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The Work of Sermons:
The Social Construction of Spiritual Entities
by

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ABSTRACT

Anthropologists have tended to take either a literalist or symbolic approach to religion. This thesis takes a social constructionist approach to the same topic. Social constructionist studies seek to demonstrate that reality is socially constructed and *how* it is constructed. This research explicates some of the methods used by a pastor to make available spiritual entities. The study is pursued through analyses of three sermons delivered at a local church. This leads to a criticism of the assumption of the other worldly orientation of religious belief. It is argued that social constructionism allows the researcher to capture social processes which other approaches fail to illuminate.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Social constructionism has achieved remarkable currency in sociology. It dominates the areas of the sociology of scientific knowledge (e.g. Knorr-Cetina and Mulkay, eds., 1983),¹ and social problems theory (Holstein and Miller, eds, 1993). The approach has seen increased favour amongst psychologists (e.g. Gergen, 1985, Burr, 1995), and has long influenced literary criticism (e.g. Fish, 1980). Despite Evans-Pritchard (1937) influential work, often cited by social constructionists (Pollner, 1974; Mehan and Wood, 1975), social anthropologists have been relatively slow to embrace the approach. This is surprising for a discipline which has long prided itself on cultural relativism; one would expect the methodological relativism advocated by constructionists to be an easy step for social anthropologists to take. Few social anthropologists have taken this step, as Watson (1987, 1991) has pointed out in dismay.²

It is towards this gap in the anthropological literature that this thesis is aimed. The problem to which this thesis

¹Recent discussions of social constructionism in the sociology of scientific knowledge include Knorr-Cetina, 1993; Shapin, 1995; Sismondo, 1993; and Velody (ed.) 1994.

²One notable exception is Moerman (1968, 1988).

addresses itself is derived from Edouard Berryman (n.d.: 283):

Believers have faith in a God who is never "really" empirically available. They pray, but He never "talks back"; they see that He acts, but He never acts before their eyes; they have a sense of His power, but they never see Him deploying it.

Berryman's approach (discussed in more detail later on) to this problem involves investigating situations where people had indeed seen God act. The quotation suggests another area for investigation: just how do believers know that God acts, or how do they see that He makes use of His power, in the more ordinary circumstances when He is empirically inaccessible? This thesis will attempt to show some of the means by which believers make available, to themselves and others, the existence of divine or spiritual entities.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF

In his review of anthropological approaches to religion, Skorupski (1976) identified two main trends of theoretical orientation: intellectualism (also referred to as literalism) and symbolism. The former traces its intellectual genealogy through Tylor and Frazer, the latter school through Robertson-Davies and Durkheim (Skorupski, 1976: 1-17, see also Jarvie, 1976). The dispute between these two positions provided a great deal of material for the rationality debate³ which, if

³See, for example, the contributions to Horton and Finnegan (eds) 1973.

some recent papers are indicative, (e.g. Runciman, 1991) has still not ended in the social sciences.

The intellectualist position, following Skorupski (1976: 3-11), can be summarized as follows:

1. People who practice magical and religious action do so because they believe them to be effective means to ends. They believe that there are superhuman entities who are able to affect the human situation.

2. Religious beliefs are accepted mainly via the process of socialization into the society in which people are born.

3. The beliefs which are received are maintained through various resistants to their falsification which can be divided as follows: individuals are either not interested in falsifying them or the system of belief supplies successful means of explaining anomaly.

4. Religious beliefs originated in response to the need to explain or understand the world and events.

The fourth item is seen to be the defining feature of the intellectualist program (Skorupski, 1976: 10-11).⁴ This is most clearly evident in the work of Robin Horton (1960; 1967, 1968). For the literalist, religious beliefs and science share a similar function. Horton, on the other hand, depicts

⁴Others, who accept the first three items, but not necessarily the fourth, may be considered properly as literalists. This argument was anticipated by Ross (1971).

religious beliefs and science as sharing a similar function and content. Thus:

The Gods of a given culture ...form a scheme which interprets the vast diversity of everyday experience in terms of the action of a relatively few kinds of forces....Like atoms, molecules, and waves, then, the gods serve to introduce unity into diversity, simplicity into complexity, order into disorder, and regularity into anomaly (1967: 52).

The symbolist position (the most vocal proponent of which has been Beattie 1964; 1966; 1970), is primarily concerned with actions (ritual) rather than beliefs, and consider the primary aspect of these actions as expressive, not instrumental. As Beattie (1966: 61) has indicated:

I shall argue that when we are dealing with ritual the primary question is not 'what does it do?', or even 'what is it believed to do?', but rather 'what does it say?' (1966: 61)

While most literalists and symbolists would agree upon what a translation of a belief should be, the symbolist seeks to take the analysis to another (symbolic) level (Skorupski, 1976: 13; see also Beattie, 1966: 64). The level at which religious action or belief is regarded as symbolic varies between analysts, but generally follows one of the following four patterns:

1. Unconsciously symbolic; the native is aware of the symbolism but at an unconscious level
2. They turn out to be symbolic when deeply reflected upon (this position is most clearly stated by Beattie (1966,

1970).

3. They may have once been symbolic but are now literal.

4. They are symbolic from the anthropologist's standpoint but not to the actor. Thus Beattie (position 2) suggests that ritual may serve to express rather than accomplish a goal, whereas Lewis (position 4) would state that the expression is one of societal position. Escatic religious practices give power to those whose position is marginal (1971: 31).

Both of the positions outlined above have a long history in the anthropological literature. Both positions also, as I shall argue below, leave unexamined a fundamental aspect of the social phenomena which religion encompasses. Let us first consider a position which seems to attempt to bridge the two.

Rodney Needham (1972: 4) has remarked with distress that anthropologists have made use of the term 'belief' as though it were "a word of as little ambiguity as 'spear' or 'cow'." In responding to some of the arguments made by Leach (1967) in his denunciation of the literalist position, Martin Southwold (1979) attempts to develop a systematic usage of the concept.

The particular argument of Leach which Southwold takes exception to is worth noting. In attacking the intellectualists (Melford Spiro in particular), Leach states:

When the ethnographer reports that 'members of the X tribe believe that...' he is giving a description of an orthodoxy, a dogma, something which is true of the culture as a whole. But Professor Spiro (and all neo-

Tylorians who think like him) desperately wants to believe that the evidence can tell us much more than that--that dogma and ritual must somehow correspond to the inner psychological attitudes of the actors concerned. (Leach, 1967: 40).

The responses to this statement can be generally summed up by Needham's (1972: 6) remark that "something which is believed by nobody is not a belief." Southwold tries to reconcile this with other aspects of Leach's paper, which he sees as having merit. Taking a great deal of inspiration from Geertz (1966), who argued that anthropologists can no longer ignore the discussion of belief, Southwold attempts to answer Geertz's question, "just what does belief mean in a religious context?" (Southwold, 1979: 632; Geertz, 1966: 24).

Southwold argues that it is safe to assume that people generally believe the basic tenets of their religion: they hold them to be true in some manner (Southwold, 1979: 632). By basic tenets he is referring to beliefs on the general order of 'God exists and is good', 'Christ died for our sins' etc. This does not exclude the notion that the individual may be sceptical about certain aspects of a belief system. A Catholic need not believe the doctrine of transubstantiation in order to believe the basic religious tenets of his or her religion. This argued, Southwold (1979:633-42) proceeds to list four properties which can be ascribed to basic religious tenets:

1. They are empirically indeterminate. Religious tenets do not directly describe the world, but are a framework within which the world can be defined. These tenets can therefore be neither confirmed nor refuted by reference to empirical evidence.

2. Basic religious tenets are axiomatic. Similar to the axioms of a theoretical model, they are unquestionable and untestable.

3. They are symbolic. This is not to say that they are merely representational of the social order, but that the truth they convey is not a factual truth; they are what Southwold refers to as symbolically true (1979: 635-6). Southwold suggest that the symbolic quality of religious beliefs is not that they stand for something else but that they serve as an interpretive landmark to order experience.

4. Religious tenets are collective. They are learned in a social context and shared by members of a community and, most importantly, acted upon in a group situation.

All in all, Southwold's argument seems to be an elaboration of what Geertz means when he says that religious symbols are both models *of* and *for* reality (1966: 7-9).

THE WORK OF THE BELIEVER

While the investigations discussed above have all added to anthropology's store of knowledge, I believe a change of

emphasis may bring rewarding results. This may be demonstrated by looking at how each would handle the statement below. This statement is an excerpt from one of the sermons which will be analyzed later in the thesis. It is therefore not something dreamed up to undermine the positions outlined above.

24 Angels ...¹what
 25 are . angels? Well first we notice .. that angels are
 26 invisible spirits .. that is . they don't have flesh and
 27 bu blood >they don't< have bodies like we do. ¹However
 28 .. there are times when angels may and have taken on . a
 29 human form and made themselves visible.⁵

For the literalist, the above excerpt would demonstrate that the speaker (or his society) believes in angels. Angels are invisible, but can take on a human form. This belief would have been brought about through the socializing procedures that being a member of a church entails. Where the literalist would go from here is hard to say. It is obvious that the speaker is not trying to use angels to explain anything; quite the contrary he is *explaining* things about angels. There is also little here to show that the speaker is defending the fact of angels against disconfirming evidence. Though he speaks of angels as invisible, but as also having taken on visible forms, both these instances confirm the

⁵ This statement, with the entirety of the sermon it is a part of, is analyzed in chapter four. See the same chapter for an explanation of transcription symbols.

presence of angels. The literalist would need to wait for more statements to perform any meaningful analysis on this belief.

Symbolists, of whatever stripe⁶ would perhaps have more to say. Leach (1967, 1977) would perhaps relate the utterance to its social situation, or, like Lewis (1971), argue that the attention angels pay to believers endorses the social position of the believers. The angels themselves may be seen as symbols, or, in a more structuralist interpretation, we can see the opposition between the visible and the invisible which is mediated by humans who have both visible and invisible components.

For Southwold (1979), a belief in angels may be symbolic as well. A belief in invisible superhuman entities may serve as an interpretive landmark for conceptions of the world. The presence of angels could, for example, be demonstrative of the essential goodness of a creator, or a means by which the power of this creator is enacted.

