Oh that's so regressive and so offensive.

(L) – (Exclusivity)

My enlightenment Western individualistic faith assumptions about human nature are *privileged* over yours.

Even though, as we have seen through his use of discourse markers, Keller often portrays the skeptic as if in informal conversation with himself, this hypothetical interlocutor still uses a sophisticated vocabulary: “dehumanized” and “exploited” (I), “regressive” (K), and “enlightenment Western individualistic faith assumptions” (L).

Further, the skeptic displays her historical awareness, posing challenges such as those we have already seen from (F):

**it's people that name the name of Christ,
look at what *they* have done to races and classes over the years**

In a similar vein, in (J), below, she objects to the Bible's putative support for slavery, which Keller has distinguished in the preceding minutes (not shown) from the chattel slavery of the 17th-19th centuries in America (referenced in line 4). Here, over the course of our first example of colloquizing, the skeptic points to a significant, though perhaps not widely known, historical phenomenon: the fact that many American slave owners justified their practice with reference to Biblical teaching:

(J)

1 **Oh!**
2 You say,
3 Rightly so.
4 **Didn't people in the South**
5 **use those Biblical passages?**
6 **Slaves obey your masters.**
7 **In order to try to subjugate the African slaves?**
8 Yes.

Not only does the skeptic's rhetorical question demonstrate that she is conversant with history, it also shows that she knows the Bible: she quotes verbatim a relevant scriptural passage (line 6: "Slaves obey your masters") from the New Testament book of Ephesians.

Notably, Keller's own voice welcomes the imagined interruption (lines 1-3: "Oh!/You say,/rightly so."), and agrees with the skeptic's observation, phrased as a question, in line 8 ("Yes."). This instance of colloquizing allows Keller to both affirm the skeptic's intelligent critique – a gesture of solidarity – but also, crucially, to defuse it. According to Keller, who will argue against this critique for the next several minutes (not shown), the equation of American chattel slavery to Biblical slavery proves problematic in critical ways. So, while the depiction of the skeptic herself is generally charitable or flattering, it is in the skeptic's constructed dialogue

that Keller locates flawed reasoning: objection after objection which fundamentally misapprehends, or confuses some basic Christian teaching.

Another, final, example of Keller's rapport building through constructed dialogue offers an interesting twist: the listener again sees herself represented intelligently, this time because Keller associates her with a well-known intellectual, one whose logic Keller suggests she might find convincing. In (M), Keller is preparing to discuss the place of faith in public debates. He has been explaining the view, problematic in his eyes, of the prominent American philosopher Richard Rorty (the "he" of line 1), which he summarizes via constructed dialogue (that is, of Rorty):

(M)

1 he says
2 **I'm just telling you this,**
3 **You've got to leave your religion at the door**
4 **when you come into the public square**
5 **You've got leave your views of *truth* and *morality* and**
6 **right and wrong and religion**
7 **at the public-at the door**
8 **when you come into the public *square***
9 **Because these things are based on *faith***
10 **and no one can ever f- adjudicate them**
11 **and therefore your th-they're controversial**
12 **and we'll fight...forever!**
13 **No no no.**
14 **Let us all leave our religion in the private world**
15 **and when we come into the public...realm**
16 **Let's simply look for strategies that work.**
17 **Let's look at the problems that face us**
18 **like education and poverty and issues like that**
19 **and let's just simply**
20 **not look for strategies and policies that are in line with your view of religion**
21 **or your view of truth your view of right or wrong**
22 **But let's just find the ones that work!**
23 **Let's just find ones that work.**
24 There's a huge problem with that,
25 I know that that sounds plausible...
26 Because we live in a society in which right now that

27 that approach is the one that's put forth
28 But it'll never work and here's the reason why
29 Ironically it's totally impractical
30 and here's why.
31 What does Rorty mean, what do *you* mean,
32 class?
33 ...
34 What is religion?

Following the stretch of constructed dialogue in which we hear Rorty's view on religion in the public sphere, Keller again draws his interlocutors into dialogue, grouping them with Rorty as principals, in Goffmanian terms, of the position just outlined (lines 31-32): "What does Rorty mean/what do *you* mean,/class?/..." The vocative use of "class" represents a momentary, (potentially) facetious frame shift inducing the churchgoer to imagine a classroom where Keller, as teacher, asks the students to explain themselves. In this way, Keller attributes the preceding argument to his co-present listeners, an argument which, in Keller's animation, comes across as cogent and believable – "plausible" as he himself acknowledges. Whether or not this summation of Rorty's political thought is actually a faithful representation is immaterial: what matters is that Keller has offered a reasonably sophisticated, coherent version of it, which he then attributes to his co-present listener in simulated conversation. He is not positioning his listener as simply biased against Christianity, in other words, but as thoughtfully opposed to it.

In sum, Keller systematically ventriloquizes his co-present audience in such a fashion as to highlight their natural, human, emotional reactions to the (sometimes weighty) theological claims they hear, as well as to emphasize their intellectual capabilities as critical listeners. Whether or not either of these gestures actually predisposes his listeners to accept his message is beyond the scope of this analysis. At the least, however, they create the potential for such a dynamic, and mitigate the possibility that the listener can easily dismiss the preacher as emotionally distant, or intellectually uncharitable in his portrayal of opposing views.

4.5.3 Constructing the ideal listener, Part Two: The listener as foil

The ideal listener, I have said, lives up to the epithet in another sense: through his animation of the skeptic's objections, Keller positions himself most favorably to refute the arguments he raises. One may think here of a chess player playing against himself: he is bound to win at some point. Managing the terms of the "debate," then, represents a major goal of the speech event served by constructed dialogue. Additionally, we will see in this section some of the rare adversarial shifts in footing Keller adopts toward his interlocutor as foil.

This function is illustrated clearly in our most recent example above, (M), where Keller summarized, through constructed dialogue, Richard Rorty's argument against religious influence in public debate and then attributed this line of thinking to his audience. In line 34 ("What is religion?"), Keller targets a fundamental category upon which Rorty's argument rests. For Keller, the term contains a critical weakness, one on which he elaborates over the following minutes: Essentially, he goes on to argue that everyone subscribes to a certain worldview containing unprovable faith assumptions (e.g., the nature of the good life) – the true sense of "religion."

This dynamic of setting up a target in his interlocutor's constructed dialogue and knocking it down in his rejoinder occurs time and again throughout the sermon series, sometimes with poignant deviations from the usual footing Keller constructs with his interlocutor. As seen in many examples above, Keller's constructed dialogue often creates collaborative footing between preacher and audience, whether via meta-talk – discursive "winks" – directed at the sermon frame, or the fact that the ventriloquized listener addresses the preacher in an informal, egalitarian mode. We have also seen his use of constructed dialogue to convey empathy with listeners' reactions to his message, another area in which he establishes solidarity with his

audience. Yet the alignments engendered in Keller's constructed dialogue are not uniformly collaborative.

Prior to the beginning of the transcript in (N), which comes from a sermon on objections to Christianity due to its exclusivity, Keller has critiqued the well-known Indian parable of the blind men and the elephant. The parable, in which each of several blind men insists that a different property of the elephant that they are all touching represents the whole creature (depending on the part each happens to be grasping), is meant to highlight the inherent, situated subjectivity, and therefore relativity, of claims about the nature of the world. As applied to religious belief, this principle of folk wisdom has led, Keller explains, to the commonly held position that no one religious system can, nor should, claim to explain *the* meaning of life and the cosmos (and as a corollary, no religious person should attempt to convince another person of that meaning). However, he maintains, this position rests on a fallacy: it assumes that the parable teller is not, herself, blind; that she can perceive the entire elephant, and thus where and why all of the blind men go wrong. In short, she enjoys a privileged perspective alien to the common blind man – a perspective which, following the logic of the analogy, no real person can have. Summarizing his foregoing critique, Keller challenges the would-be skeptic who presumes to have this bird's-eye view of all religious systems:

(N)

- 1 Y-was what the point here is?
- 2 When you say
- 3 **No one has a superior take on spiritual reality**
- 4 That *is* a take on spiritual reality
- 5 which you say is superior to everybody else's.
- 6 And when you say
- 7 **No one should convert everybody else to your view of religious reality**
- 8 That *is* a view of religious reality
- 9 that you want the listener to convert to!
- 10 ...

11 There's no way for you to know that all religions are equal
12 unless you assume the kind of the knowledge you say nobody has
13 and so how dare you have it?
14 How *can* you have it?
15 So it just doesn't work!
16 It doesn't work in the slightest.
17 It's imperialistic.
18 It looks humble,
19 but it's not.

Unlike in previous examples, Keller takes an immediate, overtly oppositional stance toward the views expressed in the skeptic's constructed dialogue, repeating key phrases from each claim to emphasize their self-contradictions in his rebuttals ("take on spiritual reality" lines 3 and 4; "view of religious reality" lines 7 and 8). After a pause in line 10, he repeats his criticism of the skeptic's assumption of a "bird's-eye view" in lines 11-19, but with more forceful, unmitigated directness. Line 13 contains an accusatory challenge to the skeptic's presumed omniscience, "...how dare you have it?", followed by the rhetorical question in line 14 ("How *can* you have it?") casting doubt on the skeptic's implied claim. In lines 17-19, the footing between preacher and skeptical listener reaches its most strained, with Keller baldly labeling the latter's position as "imperialistic" and disingenuously humble.

Here, Keller's colloquizing not only heightens conversational involvement by giving his listeners a "sense of what it would be like" to actually argue with him – to experience, for example, the enthusiastic rejection of the hypocrisy Keller sees expressed in lines 3 ("No one has a superior take on spiritual reality") and 7 ("No one should convert everybody else to your view of religious reality"). He is also, simultaneously, pressing the skeptical listener to reason with him: to ultimately decide that yes, such positions are hypocritical, or else that they are not. The accusatory challenge in line 13 ("How dare you have it?") and rhetorical question of line 14 ("How can you have it?") repeatedly target the skeptical audience member over the same matter

of how (un)tenable these convictions are. Indeed, the deictic ambiguity of “you” – is it the generic you, equivalent to “one”? or the co-present, interlocutor you? – clearly dissipates in the question “How dare you have it?”: only the most awkward interpretation could gloss this as the generic form (i.e., “How dare one have it?”). Keller is talking directly to the listener.

A similar dynamic occurs in (O), taken from a sermon on the charge of “absolutism” that is leveled against Christianity: the idea that Christians, because they believe they have absolute truth, undermine others’ freedom – and in fact, that absolute truth itself is inimical to human freedom. As the transcript picks up, Keller has just preached through an illustration of ships navigating in different environments as a metaphor for the need to recognize an objective realm of truth. The vessels’ captains need to know the actual depth of the water (a hard, objective truth) or risk bottoming out on the shoals of the various waterways, a metaphor evoked again in the last line:

(O)

1 And you see the *idea*
2 the modern idea that you have to get *away* from the truth somehow
3 to be free
4 and get out from *under* the truth
5 and stop ge-get away from the truth >to be free<
6 is *silly*
7 It’s actually stupid.
8 *Only* the truth will set you free!
9 Being closely in touch with the truth
10 and and and living in *accordance* with the truth will set you free.
11 **Ah**
12 you say
13 **Well maybe that’s true in the empirical realm.**
14 **You know the scientific realm.**
15 **But not necessarily in the moral spiritual realm.**
16 Oh really?
17 **There you can live any way you want.**
18 Oh yeah?
19 ...
20 I think I can say without fear of contradiction,

21 if you live for money and only for money,
22 if you live *only* to make money,
23 if you live *only* to spend money /laughs/
24 if you live *only* to have money
25 *nothing* else matters to you
26 You will shrivel your soul?
27 You will destroy all your relationships?
28 You might be- you might work too hard and ruin your health?
29 And your body?
30 Why.
31 Because you have run aground on the rocks of a moral spiritual reality that's *there*

Constructed dialogue (beginning line 11) again pits preacher directly against the animated, skeptical interlocutor. In line 13, the skeptic interjects to concede Keller's point before distinguishing between two different cases where universal truth may or may not be a relevant category: the "empirical realm" vs. the "moral spiritual realm." Keller's response, as pastor, to the skeptic's suggestion that truth might not matter in the moral realm comes again in the guise of a colloquized sequence, with repeated challenges to his interlocutor, "Oh really?" (line 17) and "Oh yeah?" (line 18), which employ a prosodic contour conventionally associated with incredulity. This exchange casts an initial shadow of doubt on the notion - defended by the skeptic - that moral and spiritual truths are merely relative. It further positions Keller to elaborate an argument against the idea in the following lines (20-31), in which (again) the use of the second person "you" suggests direct address.

We see the same confrontational footing at work in (P), where Keller responds to charges of the church's injustice toward the poor. Before the transcript begins, Keller has invoked the example of Martin Luther King Jr. (the "He" of line 1), who will go on to refute the idea (the "argument" of line 15) that Christianity has been falsified through its past injustices, and will argue instead that a more vibrant, well-informed faith – one that is "truer" to its roots – is required. Though Keller incorporates extensive constructed dialogue as he takes on the voice of

King in this excerpt, my interest here is in the ventriloquized voice of the audience which comes afterward, starting in line 24. Through the skeptic's voice, we see again an argument that Keller constructs, only to then dismantle:

(P)

1 He says
2 **No what the**
3 **what you need is *truer* belief, deeper belief,**
4 **get to the heart of Christian faith,**
5 **see what it really teaches!**
6 **What is at the center of the Christian faith?**
7 **A man who died a victim of injustice**
8 **and who preaches good news to the poor.**
9 And he says
10 **The solution to the injustice of Christians**
11 **is not less but more Christianity**
12 **truer Christianity**
13 **deeper Christianity.**
14 Hmm!
15 And therefore, he says the argument doesn't wash.
16 Doesn't mean there hasn't been a *terrible* record of oppression done by the church
17 But it's by no means any argument
18 for the falsity of Christianity,
19 if anything, it's an argument for getting in touch with the truth of it.
20 ...
21 Isn't that something?
22 And don't you see,
23 Listen.
24 If you say
25 **I can't believe in Christianity because of uh**
26 **of the way in which it's treated the poor.**
27 You don't really understand the poor.
28 Because, from the inside of poverty, the gospel looks wonderful.
29 You don't really understand.
30 And if you say
31 **Well it's a**
32 **it's an argument against the truth of Christianity.**
33 Uh- you're wrong!
34 Ask Martin Luther King Jr.
35 /laughs/
36 On the other hand,
37 if you're a Christian,
38 you can't walk out of this arg,

39 y'know you can't deal with this argument triumphalistically can you?
40 Absolutely not.
41 It just cuts us down.
42 It knocks us down.
43 It's the only possible way.