I am glossing over these approaches somewhat. Given more data to work with, analysts following these traditions could come up with more cogent pronouncements. What these analysts do not do, and with their theoretical perspectives could not

⁶Jarvie (1976) was particularly castigated for lumping together approaches to symbolic analysis.

do, is pay attention to the work which the speaker performs in formulating statements like the excerpt above. The explication of such work is the prescribed goal of the social constructionist approach. Rather than seeking *what* religion and/or religious belief *is* or *does*, this thesis will investigate *how* these things are done. Social constructionists seek to show *that* reality is socially constructed and *how* it is constructed; this thesis proposes to do the same. Through my own analyses, I hope to draw attention to aspects of social life which are left unnoticed by other approaches: namely, the active role which actors play in maintaining the factual status of the things they hold to be true. While the excerpt above does indeed portray a belief in angels, it also works to establish the facticity of angels.

PLAN OF THE THESIS

Chapter two will set out as explicitly as possible the theoretical position of social constructionism. I will pay particular attention to the constructionist view of the relationship between accounts and objects through a detailed discussion of concept application and the properties of discourse referred to as indexicality and reflexivity.

Chapter three will outline the methodological concerns and precedents which have informed this thesis. Particular attention will be paid to the means by which analysis is

conducted and the way in which the data is to be treated. A review of some recent constructionist literature dealing with supernatural and religious beliefs will be provided.

Chapter four, the core of the thesis, will present my own data and analysis. This will subject three sermons to detailed discussion on the methods employed in rendering God, and other spiritual entities, available in each. I will then draw attention to some features which are common to all three sermons and are contingent on the situation itself.

In chapter five I will provide a synopsis of the most significant methods revealed in chapter four, with a brief discussion of each. I will then spell out some conclusions of a more general nature on the use of the constructionist approach.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

...in so far as all human 'knowledge' is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations, the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the processes by which this is done in such a way that a taken-for-granted 'reality' congeals for the man in the street. In other words, we contend that *the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality* (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 15, original italics).

Social constructionism has been referred to as a movement (cf. Gergen, 1985) involving analyses demonstrating similar concerns. This requires comment. While I will often refer to 'social constructionism', and thus imply a concrete body of theory, no such body is readily evident in the literature. Manning (1994:117) has complained that the term social constructionism is applied far too loosely, and his complaint is well founded. The studies which have been placed under the label of social constructionist are numerous and of disparate frameworks and orientations, and the metaphor of construction often refers to radically differing processes.¹ One such meaning refers to the effect of culture and socialization upon the individual. Members of differing cultures will hold

¹ See Sismondo (1993) for a review of constructionist studies and the various uses of the metaphor of construction. Knorr-Cetina (1993) provides a commentary and constructionist response.

differing world views, and hence structure experience differently. What is considered beautiful among one group is considered ugly in another; what is mere happenstance in Western society is the result of witchcraft in many African societies. In this formulation, socially constructed refers to culturally variable.

The version of social constructionism which I will advance, while informed somewhat by the perspective adopted above, is of a different and more radical nature. Rather than investigating the repertoire of facts which a culture provides its members, the approach presented here investigates how these facts arise and are maintained as facts; that is, how they are deemed to be present independently of the members' recognition of them.

The phrase "social construction" first gained widespread use with the influence of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality*, which adapted Alfred Schutz's phenomenological approach to a theoretical model for the sociology of knowledge. Many who use the metaphor, however, owe much of their disciplinary heritage to ethnomethodology.² There has recently been a reaction against the conflation of

² This is especially true of work done in the sociology of scientific knowledge (Velody, 1994; Shapin, 1995). Prime examples are Barry Barnes and Steve Woolgar.

the two approaches by various ethnomethodologists.³ Watson (1994:410) has argued against the epistemological stance taken by many social constructionists. Sharrock and Anderson (1991:76) explain that ethnomethodologists avoid the term due to the potentially negative connotations of describing something as being socially constructed. They suggest that the metaphor indicates fabrication; the resulting product is somehow unreal.⁴ Despite these protests, a great deal of ethnomethodological research will be included under the rubric of social constructionism. In doing so I am far from alone. As Bogen and Lynch note:

There are definite parallels between the two approaches: Both emphasize the role of constitutive practices in the formation and maintenance of social order;...both stress the necessity to investigate how the "objects and "facts" proper to the field of sociology are practical and discursive accomplishments. Many avowed constructionists draw upon ethnomethodological research, and many ethnomethodologists embrace constructionist themes and arguments(1993: 213-14).

So while I classify this thesis as constructionist as opposed to ethnomethodological, the theoretical perspective which I present is in many ways a hybrid of the influences of

³ For a discussion, and a good review of recent trends in ethnomethodology, see Atkinson (1988).

⁴ They point out that the term need not have this connotation however: "The demonstration of something's 'socially constructed character need not be -in our view, should not be- at the expense of its 'reality' (ibid)." This justification is taken into account in this thesis, as will become more apparent in the next chapter.

these two related strains of thought. This being the case, I will use this chapter to outline in as much detail as possible my own views on and justifications for the social constructionist position.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST VIEWPOINT

The social constructionist stance is thoroughly relativist. It is not merely relativist in the sense of cultural relativism's accepting the beliefs of other cultures as valid in their context, it is also relativist in that it makes no judgement on the adequacy of any claim about the world; all claims are, for analytic purposes, deemed of equal value. This can take the form of either ontological relativism or of a methodological imperative to suspend judgement in such matters.

We begin by contrasting two opposing viewpoints on the relation between reality and our accounts of it. The first of these viewpoints has been dubbed the 'reflective' (Woolgar, 1983) or correspondence (Watson 1987) position. This position corresponds roughly to the 'natural attitude' of phenomenological and ethnomethodological writings (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Leiter, 1980).

The correspondence viewpoint supposes that the world as experienced is independent and prior to us. The things (facts) which embody the world preexist our knowledge of them,

and will continue to exist after we are gone. Reality exists in the singular; it cannot be two things at once. The event that occurs for one individual is the same event that occurs for the person standing next to him or her; the object they look at is the same object.⁵

The relation of reality and descriptions of it from this standpoint is depicted graphically below (adapted from Woolgar (1983: 243)).

Object----->Account

Figure 1
Correspondence View of Accounts and Objects.

According to this viewpoint then, our accounts are derived from reality. Accounts are passive, and are judged in term of how well they capture the object(s) they describe. It should therefore be possible to match description to reality point for point (Watson, 1987).

In contrast, the social constructionist perspective, stated simply, subscribes to the notion that the world which we experience is not a freestanding independent set of facts, but is socially produced. According to the social constructionist model (at least the one presented here), the

⁵ This is referred to as the idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints.

relation between accounts and that which they describe is reversed:

ACCOUNT -----> OBJECT

Figure 2
Social Constructionist View of Accounts and Objects

The social constructionist therefore contends that our descriptions of reality are constitutive of it: they make it what it is (Watson, 1987).

For the social constructionist, reality is that which cannot be wished away (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:13). This is not to say that our interpretations of the world are influenced by the social setting, as is accepted by most interpretive anthropologists and sociologists (see Watson, 1987)⁶, but that the outside world *is*, for all relevant purposes, this very interpretation. There is no access to the outside world *sans* interpretation (Fish, 1980:338-55). This argument is elaborated in the following sections.

TENETS OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Attempts to characterize social constructionism coherently are difficult to find. Usually the reader finds some very brief 'sum up' statement (eg, the contributors to

⁶ For example, Borhek and Curtis (1975:45) in a criticism of constructionism state that reality is encountered, then modified.

Velody, ed 1994). Kenneth Gergen (1985) has attempted to outline the basic assumptions of social constructionism, but is only able to claim that constructionists hold "one or more" of his four truths to be self evident. Burr (1995: 3-8) has expanded on Gergen's tenets to show more clearly the parallel attitudes which make up social constructionism. The three tenets outlined below are based on Gergen and Burr with influences from other authors cited.

Social constructionism, as conceived in this thesis, is based upon the following theoretical presuppositions:

1. Our access to reality goes hand in hand with social processes. Our experience of the world cannot be divorced from our methods of understanding it. Social constructionists maintain that all knowledge is inherently social in character, therefore the things known are correspondingly socially generated. As this is perhaps the most important constructionist assumption a great deal of space will be allocated to its discussion.

To elaborate the above premise, let us begin with something elementary: concepts and their application. People organize experience and reality through concepts, indeed one could say that we *experience* concepts. The application of a concept bestows meaning to an object or event: we experience tables as tables, books as books. We do not ever experience

them without the social baggage of concepts; we do not experience tables or books as "things which I refer to as tables and books." Our first task is then to examine the means by which concepts are mapped onto experience. Barry Barnes (1981), in perhaps the most under-cited paper in the social sciences, has provided an excellent consideration of this topic.

Barnes models cultural knowledge in terms of a network of concepts connected through generalizations.⁷ Thus, the concept of table is connected to furniture through the generalization "all tables are pieces of furniture". The diagram below provides a simplified version of Barnes' net.

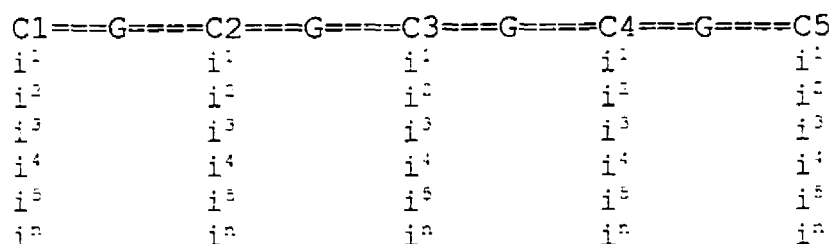


Figure 3
Barnes' Hesse Net (from Barnes 1981: 331).

The net can be extended until all known concepts are included. Under each concept are a list of instances in which it has been previously applied. These make up the concept's *tension*. Tension is used:

⁷ Barnes' model is adapted from the work of Mary Hesse, and he refers to his network as a Hesse Net.

in deliberate allusion to 'extension' as used in philosophical semantics. In the extension of a term are thought to be included all the entities to which it properly applies, or of which it is true. In the tension of a term are included only past instances of use--a finite number of instances. To talk merely of the tension of a term is to accept that future proper usage is indeterminate. (Barnes, 1981:308).

And so:

The important thing now is to see that the acquisition of all that the culture (where the concept is employed) can provide still leaves future concept application under-determined and open-ended. Concepts are invariably applied to successions of particulars which differ in detail the one from the other. Proper competence (in concept application) is displayed by their use in ways which go beyond what is initially taught (1981:309).

If concept application is indeterminate, the proper usage of a concept must be established in each individual instance. Citing a new particular as an example of one category vis-a-vis another category will depend on the perceived resemblance of the new particular in reference to the tensions of the categories in question. Each application of a concept is therefore in principle problematic. The individual is faced with numerous aspects of similarities and dissimilarities to the tensions of various concepts:

There are grounds to be found in previous usage for any selection: whatever the new particular is called can be made out as in accordance with previous usage. Therefore, what the particular is actually called must be understood formally as a contingent judgement of the agent or agents involved. (Barnes, 1981: 313).

As judgements, all concept applications are therefore in

principle contestable and revisable. There is no formal or objective means by which the accuracy of such judgements are to be assessed: insufficient resemblance can always be argued.³ The consequences of this argument are significant:

Not only is it the case that the instances within the tension are part of a received culture; the very process whereby instances are one by one added to the tension are processes involving socially situated judgement...concept application is not a social activity in the sense that it is determined by a culturally given classification of reality, but a social activity which gives rise to and develops the pattern of that very classification. The pattern does not account for the activity; rather the activity accounts for the pattern (Barnes, 1981:309-10).

Consequently, what counts as properly application (ie naming, categorizing) can only be seen as the product of agreement between actors:

Concepts do not come with labels attached, carrying instructions which tell us how they are to be used. We ourselves determine usage, taking previous usage as precedent. Moreover, such precedent is corrigible, since it is itself the product of judgements. It can always be said that previous usage was wrong, that it weighed similarities and differences incorrectly... (Barnes, 1981: 313).

What then stands as the criterion for correctness can then only be seen as social agreement (or, if you will, absence of disagreement). Neither the concepts so applied nor

³ Examples of such cases in anthropology are easy to cite. Consider the rejection of lineage models to Japanese kinship (Nakane, 1967; Bachnik, 1983), or Sahlins' (1961) exclusion of all but the Tiv and Nuer as examples of segmentary lineage systems, or Salzman's (1978) refutation of the existence of complementary opposition.

the world seem to have any opinion in the matter.

This point is made abundantly clear in Pollner's (1974, 1975) treatment of what he, Pollner, has termed 'reality disjunctures'.⁹ A reality disjuncture occurs when two persons come to describe the same event in different ways. Given the assumption of a shared and external world, Pollner suggests that such occurrences could be cited as evidence contrary to this assumption. The externality of the world is upheld, however, by *ironizing* the experience of one of the parties. One of the versions is held to be the result of faulty perception or reportage (1975: 417). Notice here, however, that it is not the world which ends the dispute, but the actors:

[the] resolution of reality disjunctures cannot simply be achieved by 'looking' at the world. Indeed, that is presumably just what parties to a disjuncture have done and that is not the end of their troubles, but the beginning of them (1975: 426).

The implications of the arguments above are of central importance to the theoretical position advanced here. When concept application is regarded as a contingent process whose ultimate validity lies not in reference to "things themselves" but an equally imperfect social sphere, it follows that what is considered to be correct formulations of the nature of the world must be formally seen as contestable. What is deemed to

⁹ See also Eglin (1979) on this topic.

be correct versus an incorrect assessment of reality is based not upon reference to the facts; the parties involved in a dispute of concept application or 'reality disjuncture' both have reference to the same set of facts, yet still there is dispute. The resolution lies in the process of the unfolding dispute, or negotiation, not in the essence of the objects themselves. It is through this process by which the new fact, the judgement that concept X is correct as opposed to concept Y, is resolved (Fish, 1980).

2. The second theoretical presupposition of social constructionism is that knowledge is historically situated. What counts as reality for a given society, or individual is the result of historic social interactions. We are therefore dependent upon the socially available knowledge temporally present (the status of which is discussed above), and on the procedures by which this is communicated. The main, if not primary means by which this interaction takes place is through language. Language is conceived not as a passive means of communicating that which preexists; rather, language makes available those characteristics which are asserted to preexist.

The reality which the social constructionist is interested in differs from the one which the physicist is concerned with. The reality which "cannot be wished away" is

one in which actors must move about in everyday life. The social constructionist has no concern for "what is really out there", but what the actors regard as being "really out there." The ultimate truth or validity of any claim is of no consequence to the analyst. We no longer accept the idea of illness produced via "evil vapors" or the therapeutic value of bleeding. That these are deemed as mistakes and errors by our current canons of acceptability makes them no less real for the people who did believe them. The reality of evil vapors and bleeding was maintained through the same processes that germs and vaccinations are today.

What consists of all known facts about the world is not available to the individual. A person's experience can never embrace all of what he has knowledge of. For many persons, the only access to the workings of their car engine is through their mechanic. Or for the anthropological student, the only access to the fact that the Trobriand Islanders trade kula rings and do not socially recognize the biological role of the male in conception is through Malinowski's (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. This does not mean that these things do not exist for people. The external and independent nature of the combustion engine is just as real for the mechanically incompetent as it is for the mechanic. The same objectivity can be claimed about the Trobriand Islanders' ignorance or

knowledge, depending on whether you listen to Spiro (1968) or Leach (1967), about the male contribution to conception. This introduces us to the central role of language in constructionist theory. As Berger and Luckmann state:

I can speak about innumerable matters that are not present at all in the face-to-face situation, including matters I never have and never will experience directly. In this way, language is capable of becoming the objective repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience...(1966:52).

There are two fundamental aspects of language which demand that interpretation be foremost in our apprehension of reality. These are indexicality and reflexivity.

Indexicality refers to the context dependency of meaning. Outside of a specific context, words or events become ambiguous (Leiter 1980: 107). It has been a long standing view in anthropology that symbolic statements are inherently ambiguous (cf. Cohen, 1974: 36-37). Social constructionism entertains a view that all statements share in this nature. The context dependency of statements is reflected in the fact that they are revisable in meaning (Barnes and Law, 1976). Recall that concepts are applied to a sequence of particular instances. The instances in which they are applied cannot be specified in advance, nor can the evaluative criteria used for such application. Meaning is, therefore, always a contestable issue, as several variations of meaning may be cited in any instance (Watson, 1991). Consider again the example of the

segmentary lineage system. In 1958, Middleton and Tait listed numerous societies as exhibiting this organization. Sahlins (1961) then redefined the segmentary lineage, assigning primary importance to acephalous organization based on complementary opposition. Salzman (1978) then argued that no society exhibits complementary opposition as defined by Sahlins. Later, Lindholm (1982) argued that the Swat Pakhtuns do indeed exhibit complementary opposition, but not in all cases of dispute. Notice here that redefining the term is of no help at all, as the redefinition leads to further problems of ambiguity; Sahlins' "tightening up" of complementary opposition leads to Salzman's rejection of it as a useful concept. Each act of redefinition creates a new set of indexical expressions to contend with (Watson, 1991). Perhaps the most forceful exposition of this is by Barnes and Law (1976: 229-33) in their treatment of the history of Euler's theorem, which they sum up as "one big exercise in repairing indexicality."

We do not in practice have much trouble with indexicality. As each description or concept is already located in a context, its sense can be determined in that instance. When I say I used my mouse to relocate this paragraph to its current position, the reader can readily understand that I mean a mechanical device rather than a small

rodent. But such understanding, such facts, must be understood as a result of the contextual nature of the utterance, not freestanding and independent of it.

Description, like definition or meaning, is an inherently problematic affair. No description can be completely exhaustive; it is in principle a potentially endless affair. Consider the example below:

Were I now to formulate where my notes are, it would be correct to say that they are: right in front of me, next to the telephone, on the desk, in my office, in Room 213, in Lewisohn Hall, on campus, at school, at Columbia, in Morningside Heights, on the upper West Side, in Manhattan, in New York City....Each of these terms could be in some sense correct (Schegloff, 1972:81, cited in Wooffitt, 1992:14).

Any description, therefore, selectively draws attention to certain aspects of the object or setting it describes. The description thereby becomes part of the setting.

This property of discourse is referred to as reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the mutually elaborative aspects of descriptions and their settings. As the descriptions are made

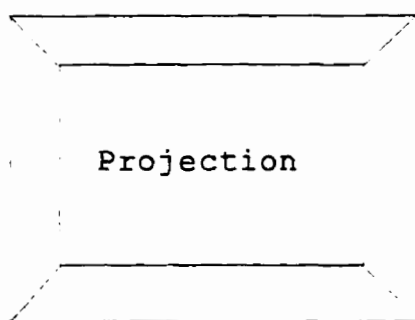


Figure 4
Graphical Representation of Reflexivity

up of indexical expressions whose sense requires the setting, the setting, which could potentially be described in a potentially endless number of ways, is given specific properties by the description. Consider the picture, from Watson, (1987:31) above:

In the diagram above, the word projection constitutes the figure as a projection. Note that without these instructions, the figure is ambiguous, it could be an indentation, or merely a collection of lines. It could even be an architectural drawing, the lines designating walls and pathways. The word projection also derives its sense from the figure; the figure lets us know that this is the type of projection we are dealing with, not a psychological one (Watson, 1987).

The ethnomethodological conception of social order is

integral to the version of constructionism promoted here. For ethnomethodologists:

It [social order] does not consist of providing causal explanations for patterned social action. Instead we will deal with the ways members of society assemble settings and behaviours so as to create and sustain a sense of social order as it is experienced commonsensically. Members of society are continually engaged in displaying and detecting the orderly features of the social world... Social order, for ethnomethodologists, refers to a *sense of social order*. *Order*, refers to the factual properties of objects and events. The problem of social order, from the ethnomethodological perspective, deals with how people create and sustain the factual character of the social world as a patterned object independent of perception (Leiter, 1980:159 original italics).

This is to say the locating and displaying of factual features reflexively makes them *available* as factual features. Making such features *available* places them into the public, intersubjective arena: it objectifies them in Berger and Luckmann's (1966: 49-50) terminology.

3. The third theoretical tenet of social constructionism is that the processes by which we construct the state of the world are continuous: facticity is a status which is held until further notice. In other words, what "is" is constantly revised as situations change. This third aspect arises as a direct consequence of the previous two. The world as we have made it available is subject to later interpretative process. It is an ongoing process. The world is not constructed once and for all, but "until further notice" (Leiter, 1980: 70).