To repeat, of interest here is Keller's ventriloquizing his audience as he rebuts the argument that the church's past injustices invalidate Christian faith. His pause in line 20 functions as something of a pivot point in his (counter)argument between voicing MLK and addressing his listeners directly, one after which he shifts back into his characteristic conversational style. For instance, line 21, "Isn't that something?" functions as both a positive evaluation of King's logic, and also an invitation to the skeptic to judge for herself (with an affirmative response preferred to his question given its syntactic form). Lines 22-23 again enlist listener involvement: "Don't you see" (line 22), prompts agreement with a forthcoming argument, while "Listen" (line 23) reinforces conversationality; listening is exactly what the audience has been doing for the past twenty-seven minutes – it is clearly not a literal command, but rather a discourse marker used as a challenge (i.e., "Look." See Schiffrin, 1987:327).

Again, as foil, the skeptic articulates arguments rejected by the pastor. She first speaks in lines 25-26, "I can't believe in Christianity because of uh/of the way in which it's treated the poor," a position Keller as pastor bluntly rebuffs in his next turn in his own voice, line 26: "You don't really understand the poor." The colloquized sequence continues in lines 31-32 as the skeptical figure pursues a different angle. Lines 31-32 ("Well it's a/ it's an argument...") are prefaced by "well" which Schiffrin (1987) calls a "response marker," one which "locates a speaker as a respondent to one level of discourse and allows a temporary release from others" (187) – a release, in this case, from the argument that the poor embrace Christianity (line 28). In other words, it may be true that the poor embrace Christianity, but the religion's checkered

history still discredits it (lines 31-32: “it’s a/ it’s an argument against the truth of Christianity”). Here we see again how, in this special type of constructed dialogue, the ventriloquized figure engages in simulated conversation with the ventriloquizer, adapting to the latter’s shifting arguments. Keller’s rejoinder (line 33: “Uh- you’re wrong!”) again lacks any redressive action (Brown & Levinson 1987:69) to mitigate the threat to his listeners’ face. Confrontation dominates their colloquized talk, at least momentarily. But Keller’s facetious, closing rebuff involves directs the skeptic to go “Ask Martin Luther King Jr.” (line 34). Following this rhetorical challenge, Keller laughs (line 35), perhaps at the ridiculous nature of the command – though it is one which nonetheless reinforces the authority of his own message by reminding the listener that someone with the stature of MLK stands behind it.¹⁶

As is typical for these rare moments of “open conflict” with his ventriloquized listener, Keller does not belabor the point of contention, but rather shifts the frame of the conversation to admonishing the Christian listener of her responsibility faced with the faith’s checkered history. In so doing, he again addresses himself directly to the listener in lines 38-43: “you can’t walk out of this arg./y’know you can’t deal with this argument triumphalistically can you?/Absolutely not./It just cuts us down./It knocks us down./It’s the only possible way.” While not ventriloquizing them, Keller’s remarks to his Christian listeners retains his hallmark interactive style: he includes response-demanding utterances such as directives and interrogatives, as well as what Malmström (2016) calls “self-mention,” or the inclusion of the speaker’s personal experience or perspective as part of a larger argument, seen here in Keller’s use of the 1st person plural pronoun in, for example, in line 42 “It knocks us down”, line 42.

¹⁶ It is perhaps telling that Keller frames the reminder in this way: inviting the listener to strike up a conversation with a historical figure.

My analysis throughout these examples has shown how in animating the skeptic as a foil, Keller puts arguments in the mouth of his hypothetical interlocutor, only to out-manuever her in his responses. Thus, voicing the listener allows Keller to best showcase the strengths of his arguments while highlighting the weaknesses of the opposing position. Occasionally the colloquized sequences exhibit a markedly different, adversarial footing from the inviting, collaborative one which usually characterizes these moments of simulated conversation. Yet the examples seen here mark some of the most dramatic moments in the entire sermon series in which listeners may be drawn into the hypothetical exchange unfolding before them. Keller's use of the second-person pronoun "you" seems increasingly to designate the local, ratified listener, while his response-demanding utterances pierce through the comfortable distance that the Sunday morning audience might have assumed would separate them from the minister on stage.

4.6 Conclusion

Is a sermon truly "by nature, a monologic genre, whereby no response from the listeners is expected or would be deemed appropriate" (Howard-Malverde 1998: 589)? Yes and no. Certainly, by virtue of a sermon's typical participation framework (Goffman, 1981), the answer would have to be "yes": the addressees are ratified listeners, but not speakers. But as this study, as part of a growing body of work has shown, sermons – at least in the West – now exhibit numerous interactive traits which represent a generic shift, a "turn-to-the-listener" (Malmström, 2016) that has conferred a dialogic quality on their performance.

The practice of strategically mimicking conversation as a means of creating audience involvement in a monologic context is not unique to sermons. From law school professors

dramatizing important cases in their lectures (Mertz, 2007), to heads of state personalizing political speeches (O’Connell et al., 2010; Vitale, 2014), multiple genres of public, institutional discourse exhibit dialogic properties consistent with what Fairclough (1994) calls “conversationalization.” A variety of theoretical lenses have been applied to document this shift in various ways, including analyses of interrogatives and other “response-demanding utterances” (Talbot, 1995), forms of address (Montgomery, 1986), colloquialisms (Vitale, 2014), narratives (Matwick & Matwick, 2014), etc. In sermonic discourse, many of the same phenomena are cited as evidence of a “turn-to-the-listener,” with the addition of certain intertextual features such as shared textual references (Malmström, 2015b) or the “taking on [of] voices” (Tannen’s [2009] expression; see also Howard-Malverde, 1998; Tomlinson, 2012).

In this vein, the foregoing analysis has revealed multiple new cracks in the monologic facade of sermonic discourse – cracks extending outward, as it were, from those previously uncovered. Chief among them are various forms of ventriloquizing the co-present audience, an audience which (unlike in the cases of Howard-Malverde and Tomlinson) reacts to the preacher’s message, and to whom the preacher responds in turn. For the minister in question, this dialogic dynamic does not arise by chance. In his (2015) book, *Preaching*, Keller offers the following advice to the aspiring pastor:

The best preachers speak to each type of listener very personally. You can do this by posing direct questions to the audience, inquiries that call for a response in the heart. Ask, “How many of you know that this past week you twisted the truth or omitted part of the truth in order to look good?” and follow it with a pause. This is far more personal and attention riveting than a mere statement like “Many people twist the truth or tell half-truths to reach their own ends.” Talk to the people; ask direct questions. Be ready for the occasional person who will really answer you back! But the goal is to give people the space to answer in their minds/hearts— in effect, carrying on a dialogue with you.
(Keller, 2015:185)

Indeed, Keller relentlessly engages the co-present audience during his sermons, and his concern for dialogue leads, not infrequently, to his constructing it himself.

Playing both parts, the preacher and the listener, enables Keller to accomplish key interpersonal as well as argumentative work. The ventriloquized listener questions and objects where the actual listener cannot, clarifying confusing statements and throwing the sermon's major arguments into relief. She reacts to surprising or potentially upsetting claims with plausible emotion, and her informed ripostes to the preacher's points showcase her intellect. She represents, in short, a model figure with whom the actual skeptic might reasonably identify. The preacher's responses, in turn, position him as an approachable conversation partner, and one who takes seriously the experiences and concerns of his listener. And yet, even as he affirms certain positions she holds, he deconstructs others, occasionally with stark directness. In her role as foil, the ideal listener makes plain (sometimes painfully so), where the actual listener needs to reconsider her beliefs.

Operating along both interpersonal and argumentative dimensions, then, ventriloquizing both builds rapport and increases conversational involvement. Keller establishes collaborative footing both in his egalitarian mode of addressing his virtual interlocutor as well as in his embodied empathy, his simulation of listener reactions which demonstrate awareness of the impact of his message. But his colloquized interchanges with his audience also reflect his efforts to reason together with them – to involve them in constructing and evaluating his arguments.

Along with the sound of language, Tannen (1997:141) identifies “sense-making” as the second twin engine of conversational involvement; that is, when “hearers or readers become participants in the creation of discourse.” At this point, the intellectual and emotional planes touch:

I suggest, moreover, that these two types of involvement are necessary for communication, and that they work in part by creating emotional involvement. People understand information better - perhaps only - if they have discovered it for themselves rather than being told it. Listeners and readers not only understand information better but care more about it – understand it *because* they care about it – if they have worked to make its meaning. (Tannen, 1997: 141)

Thus, Keller labors to deliver his message in way that will be “far more personal and attention riveting than a mere statement.” In preaching, he invites his listener up on to the stage (or perhaps himself down into the pew?) in order to consider together the merits of his case for faith.

CHAPTER FIVE: VOICES FROM THE GOOD BOOK

5.1 Introduction

Up until now, this study has considered the way that constructed dialogue frames knowledge claims – whether arguments about morality or religious history or the plausibility of Christian doctrine – so as to bolster their credibility. In this final analytical chapter, we will consider a third context for evangelical Christian discourse, small group Bible study, in which constructed dialogue also functions as an argument-framing device, but this time as a tool for the communal, interpretive work involved in analyzing an ancient text. Here, I explore how voicing Biblical figures' inner speech enables study members to explain the text by going beyond the narrative as originally written, creating a psychological profile for the characters analyzed which contextualizes their actions in ways intelligible – or *reasonable* – to the modern believer. Constructed dialogue's ability to convey, simultaneously, propositional content as well as affective stances via contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) makes it a singularly powerful epistemic resource in the project of group interpretation: it enables study members to display evidence for their understanding of the text by suggesting various motivations Biblical figures may have had, all couched in recognizable paralinguistic elements that make these characters seem relatable to the 21st century believer.

Lay hermeneutic practices with respect to the Bible have received attention across the social sciences. Anthropologists Malley (2004) and Bielo (2009) devote entire monographs to the description of evangelical interpretative strategies, revealing readers' underlying assumptions about everything from the unity and infallibility of the text to the manner in which individuals read for personal relevance, discovering confirmation for pre-existing ideas in the Scriptures. In

a more linguistic vein, Loeb (2014), Nissi (2013), and Lehtinen (2005) exemplify how a detailed examination of conversations about the Bible turns up a plethora of devices designed to facilitate the interpretive process, for example various forms of agreement or disagreement, or the use of narratives to display comprehension.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Bible study represents a tremendous confluence of activities in which participants, through their interaction with each other's spoken words and the Scriptures' written ones, work to develop a coherent sense of self and worldview. These are formative events in the lives of the faithful, places where they sense and articulate, often in new ways for themselves, what distinguishes them from the world outside. Bielo (2011:637) identifies Bible study as a venue where members engage in "scripture reading, interpretive discourse, identity performance, and cultural (re)production." But this characterization of Bible study as a site for identity performance, accurate on one level, must not obscure the fact that on another level these meetings are, in Goffman's terms, "backstage" events in the scheme of religious discourse (see Goffman, 1990). Participants routinely let down their guard – are in fact encouraged to do so – to better engage spiritual questions and struggles, to allow for individual doubt and confusion to be absorbed and processed by the group. As Luhrmann's (2012) intriguing ethnography of American evangelicals relates, doubt constitutes – perhaps unexpectedly for the skeptical outside observer – a ubiquitous feature of the spiritual landscape for many avowedly observant believers. Even when serious doubt is not at issue, Bible study still occasions a variety of friendly self and group criticism, earnest questioning, and an iterative reconsidering of one's identity and purpose, all made possible by the trust built up in these close-knit communities of believers who see themselves belonging to the same family.

Very little of all this, however, appears in typical studies of other kinds of Christian discourse: a focus on sermons (e.g., Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Wharry, 2003; Ethelston, 2009), worship services (Shoaps, 2002), proselytism (Harding, 1987), and religious rhetoric in politics (Dreisbach, 2011; Knuston, 2011) remains rooted in “frontstage” phenomena, where the public face of faith dominates. While these speech events, the various forms of publically-oriented¹⁷ presentation, exposition, or recommendation of the faith are of course interesting in their own right, the relative dearth of research into the more intimate settings where believers consciously seek to “grow in faith” has meant that the language most immediately bound up in the way evangelicals think about their own beliefs has not received adequate attention (some exceptions will be discussed in the literature review below).

As study members interpret the Scriptures, they interpret their own lives, a process which is in fact highly dialectical: lived experience in turn constitutes one of the primary heuristics which lay readers of the Bible employ to understand it (see, for example, Lehtinen, 2005). While from the linguist’s perspective the backstage of Bible study affords myriad potential angles for analysis, this central interpretive engine of the speech event, what Nissi (2013) calls its “core institutional task,” has drawn the most attention in the literature (linguistic and otherwise). Indeed, Bible study naturally lends itself to examination as a kind of community of practice, defined by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) as “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor” (464).

¹⁷ “Public” as used here is a matter of degree: one can consider the non-Christian world the “public” of a particular religious figure’s efforts to evangelize, but equally, as is the case of sermons, one may point to the congregation as type of public for whom speech must be monitored in more careful, constraining ways. As Goffman notes, “while there is a tendency for a region to become identified as the front region or back region of a performance with which it is regularly associated, still there are many regions which function at one time and in one sense as a front region, and at another time and in another sense as a back region” (Goffman, 1990: 126 – my thanks to Heidi Hamilton for pointing out Goffman’s nuanced use of these terms).

In this chapter I argue that constructed dialogue serves as a flexible interpretive device which Bible study members employ in order to understand the ancient Biblical text more fully. Specifically, I show how constructing the inner mental states of different Biblical figures – their thoughts, motivations, feelings, self-talk – enables study participants to identify with, and derive meaning from the texts they study. In fact, the practice constitutes a thoroughly banal and ubiquitous feature of Bible study conversation, an observation which struck me both in my fieldwork and personal experience in different studies. Those members I interviewed also confirmed the routineness of this practice. Malley (2004) discusses the phenomenon in developing his portrait of evangelical interpretive traditions, offering the example of a pastor who is delivering a sermon on a passage from the New Testament book of Romans (Romans 1:1-7), an early letter from the apostle Paul to the church at Rome. At one point the pastor, commenting on the sixth verse (“And you [members of the Roman church] also are among those who are called to belong in Jesus Christ”), explains:

What did [verse 6] mean for Paul? It meant that he had a sense of mission, of call. It meant that he went with a spirit of service, to be a slave to Christ. It meant that he focused on the gospel of God regarding his son, the message of the Son of God. It meant that he had confidence in who Christ was, his Lord...That was what drove him. You also are called to belong to Jesus Christ. So it means all of those things for us as well. Do we sense a call to be involved in what God wants us to do? Are we willing to approach it with a spirit of service? Do we have that same confidence in Jesus Christ as our Lord?
(Malley 2004: 116-117)

Malley observes that the pastor’s construction of a “psychological profile” for Paul – a description of his motivation and attitude – is quickly leveraged to exhort his own congregation to hear and obey God’s call. Such a move captures nicely the process of what I’ll call the “psychologizing” of a text as a method of rendering it more accessible and immediate for the

modern believer's life. Malley describes this phenomenon as part of the reader's "hermeneutic imagination":

...Bible readers, in searching to find a text's relevance to their lives, can go beyond a text as given. Not only can they contextualize it either historically or devotionally, but they may also employ the hermeneutic imagination—expansion of a term's semantic field, paraphrase, elaboration, folk psychology—to go beyond a text as given and to establish the relevance of the text to their lives. (Malley, 2004:117)

As shall be seen, the same connection between the psychologizing of the text and establishing its relevance to everyday life emerges in my data, though it is not constructed dialogue's sole interpretive function. Building upon Malley's account, I will show how constructed dialogue facilitates the construction of a psychological profile in particularly vivid ways, not merely describing how Biblical figures might have felt, but *depicting* these feelings through quotation (Clark & Gerrig, 1990).

Often study members have recourse to representing Biblical figures' inner speech in wrestling with passages that are troublesome or initially incomprehensible. To the outsider, the idea of a religious believer finding (and potentially declaring) a passage from her holy text inscrutable or objectionable may come as something of a surprise. Yet as Luhrmann (2012) and Wuthnow (2012) amply demonstrate, wrestling with doubt is a frequent, almost unremarkable feature even in the world of committed religious people, evangelical Christians included. In one of my recorded studies, a young woman reflected on the apocalyptic language certain New Testament writers employ and its implications that the world would soon be ending. These insinuations troubled her, and cast doubt on the reliability of the Bible as a whole: "I've always been like, 'They thought the world was going to end, and it didn't, so this is all fake'" she said. A group leader openly admitted one evening, after nearly half an hour of discussion, "I struggle with what the application of this passage is." As we move into our discussion of constructed

dialogue as a framing device for interpretive claims in Bible study, it is important to bear in mind that this communal hermeneutic activity is not simply an intellectual exercise for many participants: it is a moment in which believers attempt to reconcile their modern lives to an ancient text, to both make sense of and live by its message. This is not always, or perhaps even usually, a straightforward task, given the enormous cultural and chronological distance which separates the original writing from a Wednesday night Bible study in 21st century America. By exploring the process of psychologizing the text, my aim is to show how constructed dialogue serves as an important resource in this enterprise.

The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows: I will first review literature on Bible study from both anthropological and linguistic perspectives, highlighting points of intersection along the way. The next section is devoted to the methodology employed. Following this is an analysis of how constructed dialogue serves as an interpretive aid in various ways centered around the elaboration of a psychological profile of different Biblical figures. I conclude with reflections on how the perspective on Bible study taken here complements and extends previous treatments of this institution.

5.2 Bible study from anthropological and linguistic perspectives

I first turn to two ethnographic studies on evangelical Bible reading from the anthropology of religion to which I will dedicate significant space in this review given their breadth and importance for our holistic understanding of Bible study. These are Brian Malley's (2004) *How the Bible Works: An Anthropological Study of Evangelical Biblicism* and James Bielo's (2009) *Words Upon the Word: An Ethnography of Evangelical Group Bible Study*. These rich accounts of Bible study dynamics constitute a foundation upon which linguistic

theory may profitably build. Indeed, throughout this survey I have interspersed a selection of linguistic studies whose points of connection with the two ethnographies, even though not in explicit dialogue with them, nevertheless highlight the potential synergy between the two sister disciplines in understanding this institution.

Malley's (2004) investigation of evangelical Bible reading deals directly with the question of how participants establish the meaning of scriptural texts – how is the text understood? He builds a case against the folk hermeneutic idea whereby Biblical texts have set meanings, and that people read texts to arrive at those meanings. Instead, he maintains that evangelicals are inheritors of an “interpretive tradition” in which a set of beliefs is transmitted along with the attribution of those beliefs to a text, the Bible. The tradition presents the text as an object for hermeneutic activity, but the goal of that hermeneutic activity is not so much to establish the meaning of the text as to establish “transitivity” or connection between the text and beliefs. The tradition emphasizes the *fact* of connection more than of particular connections (84-85). Thus a great deal of “what the Bible says” may be transmitted quite apart from actual exegesis.

For example, Malley points to one instance where an already established doctrine is “transformed” into an interpretation: in an adult Sunday school class he attended, the instructor led the class through an argument of why certain things might still be impossible for an omnipotent, holy God (e.g., God cannot lie, cannot sin). The class's study guide quoted a number of Protestant and Catholic theologians, tracing back to the church father St. Augustine, who had originally made the case in purely philosophical terms, without reference to the Bible. Yet, as Malley shows, the modern Evangelical embrace of this argument, following historic Protestant precedent, involves extensive cross-referencing to Biblical passages seen to

corroborate the theological principle. Thus, a belief about the limits of God's power is made into an interpretation: it comes "to be regarded as something the Bible says rather than as a proposition to be believed on rational grounds alone" (78).

Indeed the transformation of an idea to an interpretation in scripture has been documented in linguists' accounts of Bible study as well. Along the same lines as Malley, Todd (2013) challenges what he calls an "idealized" view of group interpretative practice within the discipline of practical theology (70), the study of how theological tenets inform, and/or ought to inform, actual religious practices.¹⁸ Rather than a venue where participants pursue a "quest for knowledge," Todd finds that Bible study is driven by "relational concerns," the concerns of participants for each other, and for their larger communities which may include individuals outside the church. Todd frames much of his exposition of relational concerns in terms of the interaction of different of "voices" in Bible study (I understand the term "voices" as used here in its usual metonymic relationship with "perspectives"). For instance, he notes the importance of the group leader's invitation for personal stories, creating a space for the "voice" of the lay people to coexist with his own "modernist historical voice" which focused more on details of textual criticism and theology. Participants' personal experiences were then affirmed, by the leader, as relevant to the Biblical principles underlying the passage under discussion (2013:75-78). In this and other examples, Todd demonstrates how

different interpretative approaches [do] not necessarily involve continued stand-off between them or their conflation...[and] the interpretative approach of the groups is not driven primarily by the philosophical concerns of a particular interpretative strategy.
(Todd, 2013: 81)

¹⁸ Practical theology, as pursued in the Christian tradition, usually entails a prescriptive rather than purely descriptive approach to religious practice.

Malley, too, finds that evangelical Bible reading is driven by a search for principles in the text with personal relevance to members. For example, he observes that for some readers, their individual, devotional reading finishes when they find a passage that is especially meaningful (107). This search relies on assuming a “dual contextualization” of the act of Bible reading: on one hand, the Bible was written by human authors, whose intent “fixed the Bible’s meaning once and for all” (111) and which is intended for God’s people. However, God may speak to an individual at any point in history through some passage of the Bible. There are, thus, different frames – devotional and historical – which must be navigated and which combine to make interpretations of the Bible unlike interpretations of other texts.

However, Malley finds that the evangelical interpretive tradition which licenses reading for personal relevance exists in constant tension,

perennially caught between the Scylla of interpretive freedom and the Charybdis of irrelevance: too much hermeneutic freedom and the tradition disintegrates, losing its epistemological appeal; too little interpretive freedom and the Bible becomes merely an irrelevant historical artifact, rather than the ever-living word of God. (Malley, 2004: 174)

Ironically, the tradition survives, Malley contends, thanks to a divorce between the interpretive prescriptions generated in the theological academies and the hermeneutic practices of everyday believers. He explains that, in the face of the dueling needs of freedom and determinacy, the evangelical interpretive tradition “solves this problem by maintaining fairly rigorous standards of exegesis in its scholarship and quietly ignoring those standards in the churches” (123). In the Bible study I recorded for the present analysis, I also encountered a more free-ranging approach to interpretation, one not particularly attuned to any official, prescriptive exegetical method.

However, Lehtinen’s (2005) narrative analysis of a Finnish Seventh Day Adventist Bible study exemplifies how some measure of hermeneutical control can be exercised within study conversations themselves. He considers the role of “second stories,” identified by Sacks (1992)

as stories other participants in a conversation tell following one speaker's initial narrative, as a means by which members apply Biblical passages to their own lives, affiliating with one another as they seek to relate their experience to that of other members and to Biblical characters in the text under examination. The group considered has a designated leader – a “teacher” who leads members through an “international study book” featuring Biblical texts and related questions. Lehtinen argues that the teacher plays an important role in this case, as s/he determines the “proper experience” which a given passage supposedly describes, questions the rest of the group about how they relate to that experience, and then evaluates participants' comments. In this regard, the Bible study teacher's talk resembles that of a classroom instructor employing a question-answer-comment format.

Similarly, Kinney (1998) employs Goffman's (1974, 1981) notions framing and footing in a discourse analysis of a church discussion group to illuminate how group leaders discursively construct their roles by alternating between various footings. Nearly all of these, Kinney finds, serve to ground the leader's authority as either Manager, Clarifier, Evaluator, Fact-giver, etc. Her study raises the important issue of hierarchical structure even within an ostensibly democratic small group. The overall question of hermeneutical authority, then, seems to vary from case to case and may be more complicated than Malley (2004) implies.

I will now consider the other substantial ethnographic account of evangelical Bible study whose findings are suggestive for linguistic inquiry. James Bielo's (2007, 2009) in-depth ethnography of multiple Bible studies attempts to move beyond the observation that most evangelicals read the scriptures with an eye toward meanings which seem personally relevant. He maintains that a “more thorough account must understand how readers align themselves in specific types of relationship with biblical texts” (2009:60). Specifically, he continues

[w]hen reading the Bible, evangelicals place themselves in some form of ideological relationship with their sacred text...they establish how they relate to what is being portrayed. This takes shape around a series of questions: am I doing what I understand the Bible to be saying? Is my life in conflict with scripture? Am I working toward the example set forth by biblical characters? Is scripture challenging my life of faith and daily habits? Is it affirming them? (Bielo, 2009:60)

Bielo observes that small group Bible studies, like any group, involve expectations about the purpose and interactive norms of the discourse to which they give rise. He employs Tannen and Wallat's (1987) notion of interactive frames as a heuristic to understand how participants navigate between two main expectations which emerge across each of the groups he analyzes: the expectation of personal sharing and intimacy, and that of analytical discussion (Bielo 2007:62-63). While groups differ as to their emphases, none pursues intimacy to the exclusion of Biblical analysis, or vice versa. Interestingly, Bielo demonstrates that this is because, despite their ostensibly different means, talk in both of these frames is directed toward the common end of spiritual growth.

Nissi (2013) likewise examines a dimension of the interpretation/solidarity tension in her investigation of various forms and functions of disagreement within a Finnish young-adult Bible study. Given what she calls the "core institutional task" of Bible study, generating meaning for the text under investigation, Nissi argues that disagreement serves as an important driving force in group interpretation, especially in cases where no group member is a clear textual authority (788). Disagreement strategies range from "explicit," for example *denials* in which contested views clearly cannot coexist, to more indirect forms, such as *additions* in which an alternative reading is suggested alongside a previously offered interpretation. Explicit disagreements induce participants to settle upon an interpretation, to reconcile conflicting views into a "coherent whole" (786), whereas indirect disagreements like *corrections* and *additions* do not produce the same impetus to find consensus.

Though not directly addressing the interpretation/solidarity tension, Loeb's (2014) conversation analysis of "call and response" in an African-American Catholic Bible study nevertheless reveals how a group can simultaneously pursue both Biblical understanding and a sense of community. In a "call and response" format, participants who do not currently hold the floor nonetheless engage in agreeing with, continuing, assessing, and confirming utterances of the main speaker. These various functions of backchanneling, which comprise the *response* in call and response style, "create a basis for shared knowledge that supports a communal and egalitarian religious experience" (6) as they enable multiple participants to emphasize their alignment with the speaker's point of view. For example, continuers like "mmhmm" or expressions of confirmation such as "that's right" signal listener assent and are deployed in a way sensitive to the stage of the main speaker's turn, whether coming mid-course or near the end. These different forms of "response" reveal shared understandings of the religious life that are reaffirmed in Bible study. Within this format, religious experience is simultaneously personal and public as "no speaker is alone in their religion or in their speech" (15).

Loeb's findings neatly echo Bielo's contention, cited earlier, that Bible study represents "a crucial institution providing a regular, collective forum for scripture reading, interpretive discourse, identity performance, and cultural (re)production." Identity performance and cultural reproduction also constitute central themes in Sawin's (2013) account of how masculinity is performed and negotiated in an American evangelical men's Bible study. Noting several competing models of masculine identity, including the "Larger American" hegemonic model of the strong, rebel, macho man as well as the "Evangelical" model of the humble, temperate, servant-leader, Sawin highlights how participants draw on divergent models of masculinity simultaneously, certain elements of which are seen as compatible in the local context. He

employs Goffman's (1977) notion of "gender schedules," summarized as "lists of semiotic resources which need be checked off in order for a performer to be considered to have played his part authentically and accurately" (Sawin, 2013: 3), to describe the sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradicting models of masculinity available to participants. For example, over the course of recounting a humorous story of a cooking mishap, one young man encounters strong disagreement from the study leader about the taste of a certain food. When the storyteller defends the food, the leader swiftly aligns with him, eventually agreeing that the dish can actually be delicious if prepared properly. The interchange draws on elements from two different models of masculinity: the "Larger American" stereotype of men being "dangerous in the kitchen" and able to disagree vehemently with each other, but also the "Evangelical" emphasis on humility – especially from the group's leader – and willingness to defer to others.

Finally, Szuchewycz's (1994) analysis of a charismatic Catholic prayer group, though not a Bible study, provides many potential points of contact with Bible study discourse, especially in terms of offering interpretations of spiritual texts like hymns. He examines a variety of discursive strategies members employ to establish the spiritual authority of member contributions as well as a sense of coherence across spontaneous speech events. Evidential markers and the repetition of specific words or themes accomplish these goals. In terms of the former, participants index spiritual authority for their contributions by construing themselves as the semantic patients of the Holy Spirit's influence: as "being led" to a certain conclusion or "getting" a message or reading. Intertextually, a key evidential element involves the display of "confirmations" of a member's message: narratives shared by the contributing member or a different individual which serve to reinforce the original message as God-given. As Szuchewycz explains, the linkages created between a message and subsequent confirmations of that message

which bear some thematic resemblance are “interpreted as evidence of the spiritual status of the individual contribution, and ultimately of the theme itself; they are thus crucial in warranting both as spiritually mediated speech” (398). Additionally, they affirm previous speakers’ contributions, an important gesture of solidarity.