Once again, we must consider the paramount importance of discourse. To clarify "what actually happened" requires, of course, describing it. The only access to 'objective' events or objects is through discourse; 'what things actually are' was (even if I were to grant this much to the realist) lost with the passage of time and has become inaccessible. Thus there is no point in speaking of "reality modification" (Borhek and Curtis, 1975:45), the reality is simply not available for scrutiny.

To take a classic anthropological example, consider Leach's (1977:159-72) discussion of lineage negotiation among the Kachin in Burma. In this instance, Leach argues that a man alters the status of his lineage, and therefore his own by performing ritual in a fashion associated with higher status. He then rewrites his personal history to match this status by manipulation of the vagaries of Kachin kinship. The analysis of this procedure is both laudable and necessary, but it must always be remembered that it works only through a process of agreement. Kevin the common Kachin can perform ritual as lavishly as he wishes and then scream from the highest mountain in Burma that he is chief: if no one else agrees it will all be for naught. That Kevin the common Kachin is sometimes able to renegotiate his status is of extreme importance. It alerts us to the negotiated and contextual

nature of such hard objective fact as birth and age (as these are what must be ultimately respecified for a change in rank among the Kachin).

It could perhaps be said that this is a gratuitous example, as the Kachin are actively obscuring "known facts". We need only to look at science to find further examples. Besides the history of Euler's Theorem (Barnes and Law, 1976) cited earlier, we may also add the shifting nature of Thyrotropin Releasing Factor (TRF). In the history of this substance, it was a peptide, not a peptide, a peptide again, then finally was a form of peptide which it was not supposed to be (Latour and Woolgar, 1979:105-50).

There has been a growing movement in post-war anthropology towards processual analysis of topics, influenced by Leach (1977) and Gluckman's use of the case method (eg, 1968), and the analyses of Turner (1957). Barth, modifying the insights of Goffman into 'transactionalism' (1966), has also been influential.¹⁰ Social constructionism is characterized by hyperprocessualism. Pollner's frequently cited statement "where others see 'things', 'givens' or 'facts of life,' the ethnomethodologist sees (or attempts to see) process: the process through which the perceivedly stable

¹⁰ See also Bailey (1969) and Kapferer (1976). An excellent review of anthropological theory is given by Ortner (1984), though of course the last decade is lost.

features of socially organized environments are continually created and sustained" (quoted in Watson and Goulet, 1992: 217) captures the essence of this view. It is from moment to moment that 'the real' is maintained, dismissed or altered. What remains to be accomplished is demonstration of how this process can be turned into a topic of investigation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL CONCERNS

THE FOCUS OF CONSTRUCTIONIST STUDY

In the preceding chapter, I presented the underlying basis of a social constructionist perspective. This was done as forcefully as possible in order to encourage the reader to think in social constructionist terms. I have, inescapably, been practising that which I attempt to demonstrate. Social constructionism is just as socially constructed as anything else.

The theoretical tenets of a social constructionist perspective dictate what empirical goals the researcher will seek to obtain. This is particularly true of social constructionism as many of its theoretical assumptions arose as a critique of normative social science (Mehan and Wood, 1975: 37-73). In the previous chapter I characterised social constructionism as processual in orientation: it asks 'how' instead of 'why' (Watson and Goulet, 1992). As Kenneth Gergen (1985:266) has stated:

Social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live.

Social constructionism treats description as *work*, and

its task is to display this work (Latour, 1988: 163). The social constructionist researcher takes as a topic what other researchers regard as a resource (Bogen and Lynch, 1993: 222). To accomplish this, the researcher must suspend judgement in regard to the factual character of what is being asserted. This procedure is often called 'bracketing' or *epoché* (Psathas, 1989: 15, 101). Whatever the procedure is called, the result is to highlight the methods used by people to generate and maintain the factual properties of the world (Leiter, 1980: 29-32). What the researcher regards as correct is of no relevance to the situation under study: it has no bearing on the actors' orientations or understandings.¹

By suspending judgement on the ultimate validity of the actors' assertions, the social constructionist is able to take these assertions as a topic of study. Our focus becomes "how people depict the social world" (Leiter, 1980: 236). Put more explicitly, rather than asking "What do the Bongo Bongo think of God?", we are more inclined to ask "how do the Bongo Bongo, or a Christian in Calgary for that matter, make God available when they talk about him/her/it?"

Not all constructionists, or even all those cited in this thesis, maintain the same level of commitment to the

¹ See Barnes' (1981) critique of Bulmer's (1967) paper on Karam taxonomy for judging Karam categories by reference to those of Western zoology.

suspension of judgement. Following Pollner (1974, 1975, 1991, 1993) and Watson (1991), it will be argued here that this suspension must be absolute. To do otherwise is to be guilty of what Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) have labelled 'ontological gerrymandering'. Ontological gerrymandering:

makes problematic the truth status of certain states of affairs selected for analysis and explanation, while backgrounding or minimizing the possibility the same problems apply to assumptions upon which the analysis depends (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985: 216).

To understand ontological gerrymandering, let us examine one of the accused. In the now classic *Constructing Social Problems*, Spector and Kitsuse discuss the changing definitions of marijuana as addictive and non-addictive. They state that there is nothing in the nature of marijuana to account for these changes, as the nature of marijuana remained constant throughout the time periods in question (1977: 43). Woolgar and Pawluch argue that:

The key assertion is that the actual character of a substance (marijuana), condition or behavior remained constant. But in each case the authors fail to acknowledge that their identification of "the nature of marijuana" or their assertion of the constancy of a condition or behavior, can itself be construed as a definitional claim.....While the claims of the claims makers are depicted as socio-historical constructions...that require explanation, the claims of and the constructive work of the authors remain hidden and are to be taken as given (1985: 217).

Ontological gerrymandering could be seen as a means of resolving a 'reality disjuncture' in Pollner's (1974, 1975)

terms. The problem with ontological gerrymandering is that it explains away the social events it wishes to describe. Rather than focussing on the means by which the various definitions of marijuana are accomplished by the actors as matters of fact, it seeks causes for the inadequate descriptions of marijuana.² Such attempts have been criticized by Pollner (1975: 423):

When the analyst's version is treated as the privileged version in terms of which alternative accounts and experiences are ironized, subsequent analysis is often a search for the presumptive sociological and psychological mechanisms through which proponents of the subjective versions are allowed to encounter a spurious world.....Sociological encounters with allegedly spurious worlds yield equally creative ways of explaining them away.

By explaining the member's version away, the analyst loses that which he or she is attempting to focus on. For the social constructionist, it means losing the work which is done in producing the "spurious world" which he or she is attempting to capture.

ANALYTIC FOCUS

Social constructionist studies limit their focus to particular instances which are to be analyzed. As Watson (1992) argues, the object of analysis is to demonstrate how

² It should be noted that there is nothing to prevent actors from employing ontological gerrymandering as a means of description. Indeed, Woolgar and Pawluch suggest that sociologists do precisely that (1985: 224-5).

the work of discourse is done locally, not in some generalized or typical fashion. Shapin (1995) notes that constructionist sociologists of scientific knowledge have tended to limit their studies to a detailed examination of how X was accomplished in a particular instance.

With their heavy focus on language use, social constructionist studies often become studies of accounts. Accounts are any communication which reveals aspects of a setting (Leiter, 1980:162). The 'setting' may be understood as any object, place, situation or person which the account may speak of. In a movie review, for example, the movie is the setting.

The particularism of social constructionist research allows the reader to judge whether the analysis is merited by the data itself. This is especially true where accounts are the chief concern of the research. Ethnomethodologists, with their focus on the *in situ* and occasioned production of order, demand that any analysis be grounded in inspectable data (Watson, 1992:6). This further benefits the researcher, as he or she must realize the analysis presented will be under scrutiny for its relation to the data. Working closely with a transcribed piece of discourse also serves as a constant check on the ambitious analyst looking for something to say (Murphy, 1994:66).

THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

In recent years, most social constructionist studies have focussed on the social construction of scientific knowledge (seminal in this regard is still Latour and Woolgar, 1979), social problems theory (eg, Spector and Kitsuse, 1977; contributors to Holstein and Miller, 1993), and a growing group in the area of social psychology led by Kenneth Gergen (eg, 1985) and Potter and Wetherell (eg, 1987, Wetherell and Potter 1988). It is relatively recently that social constructionists have turned their eyes to what is loosely described as the 'religious' or 'paranormal'. In this section I will review those which are the most pertinent to my own project.

1. The social construction of paranormal experience.

Robin Wooffitt's (1992) analysis of individuals' accounts of paranormal experiences is an attempt to merge the disciplines of discourse analysis (discussed in the next section) and conversation analysis as performed in ethnomethodological circles (e.g. Heritage, 1988).

Wooffitt's interest in accounts of paranormal experiences arises from the fact that the people who claim to have such experiences place themselves in a poor social position: they are liable to be labelled as deluded or insane (1992: 2). He therefore sees them as ideal for an analysis of how speakers

warrant the factuality of their claims (1992:3). The goal of the analysis is "to describe the tacit communicative skills and practices which people use in their accounts to warrant their implicit claim that the experiences ... actually happened," with no intent to judge the effectiveness of such skills and practices (1992: 188).

To achieve his objectives, Wooffitt first analyzes in detail a brief excerpt of a single transcript (1992: 72-92). The analysis of this data gives an overview of the elements of discourse which will be of interest over the wider corpus of data. He then looks at some features of how speakers begin their descriptions of paranormal experiences (1992: 93-116). Following Smith (1978) and Woolgar (1980), he argues that the beginning of each description provides an interpretative frame for the hearer to judge what is said after. For example, the speakers eliminate their own agency in the accounts; paranormal experiences are not things they do, but happen to them:

By formulating their paranormal experiences as an 'it' that 'happened', speakers...are thus trading on conventions which inform the way that we refer to events the occurrence of which were not contingent upon human agency and involvement...they portray the events and phenomena they experienced as the kind which happen to people, and thereby as existing independently of the speaker's agency, actions and intentions (1992: 103).

Wooffitt then analyzes the use of two rhetorical devices which he has located in the accounts. The first of these he

refers to as "I was just doing X...when Y". This involves the description of what the individual was doing at the time of the experience(X), and the speaker's first recognition of the experience.

Finally, Wooffitt examines how speakers incorporate the speech of either themselves or another person in their accounts. This achieves a wide variety of effects, not the least of which is demonstrating the objectivity of the phenomenon by its being shared with someone else and not the result of hallucination.

Central to all of Wooffitt's analyses is demonstrating how speakers anticipate that the hearer may be sceptical of their account. The accounts all show this concern and are organized to defeat any sceptical arguments against their veracity. In the example below, the speaker is describing her actions after hearing a noise of paranormal origin. The line numbers and punctuation match Wooffitt's original (1992:79-80).

```

8  a:nd >of course<
9  I tore apart ma window
10 I tore apart the window frame
11 I >did Everything<
12 to find out what the hell's causing that

```

Wooffitt's analysis of this excerpt points out that the ensuing search is presented as one which would be expected: of course she tore apart the window. Further, her searching for

a cause indicates that she was acting in a completely normal fashion. Finally, we may note the she did not assume that the cause was paranormal. She did not go looking for anything paranormal, rather the search reveals her orientation to mundane reality.

2. *Supernatural beliefs among the Dene Tha*

Watson and Goulet (1992) have performed research on the objectification of visions among the Dene Tha of Northern Alberta. They set their position against a prominent approach in the comparison of belief systems by anthropologists, which focuses on the differences between Western and non-Western cultures (1992: 216). Their own standpoint is stated as being:

We take reality to mean that which appears to confront us and cannot be wished away. We are interested in how the Dene Tha objectify their conceptions of reality, not in whether these conceptions satisfy Euro-Canadian canons of plausibility. We think of Dene Tha accounts of dreams and visions neither as reflecting reality as Euro-Canadians conceive it, nor as distorting it, but as *constitutive* of Dene Tha reality (1992:216, original emphasis).

Watson and Goulet set out to show how the reality of Dene Tha mystical beliefs are constructed and self-validating. The central theme of their analysis is that the Dene Tha construct the efficacy of dreams and visions retrospectively through selective readings of both the dream or vision and the event to which it refers. In the case of prophetic dreams, for

example, the dream often does not state the inevitable but the probable (1992: 218-19).

The data used by Watson and Goulet originate in the fieldnotes and previous publications of Goulet. Thus the data presented consist of either quotations from published sources or verbatim fieldnotes. There is therefore no means by which the authors could present their data in the format followed by Wooffitt. Such an exercise would be futile, in any event, as many of the interviews were probably not conducted in English, and the transcription changes in inflection or emphasis would be impossible: you cannot emphasize the word 'probably' when the speaker actually said *enuudli*.³

Watson (1992)⁴ has analysed in greater detail twenty-nine lines of a single interview from Goulet's field notes. Watson's paper is designed to demonstrate how the concerns of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis may be adopted by anthropologists, even if the data used may not be deemed acceptable from the point of view of the conversation analyst (Watson, 1992: 2).

Watson is also less concerned with the 'supernatural' aspects of the interview's content than with how the speaker

³ This is the Dene Tha word for probably (Watson and Goulet, 1992: 218).

⁴ I categorize this work as social constructionist despite the denials of its author.

'makes the world available', regardless of the mundane or exceptional aspects of the world which are revealed. Consider the 14 lines below and his remarks on them:

- 1 When I was living in the log house,
- 2 I was coming home when it was dark, all of a sudden I saw
a woman
- 3 coming towards me, she was wearing a red dress and had
black hair,
- 4 she was coming from the graveyard,
- 5 she was coming closer to me.
- 6 I had my rosary in my hand and I put it around my neck.
- 7 I knew this woman was Fnnb Ej.
- 8 She kept coming every night.
- 9 Finally I told Anna, I told her I don't feel good and I
asked
- 10 her what was wrong with me. She told me you better tell
our dad.
- 11 I told him, he gave me water to drink and he blew over
me.
- 12 He told me that woman wanted to be re-incarnated,
- 13 He told me he could see her spirit around the house every
evening
- 14 trying to get close to me. (Watson, 1992: 4).

Watson's analysis focuses on how the speaker depicts the events as objective. He notes the amount of details which the speaker reports in the story: it is given a time frame (when I was living in the log house); the woman had black hair and a red dress and was coming from the graveyard etc.. These details, Watson argues, are similar to the details which an ethnographer would present in a monograph, and they say the same thing: I was there (Watson, 1992: 13-14).

Watson notes that the details are all presented in a "bare-boned" manner. The 'other world' is treated as no more exceptional than this world. The speaker presents herself as

an observer to the scene. Like Wooffitt's informants, the speaker presents herself as acted upon by an external phenomenon (Watson, 1992: 15-17).

Watson draws out other aspects of the transcript, but those outlined above should give the reader an indication of the analytic style in use. What we can note is that this style does not in any meaningful way differ from the style employed in the analysis of a judgement by a judge (in Watson, 1994), suggesting that there is nothing inherently 'more constructed' about accounts of the supernatural than of the natural.

3. Divine Apparitions

Edouard Berryman (n.d.) has recently done a study in the social construction of the divine. His starting point is the presence yet empirical absence of God. The analysis seeks to demonstrate the practices "through which the objectivity of the believer's God is achieved" (Berryman, n.d.: 285).

To conduct his study, Berryman makes use of what could be considered as a naturally occurring "breach experiment."⁵ If it is normal for God to be present but invisible, a 'breach' would occur when God is both present and visible (Berryman,

⁵ A "breach experiment" involves breaching expected patterns of behaviour or activity with hopes of demonstrating what the expected patterns are. They are discussed in Garfinkel (1967: 35-75).

n.d.: 286). Berryman therefore looks at cases where God (or another spiritual being such as the Virgin Mary) has been empirically encountered.

Berryman argues that the visionaries present themselves and the deities they encounter as regular "mundane reasoners", to adopt Pollner's (1974, 1975) terminology. For example, when asked to describe the nature of an apparition of Christ, one of his informants replied "I hear Him with my ears and I see Him with my eyes as I see you now" (Berryman, n.d.: 289). Berryman contends that this response attests to the objectivity of the apparition by implying the perceptual competence of the speaker. The speaker is not suffering from hallucinations. Also, the "moral adequacy" of the speaker is confirmed: the person is not attempting to defraud anyone.

The deities which appear to the visionary are also presented as competent social members. When the Virgin Mary appears to someone, she speaks understandably (she does not speak in Hebrew to people in France), and her talk carries with it the same assumptions of the world which her listeners orient to (Berryman, n.d.: 290-92).

From the way visionaries describe encounters with deities, meeting a deity is much the same as meeting a person. The crucial aspect which differentiates these encounters, Berryman argues, is a modification of the assumption of the

interchangeability of standpoints:

I take it for granted--and assume my fellow man does the same--that if I change places with him so that his "here" becomes mine, I shall be at the same distance from things and see them with the same typicality as he actually does; moreover, the same things would be in my reach which are actually in his. (The reverse is also true.) (Schutz, 1962: 12, quoted in Berryman, n.d.: 293).

In the case of apparitions this assumption appears to be suspended. When his informant sees an apparition of Christ or the Virgin Mary, her husband cannot see it even if he is present (Berryman, n.d.: 293).

Berryman sets out to illustrate the necessity of the suspension of the assumption of the interchangeability of standpoints and what this suspension accomplishes. He does this by comparing the 'believer's' God (with the interchangeability of standpoints suspended) with a God whose availability is subject to the interchangeability of standpoints. Berryman argues that, in the latter case, while God would have much power He would no longer be omnipotent.⁶ God could not see everything because He would be in one place (Berryman, n.d.: 297-298). Thus, the empirical non-availability of God allows the believer's God to be what He is:

The believer's God can be everywhere because he is nowhere to be seen. He is all powerful because the

⁶ The use of 'he' in referring to God is used because Berryman does so.

deployment of his power is not seeable. The believer's God is possible because He is not publicly accessible...God's "absence" is what makes His sort of "presence" possible for the believer (Berryman, n.d.: 298, original emphasis).

There will be further discussion of Berryman's research in the conclusion to this thesis.

4. *Mambilan divination*

David Zeitlyn (1990) has made use of ethnomethodological tenets in an analysis of divination among the Mambila of Cameroon. Using Garfinkel's (1967: 76-103) paper "Common sense knowledge of social structures," as an inspiration, Zeitlyn describes how Mambila diviners make use of the documentary method of interpretation⁷ to arrive at a determinate meaning during a problematic divination sequence.

Zeitlyn contends that most social analyses of divination focus on the social consequences of divination. They fail to address divination in itself:

While such analyses may reveal important aspects of a divinatory system, the theoretical standpoint adopted allows for no detailed analysis of the praxis of consultation. Neither the interaction between diviner and client nor, more importantly, the interaction between diviner and divination can be understood from this perspective. Conversation analysis, however, provides techniques to understand these interactions (Zeitlyn, 1990: 659).

Mambila spider divination consists of asking questions of

⁷ The documentary method of interpretation is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

a yes/no (or this/that) format. The spider's burrow is covered with leaves, and a stick and a stone are placed near the burrow. A pot is then placed over all of these. A question is then posed and then the pot is tapped. When the spider leaves its burrow, the leaves are displaced and the answer is interpreted through their location in relation to the stick or the stone. Several spiders may be consulted at the same time (Zeitlyn, 1990: 650-51).

Like Evans-Pritchard (1937), Zeitlyn analyses how a meaningful divination is achieved when contradictory answers are received from the oracle. The diviners assume that the oracles' answers form a pattern. Therefore, new questions are asked in light of previous answers (cf. Garfinkel, 1967). Contradictory answers therefore:

forced the diviners to examine the possibilities of more complicated problems. Once these possibilities had been eliminated the diviners could return to the main strand of the enquiry as if no contradiction had occurred (Zeitlyn, 1990: 662).

Contradictory answers can therefore be seen as rejecting the question which was asked, forcing the diviner to broaden the scope of his enquiry (Zeitlyn, 1990: 663).

Zeitlyn argues strongly for the merits of the ethnomethodological approach, both in regard to divination and more generally in anthropology itself. He claims "that ethnomethodology enables us to move beyond...announcements of

the desirability of processual anthropology to its actual practice."