In sum, the literature on Bible study has often explored the discursive establishment and maintenance of social relationships through the communal act of scriptural study on one hand, and on the other it has focused on the meaning-making process itself: how is the text conceived of and read? This chapter on constructed dialogue as an interpretive device falls mostly in the latter category: my primary aim is to show how taking on Biblical voices enables readers to experience their sacred text more directly. However, as we shall see, even through its hermeneutic function constructed dialogue remains porous to interpersonal dynamics, occasionally serving as a strategy by which readers deflect responsibility for theological principles in the text which they find objectionable.

5.3 Methods and data

In examining Bible study discourse, I engaged in an “ethnographically-informed discourse analysis” (Duranti, 2003: 115) involving participant observation of Bible studies for a period of a few months. I originally recorded conversations from three groups around Washington D.C. whom I contacted through my local church network, all groups being part of congregations associated with the Anglican Church of North America. Out of roughly two dozen groups contacted, these were the only ones to unanimously agree to participate in the study, a process which asked individual group members to vote to participate by secret ballot. However, one of the three groups had extremely spotty attendance, and I was forced to drop this

group from the study. Additionally, the data examined here come from only one of the two remaining groups, whose interpretive use of constructed dialogue, especially when voicing the inner thoughts of Biblical figures, was far more frequent than the other's. Why this proved to be the case is hard to say. One factor which may have influenced the distribution was the nature of the texts under discussion. The group reported on here was discussing a narrative which seemed to lend itself to questions about characters' motivations, while the other group was focusing on an epistle where what the Biblical writer was thinking was obvious (or so it seemed) from his prose. Further research is needed to establish how different genres of texts might influence the various forms of argumentation readers engage in as they interpret them.

The Bible study considered here, from a church I will call "Holy Trinity," met weekly in members' homes around Washington DC, usually alternating locations from meeting to meeting. The Holy Trinity group had six core members and was joined by a large number of more sporadic attendees who came only once or twice during my observation period, meaning that average attendance at a given meeting was eight or nine. Most members were in their early to late thirties. This group was comprised mostly of married couples, several with young children. Members of the group were highly educated – many with graduate degrees – and working as professionals in the greater D.C. metro area. The study leader, Manuel¹⁹, a former pastor and current director of humanitarian operations for a large NGO, attended with his wife Justine, who worked for the same organization. The study often was held at the house of Victor and Becca; Victor worked in international affairs while Becca was home with their two young children. Fred, a sales consultant, attended with his wife Linh, who also worked at Manuel and Justine's organization. Blythe and Aaron were the two lone single members of the group; Blythe an

¹⁹ All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

elementary school science teacher and Aaron, a government lawyer. In an interesting twist, nearly all of the core attendees of the Holy Trinity group, with the exception of Manuel, attended the same evangelical college in the Midwest (though at different times).

I began observing the group in November of 2014 and continued to attend regularly, without recording, until the end of January 2015, when the project's IRB application was approved. This initial "off the record" observational phase had two main purposes: first, for study members and me to become acquainted, and for me to become familiar with how the group structured its meetings; second, to mitigate as much as possible the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972), wherein the observer, by his or her simple presence, alters the phenomenon being observed. I recorded sessions beginning in February, 2015 and continued through June, 2015; if I could not be present for an evening, members would record themselves and share the recordings with me. I declined to record times of personal sharing and prayer which usually followed the main study session given the level of intimacy of such moments.

I described the study to participants both in IRB-required materials and in person as an investigation into the conversation of Bible study: "How do groups of believers interpret the text together?" was the usual form of my overarching question offered to my participants. The group reported on here is associated with the church I was attending at the time (the other was associated with a church of the same denomination). While I did not know any of the participants well before beginning the study, my status as a co-believer – and of the same denomination – meant that I was accepted with a measure of trust and a minimum of disruption in the life of the group, something other researchers of different, or no faith background have experienced quite differently in fieldwork with religious communities (see, for example, Harding, 1987, who was the object of proselytization; also Shoaps, 2002).

As is common practice in interactional sociolinguistics, I conducted “playback interviews” (see Tannen, 1992; Gordon, 2011) with participants in which I asked questions both about excerpts from recorded conversations as well as about individuals’ experiences in Bible study generally. The purpose of these interviews was to furnish the study’s discourse analysis with a richer context for interpretation, and to serve as a corrective for my own interpretations where participants had different views of a given interaction.

5.4 Constructed dialogue as hermeneutic tool in evangelical bible study

Through the examples in this section, I will show how constructed dialogue functions as an argument-framing device, a tool for the interpretive work involved in analyzing the Bible as a group. Specifically, I demonstrate the way that voicing Biblical figures’ inner speech enables study members to explain the text by going beyond the narrative as originally written, creating a psychological profile for the characters analyzed which contextualizes their actions. Constructed dialogue serves as potent resource in this enterprise, as it can simultaneously convey propositional content and affective stances via contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982). Group members construct dialogue of Biblical figures as an interpretive strategy, displaying evidence for their understanding of the text by suggesting various motivations Biblical figures may have had. In addition to this dialogue’s contemporary, colloquial register, the paralinguistic cues employed combine make these characters identifiable to the modern reader.

In what follows, I begin by demonstrating how simulating one figure’s inner monologue enables the Holy Trinity group to explain his otherwise mysterious behavior. While the group does not reach an interpretive consensus, multiple members offer plausible accounts of the narrative employing constructed dialogue, “filling in” elements of the story about which the text

itself is silent. Next, I describe how a well-documented effect of constructed dialogue, its tendency to increase a sense of vividness and, as a corollary, conversational involvement (e.g., Tannen, 1986), functions as an interpretive resource in Bible study. Rather than solving a textual problem, in this case, the group's use of constructed dialogue serves to accentuate the experiential, human dimension of the narrative, lessening the distance between the ancient events and their contemporary retelling. Finally, I explore how representing the discourse of a Biblical figure enables one reader to simultaneously offer an interpretation while deflecting responsibility for the troublesome implications it entails. As in the previous two cases, this member's use of constructed dialogue – employed to convey implicit disapproval of the problematic reading she herself offers – reinforces a sense of reasonableness in approaching the text, even at the risk of disagreeing with its apparent message.

5.4.1 Inner thoughts, outward acts

During my observational period, the Holy Trinity group was working its way through the New Testament book of Acts, an account of the early church, its travails, successes, early leadership and community life. The first several examples in this chapter are drawn from a single evening's study which focused on the twentieth chapter of Acts, and specifically the first half the chapter (reproduced below in the English Standard Version, the translation used by most study members. Section headers were inserted by the ESV editors). The passage details parts of the missionary journeys undertaken by the early Christian apostle, Paul, along with a miraculous healing he performed, but which does not receive much attention in the group's discussion. Instead, two questions occupy the Holy Trinity group from this first half of the chapter: 1. Why

was the apostle Paul in a hurry to reach Jerusalem? 2. What enabled Paul to persevere faced with such formidable – often dangerous – opposition?

Paul in Macedonia and Greece

1 After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. 3 There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews²⁰ as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, 6 but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

Eutychus Raised from the Dead

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. 9 And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.” 11 And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. 12 And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

13 But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. 15 And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that

²⁰ The ESV editors specify that the term “the Jews” likely refers to the Jewish religious and political leaders in the various cities. Paul himself was of Jewish origin.

happened to me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

The first question to occupy the study after the reading of this passage revolves around the reason the apostle Paul was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, the subject of the exchange below. Members are analyzing Paul’s whirlwind itinerary which the Acts passage outlines in the first thirteen verses when Justine asks why Paul seems to be rushing to reach Jerusalem. Apparently, the text’s account, in verse 16, that Paul was “hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost” was not understood as a full explanation. As the example proceeds, we see that psychologizing the figure of Paul via constructed dialogue proves instrumental in resolving a question which turns out to not have a straightforward answer in the original text.

(A)

1 Justine: Um...I don’t know if you guys discussed this last week maybe
2 when I wasn’t here but why is he in such a rush to get to Jerusalem?
3
4 Manuel: W-
5 Fred: >Well it’s ‘cause<
6 I mean
7 He kinda says it hére right,
8 that the end is...is near for him
9 and so...he wants to
10 I mean it séems to me like he wants to kind of tie things up
11 before his imprisonment.
12 Manuel: Mmhm
13 Justine: But did he know that because of...like a...vision
14 or because the Holy Spirit tóld him?
15 Fred: I mean that’s what he says in verse twenty-three but whether...
16 that: like is described before I can’t remember...
17 ‘cause in twenty-three it says=
18 Blythe: =Yeah=

19 Fred: /reading/ The Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and
20 afflictions await me
21 Manuel: mmm...
22 Justine: So I guess we're just assuming that the Holy Spirit told him to go to Jerusalem?
23 Fred: [Yeah]
24 Manuel: [Mhmm]
25
26 Justine: Right I guess he yeah I guess says constrained-constrained by the Spirit
27 so maybe, yeah.
28 Fred: [Yeah]
29 Manuel: [Mhm?]
30
31 Fred: 'Mean I wonder too if
32 So kind of like, what you're saying {Justine}²¹
33 in his experiences in...these other tow-
34 like every everywhere he went
35 or not everywhere
36 but often a riot would form
37 and he'd get put in front of some kind of judge, or or council,
38 and so it seems like
39 everywhere he went it got worse and worse and worse
40 so maybe he took that to be the Spirit telling him.. like..
41 **At one point you're not gonna get out of it,**
42 **At one point, like, that's gonna be it.**
43 **You're gonna get imprisoned and you're gonna get=**
44 Manuel: =Mmm=
45 Fred: =um...y'know sentenced.

A closer look at this example reveals how constructed dialogue provides the hermeneutic space for the reader to draw a subtle connection between elements of the Biblical narrative not (obviously) linked in the passage itself. Why is Paul hurrying to Jerusalem? Fred first frames his interpretation, which links Paul's motivation to go to Jerusalem quickly to the imminent danger he has continued to face, as the *prima facie* reading of the text: "He kinda says it here right/ that the end is...is near for him/ and so...he wants to/ I mean it seems to me like he wants to kind of tie things up / before his imprisonment" (lines 5-11). After some discussion of how Paul knew

²¹ Fred uses Justine's real name here. I have replaced this in the transcript with the pseudonym, "Justine" in brackets, a convention followed in other examples below.

he was meant to go to Jerusalem, Justine accepts that Paul knew this from the Holy Spirit, referring to Paul's use of the phrase "constrained by the Spirit" from Acts 20:22 in lines 26 and 27 ("Right I guess he says constrained-constrained by the Spirit/ so maybe, yeah."). Yet this acceptance is hesitant: following a lengthy silence (line 25), Justine hedges her assent twice: "I guess" (line 26) and "so maybe" (line 27). Another extended pause ensues (line 30) before Fred makes a final attempt to synthesize two ideas: that Paul has faced, and will continue to face difficulties and that *therefore* he needs to go to Jerusalem.

Constructed dialogue proves pivotal in constructing this cause-and-effect argument. Fred prefaces his constructed dialogue by situating his present contribution as maintaining topical coherence: "...kind of like, what you're saying Justine" (line 32). Justine's only discernable statement so far – something she could be construed to be "saying," albeit indirectly— is that the Holy Spirit told Paul to go to Jerusalem (line 22). Fred then makes an apparent leap to Paul's previous troubles during his missionary journey (lines 34-37 and line 39) "...everywhere he went/or not everywhere/ but often a riot would form/ and he'd get put in front of some kind of judge or or council/.../everywhere he went it got worse and worse and worse") before establishing a connection. Supposing that the Holy Spirit has been speaking to Paul through his prior brushes with danger which have been increasing in severity, Fred animates the Spirit in dialogue with Paul in lines 40-45: "so maybe he took that to be the Spirit telling him like /At one point you're not gonna get out of it,/ At one point, like, that's gonna be it,/ You're gonna get imprisoned and you're gonna get/.../um...y'know sentenced." These lines of constructed dialogue offer an answer to the question "Why is Paul in a hurry?": Paul's luck will eventually run out in these harrowing missionary encounters; he will be detained indefinitely, thus prevented from reaching the city to which the Holy Spirit has "constrained" him to go. As was

the case with Malley's (2004) pastor, in Fred's efforts at psychologizing the figure of Paul, he has attributed to him a motivation not directly indicated in the Biblical text which nowhere indicates that the Holy Spirit was directing the apostle to hurry to Jerusalem because of mounting dangers.

A deeper puzzle for the group is the question of how Paul was able to face formidable – life-threatening, at times – opposition from people he encountered throughout his missionary journey. Constructed dialogue again creates a window into Paul's mind, though tinted by speculation, through which the Holy Trinity group attempts to understand what could enable the apostle to keep his sangfroid. In the following excerpt, occurring immediately after the stretch of talk discussed above, the study leader, Manuel, is speculating about Paul's inner reactions to being constantly in danger (the "it" of line 2). The question occasions four different members weighing in, all of whom use constructed dialogue at various points in their attempts to explain or to understand Paul's apparent fearlessness:

(B)

- 1 Manuel: I'm not saying like he was...
2 he was trying to put himself in the way of it,
3 But I...I wonder if there was a part of Paul that was saying
4 **Is this gonna be it?**
5 Fred: Mhm
6 Manuel: **Is this gonna be it?**
7 **Like you keep telling me that it's coming.**
8 **S-is this gonna be it?**
9 Fred: [Mhm]
10 Josh: [Hm]
11 Manuel: So he was like..braced for it.
12 Fred: [Yeah]
13 Manuel: [He didn't] mind just like walkin into the middle of the crowd
14 because he'd already been braced by the Spirit
15 Fred: Right
16 Josh: Hm
17 Fred: [Well] an I mean=
18 Manuel: [inaudible]

19 Fred: =so that that kind of
20 would go along with
21 I forget where he says it
22 but he talks about
23 to die is Christ or—
24 [to live is]
25 Manuel: [to live is Christ]
26 Fred: is- what is it?
27 to live is Christ but to die is gain so both are good,
28 so he was always conflicted about like
29 **I would love to get outa here**
30 **and like finally be united with Christ**
31 **but I know that the work I'm doing here is really important**
32 **and that this is this is the duty that God has given me**
33 so...so to your point then, you know
34 the i-the idea that he would...
35 y'know s-see some conflict arising and think
36 **maybe this is** /laughs/
37 **this is my out!**
38 **Maybe this is what the Holy Spirit was... telling me about!**
39 Several: /laughter/
40 Fred: Umm... but in each of those prior cases it wasn't.
41 Manuel: Mm...
42 Linh: Which is pretty remarkable in and of itself
43 Like I mean I think any
44 y'know average person when something
45 y'know persecution's coming, or there's conflict or there's riots and
46 crowds forming the last thing you think is
47 **Oh is it my turn to like...**
48 **walk [right] into that? Is it my [turn to] be arrested?**
49 Manuel: [mmm]
50 Fred: [yeah]
51 Linh: Ummm...so I think in just talking about that
52 just realizing...like how confident he was: of the Holy Spirit
53 Manuel: Mm=
54 Linh: =and of being able to walk
55 into that very boldly
56 Manuel: Mmm
57 Linh: And that's something I almost can't
58 I can't relate to that /laughing/ you know like
59 I can't grasp it almost
60 Manuel: [Mm]
61 Fred: [And] he'd even already been stoned at this point
62 Josh: Mhm
63 Justine: [Yeah]
64 Fred: [Right?] so like he's already died once

65 Manuel: He's he's been through a lot
 66 Linh: /laughs/
 67 Justine: Yeah so I guess at this point he was like
 68 **I'm ready to be done!**
 69 Fred: Yeah
 70 Justine: Like...
 71 Fred: **Don't revive me next time!**
 72 Justine: /laughs/ Right I know!