THE STUDY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPIRITUAL IN CALGARY

A great deal of constructionist research has taken the form of what has been termed 'discourse analysis'. Discourse analysis is a catch-all term which describes various strategies of research, the common thread between which is an emphasis upon language (Burr, 1995:163). Recently the term has come to denote the specific approach to analysis developed by Michael Mulkay and G. Nigel Gilbert (Mulkay and Gilbert, 1982; Mulkay, Potter and Yearley, 1983; Gilbert and Mulkay 1983; 1984) and has continued in the work of Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1988). This approach is concerned with the identification of interpretative or rhetorical repertoires. Interpretative repertoires are seen as:

the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena. Any particular repertoire is constituted out of a restricted range of terms used in a specific stylistic and grammatical fashion (Wetherell and Potter, 1988:172).

The seminal study with this approach is probably still Gilbert and Mulkay's (1984) analysis of what they termed the 'empiricist' and 'contingent' repertoires used by scientists when describing scientific work. Recently Mulkay (1993) has analysed a parliamentary debate regarding embryo research in

Great Britain. Those supporting embryo research spoke in the rhetoric of hope, those opposed in the rhetoric of fear.

Discourse analysis is conducted in order to analyse a large amount of data originating in the speech of numerous individuals. In the case of the scientists' discourse, the number of interviews and individuals involved was truly incredible. This form of analysis allows the researcher to systematically discuss a great deal of transcribed talk.

The main failing of discourse analysis is that the interpretative repertoires seem to be regarded as prior to the speech in which they are found. An individual may exhibit several repertoires within a given piece of talk (Wetherell and Potter, 1988:174-76). This often leads to the individual being described as drawing upon multiple repertoires. The repertoires themselves are described as types of toolkits which people use, as though they were there before the talk and necessary pieces for the completion of a discourse jigsaw puzzle. This is evident in the following statement by Mulkay:

...there was a 'rhetoric of hope' which enabled contributors to depict embryo research, and science more generally, in a strongly positive fashion (Mulkay, 1993: 723, emphasis added).

Notice here that it is the rhetoric which allowed for the positive presentation of science, not the positive presentation allowing for a rhetoric of hope.

The major drawback of this form of analysis lies in the

loss of detail. The interpretative repertoires which are described inevitably represent only a partial amount of the overall discourse, and therefore only a partial amount of what the speaker accomplishes in that discourse. Within each repertoire are subsumed numerous microactions which are worthy of analysis.

The analytic method followed in this research follows a procedure more in line with the research of Smith (1978, 1990), Watson (1992) and Wooffitt (1992, especially chapter four). This form of analysis differs from the discourse analysis of Mulkey and Gilbert. Whereas Gilbert and Mulkey analysed their collection of interviews as a collection to be analysed in terms of the interpretative repertoires which they are shown to share, the approach here analyses each article of discourse in and of itself. As each of the sermons analysed occurred upon different days, addressed different topics, and of course referred to different scriptural readings, each should be seen as discrete events. To provide an analysis based upon their similar styles would, I think, never allow the reader to grasp how each sermon works as a totality. There would be no appreciation of what the congregation heard on the day the sermon was spoken. If I were just to say that the speaker often does X in the sermons, and then documented this with instances of its occurrences within various sermons,

just how X fit into each sermon and the work it does there would be completely unavailable to the reader.

The data which will be analysed in the forthcoming chapter comprise three sermons given at a local Calgary church.³ In each instance, the pastor delivering the sermon was the same individual. While one may wonder why only one church, and hence one speaker was used, there are reasons for this.

First, relying on one speaker allowed me to familiarize myself with the specific patterns of speech which were used, aiding greatly in the arduous task of transcription. Secondly, the church itself tape recorded each and every service with their own sound system. These tapes were generously loaned to me, allowing me to conduct the research in as discreet a manner as possible. There was no need for conspicuous tape recording devices to be set up or located upon my person. No one in the congregation needed to look at me or a recorder and wonder what was occurring.

My choice of sermons for a subject matter was based upon several considerations. The sermon portion of the service is the only portion where the pastor is free to speak at length in an unpredetermined manner. The hymns sung in church are

³ I will leave both the church and the speaker unidentified to protect anonymity.

all prewritten, many hundreds of years ago⁹; the liturgy spoken was decided upon well before either the speaker, the researcher or the reader were born. The sermon represents the sole portion of the service in which the pastor is able to demonstrate for any sustained period of time his own interpretative and verbal skills. This is not to say that one could not analyze the sociological aspects of the rest of the service, merely that this was not my interest in the study.

By focussing on the sermon, I was also able to obtain naturally-occurring and unsolicited accounts. Though the pastor knew I was present, he was going to be giving the sermon anyway. It might be noticed that many of the studies reviewed earlier relied upon interviews for their data. While there is nothing inherently wrong with using interviews, I seem to share with the ethnomethodologists the preferences for naturally-occurring statements (Adler and Adler, 1994:387, see also Holstein and Gubrium, 1994), and suggest that interviews be used only when such data are unavailable.

Sermons were seen as ideal sources of data for a further reason as well. Each sermon represents a discreet event within the service. It has a recognizable beginning and end. This

⁹ An interesting study could probably be done on the selection of hymns for each service by analyzing the lyrics with in relation to the body of the service. This would require another thesis however.

allowed me to completely present the data under observation without worrying whether I was artificially breaking up the discourse in any fashion.

In the sermons analysed in the next chapter, I have followed Smith's (1978) method of attempting to see how the discourse is recognizably about whatever it is about. In doing so I have unashamedly used my own interpretive skills in understanding what the sermon is speaking about. The analysis then focuses on what it is about the sermon that allowed me to understand it in this way. I do not feel that this leads to any particular problem of individualism in the analysis as the work I claim the speaker is doing must be firmly grounded in the discourse itself.

CHAPTER FOUR

THREE SERMONS

In the preceding chapters I have outlined the theoretical basis of social constructionism and provided an overview of previous work applying this perspective. This chapter will detail my own attempts in making use of the social constructionist paradigm. In the following pages I will analyse the means by which 'believers' make the object of their belief available to the audience:¹ in this case, the work of a pastor in presenting active spiritual beings to a congregation. In the analysis which follows, the central task shall be to demonstrate *how* the pastor achieves this.

The transcripts below were selected for simple reasons: transcript one was the first sermon which I taped and transcribed and therefore stands out in my memory more than any other; all three share the common property of being the clearest recordings I possess and hence did not cause any 'messiness' in transcription. I do not consider the transcripts to be particularly "rich" material in comparison to others, and I find the habit of analyzing only the "rich"

¹ The audience will be considered to be any other person(s) hearing the discourse of the speaker.

material somewhat questionable,² though considering the ink generated in the analysis such selectivity may be necessary.

TRANSCRIPTION STYLE

The transcription style adopted here does not attempt to be as rigorous as that used by conversation analysts, such as a reader would find in Wooffitt's (1992) work. The reason for this is that such a transcription style, which emphasizes capturing the phonetic qualities of talk, quickly becomes loaded down with transcription symbols. The example below, from Heritage (1988: 135) is a good example:

- A: Well lis:ten, (.) tiz you tidyu phone yer vicar
ye:t,
(.3)
B: 1-No I ain't.
(A): 1-(.hhh)
A: Oh:.
(.3)
(A): .hhhhh-
A: Ah::-:-::

To the uninitiated, or the moderately initiated such as myself, such a transcription quickly becomes unreadable. It makes especially difficult the reading of long transcripts such as those contained in this thesis. For this reason, many of the conventions ethnomethodologists follow in preparing a transcript have been left out of my own data. I have, for example, left out the awkward phonetic spelling of words

² For example Wooffitt's (1992) choice in his first analysis is "particularly rich", though he does not spell out why this is so. Did he just find it easier to analyze?

unless to do so would grossly misrepresent the flavour of the talk. I have also not transcribed the speakers breathing (.hhhh and hhhh in the extract above), and the extension of a syllable (eg, Ah::) has not been noted unless it added emphasis to a particular statement (in which case it was noted as emphasis). Pauses in the talk were not timed.

I have not completely abandoned attempting to capture the texture of the talk as it was spoken however, and the system employed to do this is outlined below. Most are adapted from Wooffitt (1992: xi-xii).

word . word	A dot between two words, with a space between the dot and each word, indicates a pause in the speaker's talk. The more dots, the longer the pause.
word.	A period directly following a word indicates a stopping fall in tone, usually at the end of a sentence.
<u>word</u>	Underlining indicates emphasis.
! and !	Indicate a rise or fall in intonation.
>word<	Indicates that the talk contained therein is noticeably faster than that which proceeds or follows.
word?	Indicates a rising tone such as in a question. A stop, such as after a period, usually occurs.
(?)	Denotes an inaudible portion of talk.

Line numbers have been added for ease of reference. I have not broken up the data to make it conform to any line numbering system. The lines were added after the transcripts

were typed out and were assigned by the computer. When a portion of a transcript has been included in the text, the long series of dots indicates excluded portions found on the line the excerpt begins.

And so, let us now address the sermons themselves.

TRANSCRIPT ONE: OVERSPILL

1 Jesus travelled around through all the cities and
 2 villages of that area .. teaching in the Jewish
 3 synagogues ... and announcing the good news about the
 4 kingdom ... and wherever he went he healed people of
 5 every sort of illness. And what pity he felt for the
 6 crowds that came...cause their problems were so great and
 7 they didn't know what to do .. or where to go for help.
 8 They were like sheep without a shepherd. The harvest is
 9 so great and the workers so few .. he told his disciples
 10 .. so pray to the one in charge of the harvesting ... and
 11 ask him to recruit more workers for his harvest fields.
 12 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them
 13 authority to cast out evil spirits ... and to heal every
 14 kind of si sick sickness and disease. Here are the names
 15 of the disciples . Simon also called Peter .. Andrew
 16 Peter's brother .. James . the son of Zebedee .. John ...
 17 the brother of James .. Philip. Bartholomew . Thomas ..
 18 Matthew the tax collector . James the son of Alphaeus ...
 19 Thaddaeus .. Simon a member of the zealots . subversive
 20 political party .. Judas Iscariot . the one who betrayed
 21 him. Jesus sent them out with these instructions ..
 22 Don't go to the Gentiles . or the Samaritans but only to
 23 the people of Israel .. God's lost sheep. Go and
 24 announce to them that the kingdom of heaven is near.
 25 Heal the sick . raise the dead .. cure the lepers .. and
 26 cast out demons. Give .. as freely you have received.
 27 So far the word . of out text.
 28 In Christ Jesus .. dear Christian friends. Did you ever
 29 wonder .. what Jesus thought .. about the world .. of his
 30 day. I wonder if he thought of it perhaps .. like
 31 walking down the corridor of a hospital .. and having all
 32 kinds of sick in the rooms that adjoined . that corridor.
 33 Regardless of their physical condition .. all . are sick
 34 .. sin sick that is. So spiritually speaking they were
 35 like sheep without a shepherd. They needed . forgiveness
 36 . of .. their .. sins. Today's gospel lesson (the?)

37 first verse gives us .. Jesus' three . pronged blessing
 38 of ministry ... teaching .. in their synagogues ..
 39 preaching .. the good news of God's kingdom .. and
 40 healing . all . sorts of illness. Jesus' primary purpose
 41 .. was spiritual. Do you ever get the impression . that
 42 the world does everything to preserve the physical body.
 43 Now the physical body is important .. but what happens
 44 to the soul is even more important ... our relationship
 45 to our lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came for the purpose of
 46 releasing sins grip on humankind. He came to conquer sin
 47 death and hell .. and the forces of evil. Jesus came to
 48 remove sin through the cleansing power of his . shed
 49 blood. He put us back ... into a relationship with God.
 50 Now we are called to respond .. in faith . in our lives
 51 . guided by the holy spirit. The gospel . or the good
 52 news of Jesus .. was first to be taken to the Israelites
 53 .. then all others would have access to the grace and the
 54 love of God .. even as we do today. God's love would ...
 55 spill over so to speak spill over hall generations in
 56 Jesus' name .. and in our day. In our text .. Jesus
 57 sends out twelve disciples ... and our last Sunday's
 58 gospel lesson from Luke ten we have the story of Jesus
 59 sending out seventy disciples .. to do his work ... two
 60 . by . two. The love of Jesus was to spill out ... over
 61 all his people. In our text we read ... Jesus called his
 62 twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to cast
 63 out evil spirits and to heal every kind of sickness . and
 64 disease . and then in the last two words of our .. verses
 65 of our text .. Go and announce to them that the kingdom
 66 of heaven is near . heal the sick . raise the dead ..
 67 cure the lepers . cast out demons . freely give as freely
 68 . as you have received. Notice that the blessing that
 69 Jesus gives here are physical and spiritual ... (?)the
 70 disciple were also to do the same work that Jesus was
 71 doing ... they were instruments of God's kindness and
 72 grace ... not self seeking. Now mankind's physical .
 73 mental and emotional make up would enjoy the overspill
 74 of Jesus' love and blessing. We see how this happened in
 75 old testament times . when for example Joseph became a
 76 slave in the house of (?) in Egypt and the Lord blessed
 77 the house of Potiphar we are told in Genesis chapter
 78 thirty-nine ... that's blessing by association . or the
 79 overspill .. of God's blessings. Joseph's father Jacob
 80 also enjoyed God's blessings when he worked for his uncle
 81 Laban for twenty years. Later Laban confessed in Genesis
 82 thirty ... the Lord blessed me ... because .. of you ..
 83 God's love or ... overspill. The house of Obetedom
 84 experienced God's love overspill . because the arc of the

85 covenant was housed there for several months. Obadiah
86 the old testament prophet experienced God's love
87 overspill because he hid a hundred prophets of God. On
88 this subject it was Martin Luther who wrote .. the
89 ungodly fare well because of the godly ... evil people
90 enjoy the blessings of saints whom they hate. Even though
91 all good things fall to their lot because of their
92 association with the godly . and as a result of the
93 blessings ... of the godly. So physical blessings
94 followed as a result of !spiritual blessings. The body
95 is part of the total person .. it is important .. but
96 this does not mean that there will always be total
97 healing for the body in every case. We still have sin in
98 our lives we are not perfect beings we're born that way.
99 We have limitations we have weaknesses and illnesses.
100 But because we're also spiritual beings . the body enjoys
101 . some of these blessings. We might call them even ..
102 secondary blessings which Christ bought .. >it's almost
103 like a bonus<. So .. as there is overspill of God's
104 blessing in bible times . so there is also overspill of
105 God's !blessings today did you realize that? Now
106 concerning the lord's supper .. Martin Luther wrote .
107 that the Lord's supper is a pure .. wholesome .. soothing
108 medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul .. !and
109 body ... for where the soul is healed the body benefited
110 also. In the Lord's supper the Lord personally gives us
111 . his grace . here he personally assures each one of us
112 our sins are forgiven. The scriptures also indicate the
113 more we involve ourselves in God's word the more
114 blessings we receive both for our souls . and our bodies.
115 Plan to participate in one of the bible classes that we
116 will be scheduling or have scheduled for the fall .. >can
117 be< Sunday's . weekdays . or week evenings. God's
118 blessings also come to us through his word as well as
119 through his sacraments. Today in our worship we're going
120 to recognize the teachers and leaders in our Sunday
121 school and bible classes in out the whole Christian
122 education department of our Sunday school. We thank you
123 who have been teaching or supportive in ... thi in our
124 Christian education in our congregation. We thank you
125 for your faithfulness .. and your leadership. It's a
126 service to your Lord . as well as to fellow Christians.
127 Who knows how much love overspill occurs from your
128 teaching of God's word .. I'm sure there is a lot. God
129 blesses his people. Spiritual blessings can show
130 themselves ... in also . bodily blessings. Medically
131 speaking .. you too probably know people who have made
132 miraculous . recovery from physical ailments or accidents

133 .. at times God also uses medical science to help us ..
 134 but our faith is important .. in our .. in any recovery.
 135 Conversely .. people who carry grudges or can't forgive
 136 .. who are tied up in nervous knots and anxiety also reap
 137 those benefits ... yet a change of heart and acceptance
 138 and forgiveness can bring both spiritual and physical
 139 relief ... one overflows .. on the other. Our lord
 140 encourage us .. us to fervently pray for recovery of
 141 bodily ailments as well as ask for !spiritual growth to
 142 maturity. God is concerned !also with our bodies . he
 143 made us . body and soul. James chapter five informs us of
 144 the relationship . between the physical and the
 145 spiritual. Saint John speaks of this overflow in his
 146 third epistle >in the second chapter< where we read ..
 147 Dear friends .. I pray that you may enjoy good health ..
 148 and that all may go well .. with you . even as your soul
 149 getting . along well. God has made !many blessings
 150 available to us . soul and body are inseparably linked .
 151 together. And both receive God's blessing. We praise
 152 and thank him for his generous love .. !all because of
 153 what Jesus Christ has done for us. In his suffering .
 154 death and resurrection he restored us to eternal
 155 friendship with God. To him be the glory .. Amen. >And
 156 the peace of God that surpasses all understanding< . keep
 157 your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus until light
 158 everlasting .. Amen.

For analytic purposes, the sermon can be divided roughly
 (and by no means sharply) into three mutually elaborating
 sections. In the first section, lines 1 through 27 are
 actually a summary of one of the biblical readings from that
 day's services, derived from the book of Matthew 9:35-10:8,
 while lines 28 through 40 provide a sort of commentary or
 explanation of the biblical passage. Lines 40 to 103
 introduce the central theme of the sermon and apply this to
 biblical instances. The central theme of the sermon is what
 can be referred to as the overflow process. The final lines

concern themselves with demonstrating the presence of overspill in the contemporary time frame and conclude the sermon. The analysis presented below will roughly follow the three sections of the sermon I have just outlined.

Establishing the context

The speaker establishes that the primary purpose of Jesus was a spiritual one (line 40), invoking the biblical passage as the authority for this claim (lines 36-38). This is accomplished through establishing a contrast between the physical and the spiritual aspects of human life, asserting that the spiritual portion of this dichotomy is the more important aspect:

40 Jesus' primary purpose
 41 .. I was spiritual. Do you ever get the impression . that
 42 the world does everything to preserve the physical body.
 43 Now the physical body is important .. but what happens to
 44 the soul is even more important ...

In this excerpt the speaker contrast describes the world as concerned with the physical body, implying a neglect of the spiritual aspect of human life. By 'the world', I interpret the speaker to be referring to the everyday, mundane concerns and experiences we all have. Therefore, our day to day accomplishments or goals are ineffective in bringing about a spiritual consequence.

This is immediately followed by a more detailed listing of the spiritual agenda of Jesus, in particular the defeat of

sin and its repercussions. The consequence of these actions was to return humanity to a relationship with God (lines 45-49). The agenda of Jesus is stated as a matter of fact; the speaker does not claim to 'believe' or 'think' that Christ came for these purposes, he merely makes a straightforward statement. Further, the consequence of these actions is not left in question. Jesus did not try to join us to God, but does "put us back into as a relationship" with him. These are actions which have occurred, not the speaker's interpretation of them. This portion of the discourse also serves to inform the audience about the nature of all further utterances. It makes apparent at the outset who the primary actors are (Jesus and God), and what their main concern was and is (spiritual healing). This sets the stage for the audience to understand the process of overspill when it is introduced to them in the next few sentences.

Overspill in the bible

The central theme of the sermon is how the blessings of God and Jesus work through the process of overspill. This is first introduced in lines 51-54, which describe how the good news was to first go to the Israelites and then spread to all other peoples and generations. The concept of overspill which is presented in the sermon represents a series of actions and occurrences which the social audience can readily monitor once

the pattern is made explicit to them. What makes the occurrences significant is that they are the product of an active God. The overspill of blessings is described as a spiritual set of phenomena. The disciples are sent out to do the work of Jesus (line 59). The love spread by the disciples is not their own, but that of Jesus (line 60) and the power which they have to do this work derives from Christ (lines 61-64). The disciples are the instruments of God, doing *His* work, not their own (lines 69-72).