In this example we see different Bible study members employ constructed dialogue to offer varying interpretations of how the apostle Paul may have faced the considerable dangers of his missionary voyages. After prefacing his comment by denying that Paul was voluntarily seeking to endanger himself (lines 1-2), Manuel animates Paul's thoughts, reusing an expression which Fred had employed in his own constructed dialogue in the previous example ("That's gonna be it"). Manuel says, "Is this gonna be it?/.../Like you keep telling me that it's coming/S-is this gonna be it?" (lines 4;6-8), presenting the group with a hypothetical version of what Paul may have been thinking as he confronted new dangers, one which maintains a coherence with a previous animation of the apostle from (A). Manuel will later describe Paul as being "braced" for danger (lines 11 and 14: "He was like...braced for it/.../...he'd already been braced by the Spirit").

Yet this summary, spoken monologically by Manuel, as Manuel, arguably accomplishes less "psychologizing work" than the preceding constructed dialogue: In lines 4-8, Paul is in dialogue with the Holy Spirit (e.g., line 7, "Like you keep telling me that it's coming"), a trusted guide; he is not simply asking himself rhetorically about his fate. In Manuel's constructed dialogue, Paul speaks informally with the Spirit, and in a peculiarly modern, familiar register, using the contracted form "gonna" as well as the expression "to be it" (meaning "to be the end"). In this case, Manuel's rendition of Paul not only projects an understanding of Paul's inner thoughts, but also recalls Luhrmann's (2012) descriptions of Evangelical prayer life and the

intimacy which believers are encouraged (and socialized) to cultivate with God – speaking to him as an equal and ever-present friend; elements of this appear to be transposed to the ancient apostle’s communication with God as well. More generally, this use of a modern register pervades study members’ constructed dialogue. While the use of an incongruous – in this case anachronistic – register to represent another’s speech often produces humor, the modern register employed in Biblical constructed dialogue rarely has this effect. Instead, it appears to respond to that challenge implicit in the folk wisdom that in order to truly understand a concept, you must explain it “in your own words.” As one study member I interviewed put it,

There’s something about saying something in your own words or as the voice of that person that helps you understand. I think sometimes until we say it in the other voice we don’t really understand, but then something clicks when we have to say it in that other voice.

Fred is next to offer an interpretation of Paul’s willingness to face danger as an early missionary. He agrees with the psychological profile which Manuel has so far elaborated, remarking that it “would go along with” (line 20) a statement Paul had made in one of his epistles in which the apostle seems to be reconciled to (if not eager for) his own death – line 27 “To live is Christ but to die is gain so both are good” – a reference to the New Testament book of Philippians, another of Paul’s epistles (Philippians 1:21 “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”). Fred then suggests how this principle might have been experienced inwardly by Paul through constructed dialogue in lines 28-32: “so he was always conflicted about like/ I would love to get outa here /and like finally be united with Christ/but I know that the work I’m doing here is really important /and that this is this is the duty that God has given me.” Paul’s desire to “get outa here,” meaning to leave this world for the next, and “finally be united with Christ” has immediate implications for the problem of how Paul was able to face constant threats in his missionary work. As Fred explains with more constructed dialogue, this could plausibly mean

that Paul would, “y’know s-see some conflict arising/ and think maybe this is /laughs//this is my out!/ Maybe this is what the Holy Spirit was... telling me about!” (lines 35-38). This formulation of Paul’s thoughts frames each conflict as a potential *opportunity*, a welcome chance to finally depart from the travails of this earthly world, one promised to him by the Holy Spirit.

Linh, Fred’s wife, redirects the group’s attention to how “remarkable” (line 42) such an attitude is, and proceeds to animate the thoughts of “any...average person” (lines 43-44) to contrast with the apostle. Here, constructed dialogue throws into relief just how radical a difference Linh sees in the perspectives of Paul versus an “average” person under threat, one for whom “the last thing you think is/ Oh is it my turn to like.../walk right into that? Is it my turn to be arrested?” (lines 46-48). Shortly after, in an interesting commentary, Linh describes how the group’s conversation has helped her see how instrumental Paul’s trust in the Holy Spirit is in enabling him to persevere: “Ummm...so I think in just talking about that/just realizing...like how confident he was: of the Holy Spirit/...and of being able to walk into that very boldly[...]” (lines 51-55). For Linh, it is apparently the current discussion (“just talking about that”) which has facilitated her understanding (“just realizing”) of Paul’s confidence in the Holy Spirit. Notably, the idea that Paul *was* confident in the Spirit during his run-ins with various antagonists is, as in the previous example, nowhere explicitly stated in the text under discussion; it is a product of the constructed dialogue which group members have attributed to Paul.

Though the group’s efforts at psychologizing Paul through constructed dialogue have led to new insight for Linh, the attitude she now understands Paul to have maintained still seems foreign: “And that’s something I almost can’t / I can’t relate to that /laughing/ you know like/I can’t grasp it almost” (lines 56-59). The original problem of understanding how Paul could have repeatedly endured dangerous situations appears to have resurfaced. What is more, Fred and

Manuel subsequently align with Linh in emphasizing the incredible trials Paul has somehow managed to come through undeterred: Fred mentions, in line 61, how Paul has already been stoned, and in line 64 that he's "already died once" (likely an allusion to the same stoning incident where Paul was taken for dead). Manuel concurs, line 65, that he has "been through a lot." These comments, coming in support of Linh's statement that Paul's disposition is hard to relate to, hard to grasp, cast a shadow of doubt over the interpretive work which has been accomplished so far. Manuel and Fred's attempts to depict Paul as fortified by and secure in the Holy Spirit have apparently not quelled Linh's skepticism. Neither has Fred's notion that Paul, though still attached to his worldly ministry (lines 31-32 "I know that the work I'm doing here is really important/ and that this is this is the duty that God has given me"), longs for union with his God in the afterlife.

In one last attempt at coming to terms with Paul's willingness to endanger himself, the group's final series of comments on the topic also make use of constructed dialogue to approach the question from a different angle. Acknowledging all that Paul has gone through, Justine concludes, in lines 67-68: "Yeah so I guess at this point he was like/I'm ready to be done." Justine has Paul speak here, again, in a distinctively modern register ("I'm ready to be done"), this time as a man resigned to his fate, not one "braced" for conflict or torn between his earthly responsibilities and heavenly rewards. Fred agrees ("Yeah" line 69) and then helps co-construct this discouraged version of Paul in line 71, "Don't revive me next time!".

The group has collectively voiced Paul, then, from three different perspectives via constructed dialogue which each posit a different attitude the apostle might have adopted faced with danger: trusting or "braced," eager to be martyred, and finally, resigned or defeated. Ultimately, the conversation moves on without a consensus as to which attitude was the "true"

one. Very near the end, as we saw, Linh was still expressing difficulty in relating to Paul's frame of mind. Yet even without unanimous agreement, the group's collective effort at psychologizing the passage through constructed dialogue has at least yielded various plausible answers to the original question: what enabled Paul to persevere while facing fierce opposition? By voicing hypothetical thoughts attributed to the apostle, group members have not merely speculated, but *demonstrated* (the main purpose of quotation, as Clark and Gerrig [1990] argue) to each other how he might have steeled himself to persecution. The group has filtered this Biblical passage through various lenses of constructed dialogue, rendering what was once alien and puzzling more intelligible (if not totally convincing) to the modern reader.

In (C), Manuel diverts the group's discussion from the book of Acts to a passage in Paul's letter to the Romans, another New Testament text. Constructed dialogue again functions as a hermeneutic resource in articulating the apostle's supposed inner thoughts which could explain his conduct. Because this segment contains highly contextualized argumentation about the text, I offer some explanatory background before presenting the transcript and analysis.

Following from the previous example, the topic remains Paul's desire to go to Jerusalem. However, Manuel wants the group to consider a certain idea from the Romans letter that, he suggests, could provide clarity for their discussion (but which actually proves to be somewhat of a circuitous detour before it connects to the apostle's return to Jerusalem, at the end of the excerpt). The notion is that of "finishing the work" of Christ (line 11 below) which the apostle Paul reportedly describes in Romans.

This phrase itself (the "it" of line 2) is enigmatic, and Manuel seeks to explicate it before applying it to the current conversation about Paul's missionary itinerary. He suggests that the idea of "finishing the work of Christ" refers to two phenomena, one contemporary and one

historic (an example of Malley’s “dual contextualization” discussed above). For believers like those in the Holy Trinity group meeting in 2015, the phrase designates a role that modern Christians have in furthering the ministry Jesus inaugurated (lines 8-10); historically, the phrase referred to a new wave of evangelization to the Levantine coastlands, one which was foretold in the Jewish prophetic book of Isaiah (referenced in lines 26-31). Jesus’s itinerant ministry had not taken him to the coastlands, and so this was the “work” that Paul would be finishing. Additionally, though, Paul seeks to follow the model of his master, and thus eventually turns back toward Jerusalem (lines 45-49), the link with the original topic of discussion. In offering this interpretation, Manuel animates the inner thoughts of Paul via constructed dialogue:

(C)

1 Manuel: So well, I mean
2 There’s a couple different ways that we could look at it but
3 But it is,
4 it is interesting that Paul seems to
5 seems to be thinking especially in a lot of the letters that he’s writing
6 and uh most especially when he’s talking in Romans
7 he talks about this
8 our participation in Christ’s work is not just *mimicking*
9 but there’s actually a critical part that we play
10 as part of what Jesus is doing
11 and it’s actually finishing the work
12 and he uses this
13 he *uses* that word
14 which is *weird*
15 because the way that we think about it is-
16 y’know Jesus says it is finished.
17 Done. There isn’t anything else that needs to be done...
18 Right?
19 So, it’s, y’know people have *struggled* with
20 well what on the worl-what on Earth did Paul *mean*
21 Fred: Right
22 Manuel: And one of the things that people think is that um
23 Paul, when you watch, when you look at Paul’s missionary journey?
24 Fred: /quietly/ mhmm
25 Manuel: Right
26 That Paul is actually picking up on in Isaiah

27 it says that the *coastlands* will...hope like umm
 28 they'll hope in in God and I f'c I can't remember exactly
 29 the the phrasing of it
 30 But that Paul's missionary journey is actually trying to *do* that
 31 Cause Jesus didn't go to any coastlands
 32 Fred: mmm
 33 Manuel: So like
 34 One theory is that Paul's like
 35 **Huh!**
 36 **>>Well I guess Jesus is going to the coastlands**
 37 **if I go to the coastlands!<<**
 38 Josh: [Mmm mmm]
 39 Manuel: **[I'm goin' to] the coastlands.**
 40 **We're finishing the work.**
 41 And so...but Paul has this
 42 Y'know,
 43 **I am doing Christ's work,**
 44 **Like I'm not just following in his footsteps**
 45 **but I have to do the very same things that he did**
 46 **so [going] to Jerusalem is...**
 47 Frank: [right]
 48 Josh: hmmm
 49 Manuel: **doing the thing that I'm supposed to do**
 50 Frank: mmm

As in the previous examples, constructed dialogue here interpolates various emotional states in the construction of a psychological profile of the character under analysis. In Manuel's animation of his inner monologue, Paul appears excited at the prospect of traveling to the coastlands as Jesus' ambassador as this would be the equivalent of Jesus himself going ("Jesus is going to the coastlands/if I go to the coastlands!" lines 36-37). Given this equivalence, Paul then seems full of resolve in Manuel's voicing: "I'm going to the coastlands!/We're finishing the work" (lines 39-40). These two psychological states – excitement and determination – are not manifest in the Biblical texts under examination, but are rather deduced from the narrative, and then introduced into the apostle's simulated inner speech. The same is true for Paul's sense of obligation to follow Christ's model. Thus, in line 45, Manuel voices Paul, speaking of Jesus: "I have to do the very same things that he did" – a duty Paul does not mention in the Acts passage that frames the

Holy Trinity group's discussion. This is not to say that Paul *never* speaks of following Christ's example in the New Testament or, for that matter, that he never mentions his excitement or determination. But in voicing Paul's thoughts about the particular decisions related to the travel and missionary activity in the passage under examination, Manuel interprets the text as if these motivations were the driving forces behind his plans.

Indeed, as the Holy Trinity group considers the question of why Paul, an early Christian leader, travels to the places he does in his missionary journeys, they often seek to "get inside his head" in order to understand the text, a process I argue is well-served by constructed dialogue. Consider again the depiction of the apostle's inner thoughts in lines 35-37: "Huh! Well I guess Jesus is going to the coastlands/if I go to the coastlands!/I'm going to the coastlands!/We're finishing the work." In Manuel's animation, Paul's excited epiphany is marked by rapid speech and word stress, with discourse markers reflecting a change of information state (huh, well), and the third, final, emphatic repetition of the phrase "the coastlands" expressing a certainty of purpose. Manuel even includes the key phrase in his simulation, "We're finishing the work" (line 40), as evidence that the apostle was thinking in the same terms about his missionary work described in Acts as when he exhorted his co-religionists in the Romans passage referred to earlier. Constructed dialogue, then, has enabled an exegesis of the passage predicated on a plausible, though by no means obvious, view of a character's psychological state. In addition, it has allowed for not only an interpretation of one scriptural text, but two: the intertextual reference to "finishing the work of Christ," an apparent mystery in the context of the letter to the Romans, finds its resolution here in the description of Paul's travels in Acts.

5.4.2 Making the narrative real

Occasionally study members animate the inner thoughts of Biblical figures without trying to solve any special textual problem. Constructed dialogue serves merely to increase the vividness of the narrative, to transport study members from their cushioned, twenty-first century living rooms to the hazardous wilderness of Biblical times. The goal in this case is understanding the text, not in the sense of decoding it linguistically or propositionally, but of reliving it vicariously as a story in a way that the original characters might have experienced the events themselves. So, for example, in (D), from later in the same conversation on Acts 20, the Holy Trinity group discusses the attachment that the apostle Paul (the “he” of line 1) appeared to feel toward each of the nascent churches he visited. In this example, Blythe’s comments reference a variety of New Testament epistles (“the letters” of line 5) written by Paul, and she generalizes about the apostle’s affections far beyond the passage being discussed that evening. In shifting the topic back to Paul’s trajectory toward Jerusalem, Manuel builds on the argument Blythe has been making, demonstrating the anguish Paul likely suffered by voicing his inner monologue (the “little church” Manuel references in line 19 is the church at Ephesus, mentioned in Acts 20, one of the last Paul visits before his return to Jerusalem):

(D)

- 1 Blythe: Like there’s this collective love for each community he’s
2 Manuel: mmhm[mm
3 Blythe: [a part of
4 But like that there are individuals that he so: names and like
5 like the way he names them in the letters
6 like that these are true relationships with these people that he desperately loves.
7 Manuel: Yeah an- and imagining again this tenderness
8 that umm...
9 like him knowing
10 **I’m going to Jerusalem,**
11 **and this is the last time that I will see these people.**
12 **I’m going to the place that will ultimately result in my death.**

13 **Y’know like**
 14 **S-go-I’m going to be imprisoned and the the- this is it.**
 15 **I’m saying goodbye to these people for the last time.**
 16 **I don’t know what’s [gonna *happen* to] them.**
 17 Unknown F: [inaudible]
 18 Josh: mmhmm
 19 Manuel: **I don’t know what’s gonna háppen to this little chùrch that I spent *two years***
 20 **with,**
 21 **Like I don’t know what’s gonna happen to this *community*,**
 22 that he fell in love with.
 23 Y’know like
 24 Imagine the turmoil of that
 25 Like that’s:
 26 that’s pretty powerful

In this case, constructed dialogue does not serve as evidence to settle an interpretive difficulty with a particular passage. Instead, we see the voicing of a Biblical character’s thoughts which depicts inner struggle he purportedly experienced, rendering the narrative more immediate personally relatable to modern readers.

Manuel repeats the basic facts of Paul’s imminent return to Jerusalem (lines 11-15) with a focus on obvious physical and social realities of the kind one would articulate to oneself only in a period of momentous transition, or perhaps an of out-of-body experience: he is leaving, he will not see his companions again, he will soon die, etc. His animation paints a phenomenological portrait which turns out to be more than the sum of its parts: the biographical details serve as the raw material from which Paul’s *experience* of them can be conveyed. The rising pitch and elongated final consonant of “going:” before the falling tone of “to Jerusalem” in line 10, for instance, index hesitant resignation. Repetition of various types permeates Paul’s speech and adds to the gravity of Manuel’s animation: The repeated emphatic stress in lines 11-12 (“this is the lást time that I will sèe these people./ I’m góing to the place that will ultimately result in my death”) suggests the difficulty Paul had in believing what was happening, as if (in Manuel’s animation) he needed to convince himself that major changes were in fact taking place. So, too,

with repetitions of the present progressive (lines 10: “I’m going,” 12: “I’m going,” 14: “I’m going,” 15: “I’m saying”), we see in Manuel’s portrayal the apostle gradually coming to terms with his situation. Repetitions of “I don’t know what’s gonna happen” (lines 16, 19, 21: “I don’t know what’s gonna *happen* to them./I don’t know what’s gonna happen to this little church that I spent *two years* with,/Like I don’t know what’s gonna happen to this *community*”) underscore the apostle’s anxiety for his disciples. By the time Manuel, having switched back into his own voice, issues his concluding imperative to the group to “Imagine the turmoil of that” (line 24), there is little imagining left to do: his preceding turns have furnished the group with a detailed reenactment of Paul’s anguish.

As I have argued, this demonstration of a Biblical figure’s inner thoughts does not resolve a specific question group members had about the passage under discussion. Instead, constructed dialogue functions here, as it has in many places throughout this study, to increase the listener’s sense of “engrossment” (Clark & Gerrig, 1990) – of what it would have been like to “directly experience the depicted aspects of the original event” (793). For the collective hermeneutic enterprise that is Bible study, this type of reenactment of an inner-monologue serves interrelated goals. On the one hand, it is itself an interpretive move, a “statement” about the Biblical narrative – how, for instance, a certain Biblical figure such as the apostle Paul must have experienced events narrated therein. On the other, voicing Biblical figures’ inner speech occasionally enables study members to draw connections from the narrative to their own lives.

For example, in (E), which follows very closely in the conversation after (D) (line numbers are carried over from that example), Linh relates a recent discussion in which she had participated with a different group from Holy Trinity Church, a church membership information course. As she describes her own obligations to her fellow church members, she evokes the

apostle Paul, voicing his inner thoughts about his own fellow believers. By way of background, the idea of “shrinking” from another person, line 44, refers to downplaying one’s faith in the other’s presence, and had been discussed earlier in the study. Also, the phrase “the body of Christ,” line 56, is a metaphorical term for the church community:

(E)

27 Linh: And we were talking about
28 membership and how we’re essential to one another
29 and thinking of it as a family and if, you know
30 in your family, at your family dinner
31 your brother wasn’t there and didn’t show up a lot
32 you’d you’d be missing him like that would be
33 Manuel: mm
34 Linh: something that you would notice right away and I think
35 the way that Paul talks to the church it
36 you know, cause I can also like
37 think of those relationships where I’m like
38 uh, **don’t shrink!** y’know?
39 Josh: mmhm
40 Linh: But if I think about like my family it’s like
41 I don’t have a choice like I can’t shrink
42 Josh: Right
43 Linh: You know like I have to be there because
44 It’s not the same when they’re not there
45 It’s not the same when they’ve drifted apart
46 And so
47 I think the way Paul just sees the church is like
48 **You’re my family and you’re essential**
49 Josh: mmhmm
50 Linh: **And if you’re not [you know] involved in the body of Christ**
51 Josh: [mm]
52 Linh: **if you’re not, y’know**
53 **I feel that pain**
54 Josh: mhmm
55 Linh: Like, and it just seems like it is like
56 it’s only something you can do when you care and you invest
57 and you feel the hurt of that person or the church drifting away
58 Josh: mhmm
59 Linh: because yeah I don’t think you can do that
60 out of any other motive

In this example, as in the last, a study member demonstrates for her companions the intimate bond Paul would have felt for his fellow Christians. Topically, the concern Paul shows (“I feel that pain” line 53) maintains some coherence with Manuel’s recent voicing of the apostle, after which, in his own voice, he had commented “Imagine the turmoil of that” (line 24 from (D)). But unlike Manuel’s depiction of Paul anguishing over the church at Ephesus in (D), Linh’s articulation of the apostle’s inner thoughts (lines 48-53) connects less readily to a specific episode in the Acts passage under discussion; there are no references to individuals, locations or events. Instead, through her constructed dialogue, Linh displays evidence for a lesson which had recently impressed her from her membership class: that church members are as important to one another as members of a family. Of course, there is no neat separation between constructed dialogue’s function as an interpretive act and a means by which study participants establish the text’s relevance to their own lives. As discussed earlier, when members interpret the Scriptures, they interpret their own lives, a process which is highly dialectical: lived experience constitutes one of the primary heuristics which lay readers of the Bible employ to understand it.

5.4.3 Keeping one’s interpretive distance

I conclude this exploration of constructed dialogue as an interpretive resource in Bible study with an example which reveals how articulating the thoughts of a Biblical figure – God, this time – allows study members to offer a possible interpretation of a troublesome passage. By troublesome, I mean more than simply that the text resists a straightforward analysis, but rather that the perceived meaning appears to run counter to deeply held ethical or theological positions. In voicing a Biblical figure as she speaks about the passage, the reader demonstrates a critical, though not an outright “heretical” stance, and communicates her unease with the presumptive

interpretation without going on record as questioning the integrity of the Bible as a whole. Indeed, responsibility for the interpretation is partially deflected, coming as it does through constructed dialogue.

The discussion took place as the Holy Trinity group was discussing the eighteenth chapter of Acts (see Appendix 2), several weeks prior to the conversation featured in the preceding examples. In this chapter, it is recorded that at one point, after an unspecified number of weeks evangelizing in the synagogues Corinth, the apostle Paul abandons his attempt to evangelize his apparently stubborn Jewish audience which had begun to revile him. He exclaims, in Acts 18:6, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles” (English Standard Version). The Holy Trinity group expresses some surprise at the force of these words, prompting the leader, Manuel, to read a different, Old Testament text, Ezekiel 33:1-9 (reproduced below), as a possible explanation for Paul’s severe remarks.²² Manuel argues that Paul, being a Jew, may have felt a special responsibility toward his fellow Jews in proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, in the same way that the prophet Ezekiel understood his burden as being the “watchman” for the people of Israel, warning them against God’s judgment (as reflected in the section-header chosen by the ESV editors):

Ezekiel is Israel’s Watchman

1 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, 3 and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, 4 then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5 He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. 6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the

²² The reflex to resort to intertextual explanations in other books of the Bible for a given passage – sometimes written at a remove of many centuries, as in the present case – speaks to a “textual ideology” of the unity of the Bible’s meaning, identified by Bielo (2009) as a core feature of evangelical Bible study.

people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.

7 "So you [Ezekiel], son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 8 If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul."

This passage becomes the center of the conversation as members address another question Manuel asks concerning who, among the group's social circles, may be people that group members are being called to confront, or warn, about spiritual matters. For whom, as Manuel puts it, are group members watchmen? As the transcript below begins, Manuel is just finishing a personal anecdote about a confrontation that he himself initiated (the "It" of line 1) with an old college friend about an unspecified behavior Manuel found objectionable. The confrontation apparently did not go well. Becca, though, expresses hesitant support, employing constructed dialogue to defend Manuel's questionable intervention, and more generally the practice of confronting/warning another person about divine judgment. Near the end of the segment, the group turns its attention to a series of videos on evangelism popular with a different Protestant denomination:

(F)

1 Manuel: It wasn't received well..
2 I also probably didn't say it very well
3 /laughter/
4 I'll say that much
5 Becca: Yeah=
6 Manuel =It was pretty. pretty bull-headed [/inaudible/
7 Becca: [It's true but that Ezékiel passage that [you:
8 Manuel: [mmm
9 Becca: that you read
10 it's very like

11 **I'm incéntivizing this in a [way,**
12 Manuel: [yeah
13 Becca: God isn't saying
14 **the inc^léntive is.**
15 **that you don-**
16 /laughing/ **you don't wanna [have] this on your head**
17 Manuel: [yeah]
18 Becca: so it's it's not a very like
19 **I want you to do this out of love for the peopl:e**
20 Manuel: /laughs/
21 Becca: It's [more] like
22 Manuel [yeah]
23 Becca: /smiling voice/ **I want you to do this: so that you don't... [you know]**
24 Victor: [Well tha]t's that's
25 sort of the typical Southern Baptist approach to evangelism
26 [It's.. you know=
27 Becca: [mmmm.. yeah
28 Victor: =they have those..
29 what are those?
30 Those various. dramas that they have that shows the people
31 in the elevator [going] down to hell: and
32 Becca: [yeah] yeah
33 Manuel: mmhmm
34 Becca: yeah
35 Victor: **if only {Victor } had=**
36 Becca: **=if only [you had done something]**
37 Victor: [s:... **if only {Victor}] had said somethin' to me.**
38 Becca: [Hmm] yeah
39 Manuel: [Right]
40 Aaron: Oh those videos!
41 Unknown M: /quiet laugh/
42 Becca: [But there's] something that that's very
43 Aaron: [Uch::!]
44 Becca: that seems very in líne with. Ezekiel
45 Blythe: [mmmm]
46 Manuel: [mmm]
47 Becca: although what you're saying makes a lot more sense
48 like you you want to minister to people out of love for them

In this example we see how Becca, through her constructed dialogue of God's rationale for spiritual confrontation, articulates an interpretation of the Ezekiel passage which makes sense of the text, but from which she distances herself through various contextualization cues. After

Manuel's series of self-criticisms (lines 1-4,6) for what was evidently an unhelpful intervention with a friend, Becca returns the focus of the conversation to the Ezekiel passage in defense of Manuel's actions. Even in these lines leading up to her animation of God (lines 7-9: "It's true but that Ezékiel passage that you:/ that you *read*/ it's *very* like"), pitch modulation ("It's true") and emphatic stress ("Ezékiel"/ "*read*"/ "*very*") index the disconcerting effect of the theological principle Becca sees at work: that believers bear the responsibility for souls who would be lost without their intervention. This troubling idea, that God's message to Ezekiel theoretically encourages confrontation with others, she articulates in the voice of God, line 11 "I'm incentivizing this in a way." Perhaps more clearly here than in other examples, we observe how the strikingly anachronistic turn-of-phrase attributed to God functions as Becca's attempt to summarize a theological truth in modern, relatable terminology, as opposed to suggesting a plausible inward thought of a Biblical figure. It is not clear if the hedge "in a way" also belongs to the constructed dialogue for God, but regardless of whose words they are (Becca's or God's), they corroborate semantically what Becca's reluctant, almost incredulous tone has been signaling phonologically since she took the floor in line 7: that she is articulating a troubling, "dispreferred" idea within her small group community.

Constructed dialogue conveys Becca's interpretation still further in lines 13-16: "God isn't saying/the incentive is/ that you don- {laughs}/you don't wanna *have* this on your head." Though she begins this turn preparing to explain what God is not saying, it appears as though she changes course after her laughter in line 16 to reiterate what God *is* saying: "you don't wanna *have* this on your head" where "this" refers to the responsibility for not warning people who needed warning. Her laughter in line 16 does not follow from anything funny that she has said and contributes to the impression that she is expressing an uncomfortable idea. She returns to

what was likely her original goal of explaining what God was *not* saying in lines 18-19 with more constructed dialogue: “so it’s it’s not a very like/I want you to do this out of *love* for the people.” Her exaggerated, weepy voice in line 18 provokes Manuel’s laughter, line 19, and holds up for mockery what actually appears to be Becca’s preferred motivation for confronting others about spiritual matters: to do so out of love for the other, and not out of fear for oneself (see lines 48-49: “although what you’re saying makes a lot more sense/ like you you want to minister to people out of love for them”).

Becca’s final line of constructed dialogue still as God, line 23 (“I want you to do this: so that you don’t... you know”), again shows evidence of its being a dispreferred message: she pauses, elongating the “s” on “this,” referring to spiritual confrontation. Her use of “this” here marks the fourth time the word has been used to stand in for either confrontation or the responsibility for not confronting someone, ideas which are never mentioned explicitly throughout her talk. She pauses again when faced with the prospect of articulating the negative consequences awaiting the watchman who fails in his duty to warn (“so that you don’t...”), adding to the overall dysfluency of the line. Again, she avoids going into detail concerning these consequences, settling on the filler phrase “you know” which is overlapped by Victor (lines 24-25), to whom she cedes the floor without contest.

Though Becca has conveyed discomfort with the interpretation she has elaborated via constructed dialogue up until this point, she seems to be articulating a logical, reasonable understanding of the Ezekiel passage when read in conjunction with the Acts text and Manuel’s question about being a watchman. Manuel himself has peppered Becca’s turns with positive backchanneling – his use of the continuer “yeah” occurs in lines 12,17 and 22. What is going on, then? My argument is that constructed dialogue has enabled Becca to accomplish two things

simultaneously: to offer a coherent interpretation of the text (a major institutional goal of Bible study) and also to critique, or cast doubt on that interpretation through the use of various contextualization cues signaling her unease.

One might argue that these speech actions – interpretation and critique – could be combined without resorting to constructed dialogue. Certainly this is true. Yet for the work of *distancing* herself from the (troublesome) interpretation she is propounding, Becca’s use of constructed dialogue is particularly apt. In representing discourse, rather than arguing monologically, Becca is limiting her commitment to the positions she articulates. If we string together her contributions so that they appear consecutively, there are four distinct utterances (constructed dialogue shown in bold):

- 1 ...that Ezekiel passage that you
 that you read
 it’s very like
 I’m incentivizing this in a way
- 2 God isn’t saying
 the incéntive is
that you don- /laughs/ you don’t wanna have this on your head
- 3 so it’s it’s not a very like
I want you to do this out of love for the people
- 4 It’s more like
I want you to do this: so that you don’t... you know

Syntactically Becca never completes a full sentence without the use of constructed dialogue which serves as a major constituent, the primary new information, in each case. All four sentences are essentially restatements of the same key point in the Ezekiel passage. Three of four sentences introduce their summaries of this point with the formula “It is (not) like **X**” where X is God’s recontextualized speech, and the remaining sentence (#2) uses a similar, summary phrase, “God isn’t saying **X**.” Importantly, all four summaries are couched in *God’s* words, not

Becca's. Becca serves as author and animator here, but her being the principal of the message – her taking responsibility for the message – stands very much in doubt given the hesitant manner in which she has spoken these lines. The net effect of this strategy is that Becca has expressed reserve about the passage by using the words of one of its figures (God, in this case) without needing to say, explicitly and in her own words, “I find this wrong.”

That Becca's rendition of God registers as a critique of the text is apparent in the stretch of talk immediately following, which quickly confirms that the group shares her distaste for such a severe, confrontational posture toward others. Victor, in lines 24-25 (“Well that's that's sort of the/ typical Southern Baptist approach to evangelism”) shifts the focus to how Southern Baptists, America's largest Protestant denomination, view evangelism, implying that this “approach” is not part of the current, Anglican group's ethos. He recalls, lines 28-31, a series of videos dramatizing the Baptist view of the consequences of evangelizing (or not) a potential convert. Along with Becca, he performs the role of a hypothetical character in one of these films – apparently a damned soul – with Victor's character placing the blame on Victor for not warning him of God's judgment (lines 35-37 “{Victor} If only Victor had/{Becca} if only you had done something/{Victor} if only Victor had said somethin' to me”). Victor's recriminatory tone is humorously exaggerated (at least one person laughs in line 41); he is painting these dramas more as a ploy to guilt the believer into evangelizing than as an accurate depiction of the stakes involved. Aaron, in lines 40 and 43 (“Oh those videos!/ [...] / Uch::!”), offers perhaps the clearest evaluative stance toward this “approach” in this stretch of the conversation: disgust.

In sum, we can say that Becca's use of constructed dialogue in interpreting Ezekiel has enabled her to offer an explanation of the text, an institutional priority for Bible study, while simultaneously attenuating her responsibility for that explanation, filtering it through her

animation of God's unconvincing (or perhaps unconvinced) voice. In this case, the Bible study affirms Becca's implicit reserve about her own interpretation, and consensus quickly forms around the evangelistic excesses to which such a reading may lead. The question of whether or not the text *actually* recommends such a posture of confrontation for the modern believer is ultimately passed over in silence.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how constructed dialogue serves as a flexible interpretive device which Bible study members employ in order to make the ancient Biblical text more reasonable – that is, more identifiable, relatable, and intelligible – to modern sensibilities. The process of psychologizing the text entails an articulation of a Biblical figure's inner thoughts, often recontextualized in a contemporary, conversational idiom, in elaborating a psychological profile for him. This profile occasionally serves to explain the figure's inscrutable actions or else simply to identify with him as a person. The Biblical narrative is thereby rendered more vivid and palpable, helping to bridge the gap which separates the modern reader from the events recorded. For instance, when I asked couple Victor and Becca about Becca's talking as God in the last example, Victor commented:

- Victor: I think maybe it's easier to take on first-person God voice to paraphrase because you're grappling with the text and trying to understand like what does this passage I- 'cause in an evangelical Bible study you're looking for applicability in your daily life right?
- Josh: Right
- Victor: And so this [inaudible] to bring it down to that more direct level? To paraphrase that? It's more direct in terms of applicability. The person saying "the passage says this or that," that's more indirect that's more impersonal.

Victor's concern with personal applicability echoes previous findings on the assumptions and priorities of evangelical Bible study (Malley 2004, Bielo 2009), and encapsulates the argument I am making here as to how readers discursively construct the relevance of the Bible to their own situations. Constructed dialogue, in rendering a passage more "direct" and "personal," creates a dynamic relationship with the text, allowing readers to project familiar sentiments or motivations on to Biblical figures which other group members may in turn reject or endorse.

As seen in the last example of this chapter, however, rejection or endorsement cannot be reduced to purely "epistemic" concerns. As Becca speaks in the voice of God to articulate an unsavory principle of spiritual confrontation, she does so in a hesitant manner, doubly distancing herself from responsibility for the ideas expressed. In this case, the obfuscation of principalship serves to deflect responsibility for a problematic idea. Here again we see the interpenetration of the epistemic and interpersonal dimensions of constructed dialogue at work: rather than operating exclusively as evidence for the claim that God encourages his people to confront non-believers (which is, on a superficial level, what Becca's turns accomplish), Becca's halting, almost incredulous animation of him conveys discomfort with an interpretation she appears to be constrained to defend. But this manifest discomfort, Becca's "message about the message" in Voloshinov's terms, prompts immediate alignment from other study members who rally to echo – and extend – her disapproval. The group thus collectively reaffirms its identity as "non-confrontational" and opposed to manipulative tactics of evangelism.

As mentioned at the end of the previous section, this opposition to one possible reading of the text never transforms into consensus about what implications the text *does* have for Holy Trinity group members as they leave their evening study to return to their daily lives. Indeed, as we have seen time and again, the use of constructed dialogue as an epistemic resource is no

hermeneutic silver bullet: the group never clearly establishes support for Fred's interpretation of why Paul was hurrying to Jerusalem in (A), nor does a clear picture emerge of what sustained the apostle to continue his harrowing missionary work in (B). While it is beyond the scope of this study to establish what factors might enable a Bible study to definitively agree on a given interpretation (not to mention how that agreement could be determined), this chapter has nonetheless established the significance of constructed dialogue in enabling modern readers to close some of the interpretive distance between their own lives and an ancient text. In Malley's (2002) terms, voicing Biblical characters enables study members to approach the "dual contextualization" of meaning assumed to operate in the narrative: "The meaning of a text is double because the text is, or can be, implicated in two speech events: the historical author's intent for his audience and God's intent for the individual believer" (Malley 2002:128). We have seen how, at the historical level, simulating inner monologue provides an embodied demonstration of various states of mind that explain diverse actions or positions. At what Malley terms the "devotional" level (2004:113) – God's intended message for the modern reader – constructed dialogue again provides a vivid model for virtues that believers should seek to cultivate, such as tenderness and concern for the spiritual health of their co-religionists or areligious neighbors. In sum, whether or not a given interpretation is seen as *correct* by the end of the conversation matters less for the group than the work of establishing the text as intelligible, and as relevant to daily life.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In her essay “Writing Short Stories,” Flannery O’Connor offers this observation on the nature of fiction:

When you can state the theme of a story, when you can separate it from the story itself, then you can be sure the story is not a very good one. The meaning of a story has to be embodied in it, has to be made concrete in it. A story is a way to say something that can’t be said any other way, and it takes every word in the story to say what the meaning is. You tell a story because a statement would be inadequate. When anybody asks what a story is about, the only proper thing is to tell him to read the story. The meaning of fiction is not abstract meaning but experienced meaning, and the purpose of making statements about the meaning of a story is only to help you experience that meaning more fully. (O’Connor, 1969:96)

Reworked slightly, what O’Connor argues for stories, I would contend, holds true of constructed dialogue in everyday speech as well. The meaning of constructed dialogue is made concrete in the very act of representing speech. Like the meaning of a story, its meaning is not abstract (propositional) meaning, but experienced meaning. Above all, constructed dialogue is a way to say something that cannot be said any other way, and it takes every word – and every non-verbal element as well – to convey what the meaning is.

The overarching argument of this study has been that constructed dialogue in religious talk serves as an important resource in establishing the coherence or plausibility of faith. I have repeatedly described it as a “flexible linguistic device,” one uniquely suited for accomplishing a variety of communicative functions related to the framing of knowledge claims and management of interpersonal relations, both important dimensions in constructing faith’s reasonableness. This flexibility and suitability derive from the fact that constructed dialogue conveys not abstract, but experienced meaning. When Pastor Timothy Keller ventriloquizes the skeptic in the pew, for instance, agonizing about whether to entrust her life to God, he recounts a painful

(hypothetical) story of her broken romantic relationships and the sense of dehumanization and exploitation they occasioned – experiences which give her pause before making herself vulnerable again, this time to God. His voice becomes strained and filled with pathos. This sort of embodied empathy, I would submit, *cannot be conveyed any other way*: it is a demonstration, in Clark and Gerrig's (1990) sense, of another's experience, as opposed to a simple description of or comment about it.

If embodying empathy for an audience represents some of the interpersonal work constructed dialogue accomplishes in rendering religious belief plausible on one hand, then embodying arguments from respected thinkers who defend the faith exemplifies the device's epistemic function on the other. Here again, constructed dialogue's "experienced meaning" proves vital in heightening conversational involvement, as Tannen (2007) points out: When esteemed thinkers "speak" through the pastor, they often do so with great conviction (e.g., NYU psychologist Paul Vitz: "There *surely* are people who psychologically need not to believe in *God* / there's all *kinds* of reasons why people *don't* want there to be a God"), vivifying and personifying intellectual arguments in ways no paraphrase could. An analogous epistemic function characterizes constructed dialogue as used in Bible interpretation: When study members simulate the thoughts of various figures in the scriptures, they do not merely summarize, but actually *enact* the various states of mind which these figures may have (hypothetically) known themselves. These fleeting moments of experienced meaning stand in as a kind of evidence readers offer to one another for the interpretations their represented speech suggests.

Maintaining a focus on the twin aspects of knowledge management and interpersonal work accomplished by constructed dialogue, I will review in the following section the primary findings across the three contexts examined in this project. I distill these findings further in

section 6.3 where I discuss the main contributions of this analysis to our understanding of constructed dialogue, as well as its intersection with religious discourse.

6.2 Constructed dialogue across contexts

Chapter Three explored constructed dialogue as an epistemic resource used by a Protestant minister engaged in a journalistic interview recorded before a live audience about the reasonableness of Christian faith. I showed how the minister, Timothy Keller, “takes on voices” of both allied, religious thinkers as well as anti-religious figures in making a case for faith. In each instance, the voices of these well-known or intellectually esteemed individuals lend an authority to Keller’s arguments which his own background could not have conferred given his relative obscurity outside select American Protestant circles.

We saw how, for instance, when journalist Martin Bashir asks about religion’s tendency to incite violence, Keller retells a story of Jesus exhorting his disciples to sheath their swords, culminating with his command to "PUT them away, this is not what I’m about." When Bashir suggests religious believers may be intellectually compromised, Keller draws on atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel who is made to "confess" his own inability to think impartially about the question: "I don’t want there to be a God... I’m coming right out of the closet and admitting that though I try my best to be objective, I’ve got all kinds of personal reasons why I wouldn’t want that to be true..." Thus, the voices of the faithful and the skeptical alike work in the service of Keller’s overall conversational goals in building an argument for belief.

What is more, this work occurs not merely at the propositional level, but at the metamessage level as well. Investing the animated voices with a host of contextualization cues ranging from pitch modulation to word stress and volume, Keller suggests that the figures he

embodies hold the positions they do with firm conviction. This “reported affect” (Ingrids & Aronsson, 2014) serves Keller’s rhetorical aims just as much as the mere fact of invoking figures who have views consonant with his own. For example, we saw how Keller first paraphrased an argument of skeptic Mark Lilla regarding the ability of Christianity to be self-critical (“Mark Lilla points out... that Christianity has got self-corrective...uh...resources in it...that are extremely strong.”) only to repeat the same idea a few moments later *as* Lilla: “Mark Lilla says... the uhm... you-you can criticize Christianity... until you begin to realize that criti-Christianity has self-critical resources way beyond your ability to criticize.” In addition to the aforementioned contextualization cues, deictic terms such as “you” (seen also in the example immediately above), whose nebulous reference might include the audience, further invite conversational involvement. Keller’s preference for simulating and not merely summarizing figures introduces an additional, affective dimension to his arguments which increases their immediacy and vividness. His construction of dialogue figuratively brings the journalist Martin Bashir and the live audience into direct dialogue with authoritative thinkers who challenge various positions they may hold.

Chapter Four’s focus on sermons revealed additional ways in which constructed dialogue helps to establish a religious worldview as reasonable and accessible. In this context, I showed how Timothy Keller, in ventriloquizing his co-present audience, pursues important interpersonal and argumentative goals. He simulates interruptions to his preaching which challenge his message, force him to qualify his remarks, and create a solidary footing. At the most basic level, Keller’s ventriloquizing serves to facilitate the comprehension of his message. Speaking as his audience, he interjects clarifying questions such as “What do you mean?” and “Where are we?” (in the plan of the sermon) before elaborating on a point or reorienting his listeners to his

overarching arguments. Even in these simple gestures, however, constructed dialogue serves not only to manage the information conveyed in Keller's talk, but also to establish a collaborative footing with his audience: conversation partners who can address him informally, sometimes with exasperation, as they press him to explain himself.

The emphasis on managing interpersonal dynamics, in addition to knowledge claims, becomes even more apparent in the way Keller depicts his ideal listener through constructed dialogue. I demonstrated how Keller's ventriloquizing positions the skeptical audience member as a well-informed and sensitive person, one whose responses to the minister make it more difficult for the actual skeptic to conclude that she has been reduced to a straw man. She protests, for instance, "Didn't people in the South/use those Biblical passages?/Slaves obey your masters./In order to try to subjugate the African slaves?", and elsewhere, that "the whole idea of a God of judgment and Hell/seems opposed to the idea of a God of love!" As Keller endeavors to defend the plausibility of faith, acknowledging the intellectual and affective hurdles his audience may encounter provides a measure of rhetorical insurance against counterargument. I contend that constructed dialogue offers a uniquely powerful means by which to "do" this acknowledging – a gesture which might simply have taken the form of *mentioning* potential objections as he proceeded (i.e., "Now some people may think this sounds harsh, but I am here to tell you that..."). Instead, Keller *demonstrates* (Clark & Gerrig, 1990) the potential responses his listeners may be stifling in their seats, embodying empathy in a manner more likely (perhaps) to convince them that he understands their reservations – and yet still finds the case for faith strong enough to merit consideration.

On the other hand, Keller's construction of his listener as ideal foil reveals putative weaknesses in skeptical arguments which are exposed through colloquized interchanges:

When you say
No one has a superior take on spiritual reality
That *is* a take on spiritual reality
which you say is superior to everybody else's.
And when you say
No one should convert everybody else to your view of religious reality
That *is* a view of religious reality
that you want the listener to convert to!
...
There's no way for you to know that all religions are equal
unless you assume the kind of the knowledge you say nobody has
and so how dare you have it?

Such sequences again function to heighten conversational involvement, offering listeners a “sense of what it would be like” to actually argue with the pastor, including being pressed directly for a response.

Finally, Chapter Five's focus on small group Bible Study broke new ground in the analysis of group interpretative processes within this widespread institution (Malley 2004; Bielo, 2009, 2011) by revealing how constructed dialogue serves as a hermeneutic resource for both understanding the text and reconciling its message with modern readers' experiences and ethical norms. Skeptics, it turns out, are not alone in struggling to fit certain aspects of a religious perspective into their schemata for thinking about the world and their place in it; though inherently sympathetic toward belief, Bible study goers also must work to harmonize the tenets of their faith with their daily experience. In fact, reading their sacred text together constitutes an important part of this process.

Voicing the inner thoughts of Biblical characters constitutes a flexible hermeneutic tool for the modern reader attempting to understand the Biblical text. For example, we saw how at one point three different members of the Holy Trinity small group Bible study simulated inner monologue for the apostle Paul in attempting to understand what sustained him through his perilous missionary journeys. A fourth member voiced her own hypothetical (and fearful) inner

reactions to the kinds of dangers Paul faced as she contemplated the radical differences in their dispositions. While constructed dialogue does not necessarily lead to consensus in solving a textual puzzle, the various readings this device facilitates edge the group closer to a plausible understanding of their sacred text, often leaving them with a variety of interpretive options.

Even when no interpretive trouble exists, constructed dialogue serves a key role in heightening a sense of immediacy and identification with Biblical protagonists. Study members demonstrate to one another “what it would have been like to be there,” as, for example, when the Holy Trinity group leader, Manuel, dramatically reenacts Paul’s realization that he may soon be leaving beloved acquaintances as his journeys take him further into danger:

**I’m saying goodbye to these people for the last time.
I don’t know what’s gonna *happen* to them.**

As “second-order witnesses” (Noy, 2007) to Paul’s anguish, group members enter into the story more fully. Here, as elsewhere, constructed dialogue serves in a sense to bridge the divide that separates reader from Biblical personae. Further, depicting a Biblical figure’s inward posture occasionally results in establishing it as a model to emulate, as when Linh seizes on Manuel’s rendition (above) in identifying an attitude of compassion which she maintains all believers should cultivate toward one another. In this way, lessons relevant for the modern believer’s life are drawn from their ancient forbearers’ experience.

Last, we observed how taking on the voices of a Biblical figure enables readers to position themselves in an advantageously ambiguous relationship of responsibility with respect to the message this figure propounds, especially where such a message seems somehow suspect or troublesome. In this vein I demonstrated how, in animating God’s charge to the prophet Ezekiel to warn others of divine judgment, Becca’s dysfluency and intonational contours constituted contextualization cues which transmitted, on the level of metamessage, a hesitancy to

accept the very principle she was articulating. Her fellow study members quickly aligned with her evaluation, though the group made no attempt to reconcile its more conciliatory and compassion-oriented approach to evangelism to the text under consideration. Constructed dialogue in this case merely created an opportunity for one reader to voice – and other readers to reaffirm – their shared norms of interaction with non-believers, and to do so without explicitly saying they disagreed with the Bible’s apparently contradictory approach.

6.3 Summary

The current study advances our understanding of constructed dialogue, as well as what Wuthnow (2012) calls “the content and structure of what passes as reasonable speech” in religious talk, each in different ways. With respect to constructed dialogue, this study has revealed that the two perspectives of the phenomenon discussed in Chapter Two, one which sees constructed dialogue as implicated in managing social relations and one which views it as an epistemic resource, can be intricately connected; both dimensions often operate simultaneously. For instance, the minister pursues collaborative alignments with his audience by displaying evidence of what they may be thinking, episodes which build solidarity when his taking on their voice show that he understands their perspective. Likewise, in Bible study participants may demonstrate likely interpretations for various texts via constructed dialogue, but the manner in which they animate Biblical characters often carries immediate social consequences. For example, one member offered an interpretation via constructed dialogue in such a way as to ensure that the group understood she was troubled by it, prompting the group to align with her in her discomfort.

A key contribution this study makes to the domain of epistemic discourse analysis is to show how contextualization cues within a stretch of constructed dialogue can reinforce its evidential force. That is, I have shown how the presence of various contextualization cues in constructed dialogue contribute to the framing of a given claim as authoritative or reliable. We saw how, for example, pastor Timothy Keller answered Martin Bashir's challenge that religion leads to violence: instead of simply saying that violence is inconsistent with his faith, Keller voices Martin Luther King Jr. denouncing it ("if you even get in touch with *réal* Christianity / you *CAN*'t do this sort of thing"). Embedded in this pronouncement, word-stress and a high-low pitch contour on the word "can't" function as contextualization cues indexing firm conviction. Keller's overall achievement, then, is to appropriate both King's personal authority *and* his (hypothetical) epistemic stance toward the proposition he animates. Thus, we could say that such a move doubly reinforces the reliability of the statement: both borrowing moral authority by "abduction" (Tannen 2009) and by a micro-level expression of certainty. Just as further research into so-called "audiovisual marking" of epistemic stance is needed to complement the lexico-grammatical tradition hitherto dominant in the field, so too would we benefit from moving beyond the view of represented discourse as an evidential strategy by virtue of its mere presence in certain conversational contexts. Rather, we need to explore the specific forms it takes, forms where a plethora of devices may well be nuancing the epistemic stance communicated. This project has taken a few initial steps in that direction.

As we have seen, however, constructed dialogue functions not only on the plane of ideas and arguments, but also on that of interpersonal social dynamics. Within research on religious discourse, a common view (e.g., Besnier, 1994, Lempert, 2008) of the function of represented discourse regards it as bolstering the authority of the speaker, especially where the external

voices come from authoritative sources such as a holy text. In contrast, this study has built on Tannen's (2007) observation that constructed dialogue plays an important role creating interpersonal involvement, drawing listeners into the process of sense-making. In the case of sermons, these findings corroborate recent research which has documented a "turn-to-the-listener" (Malmström, 2016). As an example, this study has documented for the first time a type of ventriloquizing (Tannen, 2004, 2007) in which the speaker animates a co-present listener, and then responds – sometimes in multiple sequences – to that animation. This process that I call colloquizing represents a particularly dramatic strategy for heightening conversational involvement in that it usurps the interlocutor's normal responsibility to react, prompting her to evaluate both the initial comment *and* the simulated response attributed to her. Colloquizing also signals to silenced audience members that the speaker continues to bear their presence and perspective in mind. In a participation framework such as that of a Sunday sermon, these imagined conversations are as close as preacher and listener can come to actual dialogue.

In a further contribution to our understanding of religious discourse, the current study has nuanced Wuthnow's (2012) analysis of the expression of reasonableness and belief which focuses largely on condensed theological or philosophical arguments – for example, versions of the idea that God's action can be contingent on human action or circumstances, and that therefore unanswered prayers are not necessarily failures of the divine. Instead of focusing on such theological "scripts," I explored a more general feature of everyday discourse – constructed dialogue – and demonstrated how this ubiquitous discursive device is deployed in speaking on religious topics in such a way as to render them more plausible to both believers and non-believers alike.

Related to this function is an interesting pattern which emerges when considering the form of the constructed dialogue found across the three contexts examined: in each case, the represented discourse appears in a familiar, conversational register, one which is in many cases different from what one might suppose the “original” reporting context would have occasioned. In Keller’s interview, for instance, the animated voice of Jesus commands his disciples concerning their swords to “PUT them away” because “this is not what I’m about”; philosopher Thomas Nagel confesses “I don’t want there to be a God... I’m coming right out of the closet and admitting that though I try my best to be objective, I’ve got all kinds of personal reasons why I wouldn’t want that to be true...”. A Bible study participant voices the inner thoughts of apostle Paul bracing himself for imminent persecution – and possibly death: “...is this gonna be it?” Why do we observe the same contemporary, colloquial idiom in constructed dialogue across contexts, whether in the voice of an ancient Biblical figure or a prominent 21st century intellectual?

I argue that the pattern can be explained by the common overarching conversational goals in each case: rendering a reasonable account of faith which makes sense to the modern mind. As different Bible study participants I interviewed explained, taking on the voice of a Biblical character “helps you understand... something clicks when we have to say it in that other voice,” and “This is just how we talk as people... It’s a really common way to clarify.” Constructed dialogue is a kind of demonstration; it is, recalling Flannery O’Connor’s phrase, experienced meaning. And, as Clark and Gerrig (1990:768) argue, demonstrations are selective: they depict only certain aspects of speech, a selection which depends upon the experience the speaker wants the listener to have. The desired experience across the three contexts examined in this study, I maintain, is that the listener *recognize or identify with* various insights into the spiritual life:

whether those of a modern atheist philosopher struggling with his biases against belief or those of first century Christian apostle, staring down persecution. What Timothy Keller seeks for his listeners, just as what small group Bible study participants want for their fellow members, are coherent, recognizable accounts of belief. By constructing dialogue in an unmarked, contemporary conversational idiom (as opposed to, say, a stylized performance in religious classical, or employing an academic register), the speakers examined here are selective in their demonstrations: they straightforwardly depict various linguistic acts such as expressing propositions and taking stances, as well as certain features of the delivery of those acts (Clark & Gerrig, 1990: 775) – contextualization cues such as pitch modulation and word-stress – which in fact nuance the acts themselves. The net result is that what we might call the “essence” of the quoted speaker’s message reaches the listener in a form similar to that in which the listener might have articulated the same idea herself. It is recognizable; it “clicks.”

In conclusion, I note that though the instances of constructed dialogue analyzed here all occurred in some sort of religious discourse, whether apologetic interview, sermon, or Bible study, it would be misleading to suggest that the forms and functions of this linguistic device took the shape they did *because* of the spiritual subject matter. Unlike Kuipers (1993) or Lempert (2008), I did not examine traditional performances wherein channeling the speech of spirits, ancestors or tradition would have been required given the religious context. Rather, constructed dialogue occurred spontaneously across the settings I investigated, though in each case proved instrumental in responding to the unique contextual challenges involved in making sense of faith. Pastor Timothy Keller’s interview with an intellectually-minded journalist before a live audience at a university prompted him to draw on voices of respected thinkers outside of his immediate faith community. His sermons, more personal and exhortative as a genre,

nonetheless required him to attend to a diverse set of audience characteristics, ranging from their potential personal experiences of (or views on) controversial subjects to their attention spans over the course of a long, monologic speech event. Bible study participants faced the formidable task of understanding and applying the text of their holy scripture – written at an enormous cultural and chronological remove from context in early 21st century America – to their daily lives. It is striking to observe that, in reasoning through the complex and often profound questions faith poses, speakers so frequently resort to the “experienced meaning” which only the voice of another person can provide.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Transcription Conventions

The following transcription conventions are adapted from Tannen (1981).

...	half-second pause. Each extra dot represents another half-second of pause.
ˈ	marks primary stress
ˌ	marks secondary stress
<i>italics</i>	marks emphatic stress
CAPS	spoken loudly
	marks high pitch on word
┌	marks high pitch on phrase, continuing until punctuation
└	marks low pitch on word
.	sentence-final falling intonation
?	yes/no question rising intonation
=	indicates that turn continues immediately in next line, or following overlapping talk
,	clause-final falling intonation (more to come)
:	lengthened vowel sound
/?/	inaudible segment
[Brackets connecting lines show overlapping speech
>speech<	‘speech’ is spoken quickly
/notes/	transcriber notes on a feature of talk (laughing, reading voice, etc.)

Appendix 2 – Acts Chapter 18 (English Standard Version)

Paul in Corinth

18 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. 6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” 7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. 9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, 13 saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.” 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. 15 But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.” 16 And he drove them from the tribunal. 17 And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

Paul Returns to Antioch

18 After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. 21 But on taking leave of them he said, “I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus.

22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Apollos Speaks Boldly in Ephesus

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

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