Once introduced, the process of overspill is continuously stressed throughout the entirety of the sermon. Dorothy Smith (1978) has suggested that a recurring theme in discourse can act as a set of instructions to the listener as to how to interpret what is being said. Throughout the sermon, the audience is periodically reminded of the overspill process, and thus reminded what the cited instances are instances of: overspill. Consider the following excerpt, with the instructions italicized:

72Now mankind's physical .
 73 mental and emotional make up *would enjoy the 'overspill*
 74 *of Jesus' love and blessing.* We see how this happened in
 75 old testament times . when for example Joseph became a
 76 slave in the house of (?) in Egypt and the Lord blessed
 77 the house of Potiphar we are told in Genesis chapter
 78 thirty-nine ... *that's blessing by association . or the*
 79 *overspill .. of God's blessings.*

The instructions in this portion are located both before and after the empirical example provided, thereby informing

the audience what the story of the house of Potiphar is a story of. Let us look at the next few lines of the transcript:

79Joseph's father Jacob
 80 also enjoyed God's blessings when he worked for his uncle
 81 Laban for twenty years. Later Laban confessed in Genesis
 82 thirty ... the Lord blessed me ... because .. of you ..
 83 *God's love or ... 'overspill.* The house of Obetudum
 84 *experienced God's love overspill .* because the arc of the
 85 covenant was housed there for several months. Obadiah
 86 the old testament prophet *experienced God's love*
 87 *overspill* because he hid a hundred prophets of God. On
 88 this subject it was Martin Luther who wrote .. the
 89 ungodly fare well because of the godly ...

Notice how each new instance is provided with the instructions, shown here in italics. The audience is further reminded of the overspill process in lines 103-105, 127-128, and 139.

The described nature of the overspill process is also continuously elaborated throughout the course of the sermon. When first introduced, overspill refers to the spreading of the gospel from the disciples to the people of Israel; then from the spiritual to the physical (lines 72-74); then from the godly to the ungodly (lines 88-93). The instructions discussed above are a fundamental aspect of this procedure: with each elaboration we are informed that the new case is an example of overspill.

The vehicle through which the process of overspill can work is also expanded upon during the sermon. We begin (lines

56-60) with the disciples acting as vehicles; then holy objects (lines 83-85); sacraments (lines 105-110); and finally scripture and church activities (lines 112-117). In all of these cases, the elaboration of the overspill process is accompanied by the instructions.

The most vigorously described elaboration introduced is the overspill of spiritual blessings into physical blessings. I have demonstrated how the mundane world is cast as unable to bring about spiritual relief. The spiritual blessings of Jesus and God, on the other hand, do not suffer from such limitation. On the contrary, the physical consequences of God's actions are a fundamental aspect of the sermon. The presence of physical blessings works to reinforce the assertion of the spiritual blessings. Consider the excerpt below:

72Now mankind's physical .
 73 mental and emotional make up would enjoy the 'overspill
 74 of Jesus' love and blessing. We see how this happened in
 75 old testament times . when for example Joseph became a
 76 slave in the house of (?) in Egypt and the Lord blessed
 77 the house of Potiphar we are told in Genesis chapter
 78 thirty-nine ... that's blessing by association . or the
 79 overspill .. of God's blessings. Joseph's father Jacob
 80 also enjoyed God's blessings when he worked for his uncle
 81 Laban for twenty years. Later Laban confessed in Genesis
 82 thirty ... the Lord blessed me ... because .. of you ..
 83 God's love or ... 'overspill. The house of Obetudum
 84 experienced God's love overspill . because the arc of the
 85 covenant was housed there for several months. Obadiah
 86 the old testament prophet experienced God's love
 87 overspill because he hid a hundred prophets of God. On
 88 this subject it was Martin Luther who wrote .. the
 89 ungodly fare well because of the godly ... evil people

90 enjoy the blessings of saints whom they hate. Even though
 91 all good things fall to their lot because of their
 92 association with the godly . and as a result of the
 93 blessings ... of the godly. *So physical blessings*
 94 *followed as a result of /spiritual blessings.*

The excerpt describes a series of old testament occurrences by which people in association with major biblical figures receive blessings through this overspill. Lines 93 and 94 (italicized) constitute these as examples of physical blessings following from spiritual ones. This is accomplished by the use of the word 'so', which implies a conclusion which has been *drawn* from these instances, though in lines 70-74 we have already been told what we are going to see. Further, only the bare bones of the biblical passages are presented to the audience. The details of what blessings were acquired by the parties involved are not available, and the members of the audience do not have access to the biblical passages cited by the pastor. While the hymnals are present at the church, the only bible I saw in chapel was the pastor's.³ Thus lines 93 and 94 *tell* the audience what form of blessings were bestowed. By describing which parties received the blessing via the overspill process, the audience is also informed where lie the spiritual origins of the blessings, (eg: Joseph; Jacob; the Ark of the Covenant; the one hundred prophets; and the saints

³ A person could check the passages after the service, but it would only be in light of what has already been said.

people hate).

The power of spiritual blessings is therefore contrasted to the more limited work of the mundane world of humans. The spiritual work of Jesus and God bridges the gap between the spiritual and physical aspect of human existence. That such an effect can be brought about merely through association with the godly demonstrates the efficacy of the overspill process. The rhetorical device employed here is what I shall refer to as consequential implication. Consequential implication occurs when the consequence or effect supplies the warrant for or implies the efficacy of its putative source. To think of other examples of this device is quite simple. Much sociological work making use of statistical correlation presents its findings in this manner, eg the effect of violence in the media on the violent crime rate, which shows the level of violent crime increasing (consequence) with the level of access to violence through media (source). Another example, receiving much press thanks to the release of the film *The People vs Larry Flynt*, is the amount of readership pornography receives (source) among males who commit atrocities against women (consequence). The warrant provided in such situations is simple: if the consequence can be demonstrated, then the source must be present. In most cases, and in ours, the audience is given only one source to ascribe

causality to.

In the sermon at hand, we are interested in how consequential implication serves to warrant the presence of a deity. Through the concept of overspill, the speaker provides a mechanism by which an activity of god can be monitored (e.g., the blessings of those involved). The speaker does not rely on one case, such as Jesus raising Lazarus, but through cases where persons benefited from association with ones already blessed. These included the actions of the disciples (lines 61-68), and the examples from the Old Testament where the unblessed gained through association with the godly (lines 74-83). For the process of overspill to occur requires an actor capable of accomplishing this action. Mortals are incapable of accomplishing such an action on their own: we cannot will someone to good health or prosperity. That the speaker is able to demonstrate such occurrences in both biblical and contemporary times *implies* the action of an entity capable of doing so. That the action took place *requires* the actor to be present.

The contemporary period

The work done by the pastor in describing the overspill process and the subsequent connection between spiritual and physical blessings produces a lens through which the audience can interpret contemporary occurrences. The pastor makes the

continuing activity of God available through two primary means: reference to physically present evidence and the invocation of observable instances.

Lines 106 through 112 discuss how the Lord's supper, or communion, acts as an agent of the overspill process. Communion is perhaps the central ritual of Christianity, where the faithful either physically (through transubstantiation) or symbolically receive their God into themselves. In our transcript, lines 109 through 112 imply that the primary benefit of communion is a spiritual one, "For where the soul is healed the body....here He personally assures each one of us our sins are forgiven." It is stated that the body also benefits from this blessing. As communion consists of a thin wafer and a half ounce or so of wine, it would be ludicrous to suggest the pastor is implying a nutritional benefit from the Lord's supper.

The inclusion of communion as an agent of overspill provides physically present evidence of God's work, as the sermon was delivered on a day when communion was observed. Later in the service, nearly every member⁴ of the congregation actually performed the act described, allowing them to "see it

⁴ I say nearly every member because some (perhaps not baptized) did not take communion. I myself did not participate out of respect for the meaning of the ritual which I do not ascribe to.

for themselves" so to speak.

The audience is given further examples in the next few sentences. They are given an opportunity to experience the blessings of God through a closer understanding of the scripture (lines 112-114). Note that it is not the speaker from which this authority derives but from the scripture itself. A course of action is then prescribed which can accomplish this, that is by joining one of the bible study groups sponsored by the church. Access to these groups is as simple as walking through the foyer where the times and locations are posted, or reading the church newsletter for information regarding them.

Specific persons are then employed as examples of the overspill process. Lines 119 through 128 describe an activity which will occur later in the service: the recognition of the members of the Christian education department of the church. By doing so, the pastor identifies actual warm bodies present in the chapel, who many of the audience know personally.⁵ Lines 127 and 128 then imply that a great deal of 'love overspill' results from the actions of these people. The members of the audience can therefore put faces to actors

⁵ For those of us present who did not know them, there was a pamphlet naming them handed out as people entered the chapel. After the sermon, these individuals were called forward to receive recognition. Even if you did not read the names, you could see the individuals themselves.

involved in the overspill process. Anyone present who has children in or has ever attended, or even has knowledge of, Sunday school or a bible study can thereby attach the work of God's overspill to his or her own experiences. The speaker thus draws on the experience of the congregation itself to demonstrate the process of God's actions. In a similar fashion, the pastor presents the audience with what I refer to as an observable index by which the God's blessings can be identified. In lines 129 and 130 the pastor returns to the overspill of spiritual blessings into physical ones. Lines 130-132 state "Medically speaking. you too probably know people who have made miraculous recovery from physical ailments or accidents." By describing the recovery as miraculous the pastor implies that medical knowledge is insufficient cause for the recovery. The phrasing also places the audience into the position where they themselves supply the instances which confirm the pastor's suggestion. The audience can therefore provide evidence which is independent of the pastor. As it was demonstrated earlier that spiritual blessings may show themselves through physical blessings, the audience is provided with an index with which to observe the presence of spiritual blessings which they themselves provide confirmation of. This index is supported with one further example (lines 135-139), and an invitation to the audience to

experience this themselves. The pastor invites the audience to try praying for relief of physical ailments (lines 139-142) implying that such prayers do indeed succeed.

TRANSCRIPT TWO: A ROYAL INVITATION

My second analysis will be concerned with the following transcript:

1 Our text the Gospel lesson's taken from Matthew chapter
 2 11 verses 25 to 30 which reads as follows
 3 And Jesus prayed this prayer. Oh Father Lord of Heaven
 4 and Earth. Thank you for hiding the truth from those who
 5 think themselves so wise and for revealing it ..to little
 6 children. Yes Father..for it pleased you to do it this
 7 way. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father.
 8 !Only the Father knows the Son and the Father is known
 9 only by the Son and by those to whom the Son reveals
 10 him....Come to me, and I will give you rest all of you
 11 who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my
 12 yoke...for it fits perfectly. And let me teach you for
 13 I am gentle and humble... and will find rest for your
 14 souls... for I give you only light burdens.... So far the
 15 words of our text.
 16 In Christ Jesus dear Christian friends. What happens at
 17 your home when an invitation arrives? You wonder from
 18 where its from?..or for whom?...or who . is invited to
 19 attend? And What are they invited to attend? What's the
 20 big occasion? And will you accept ..the invitation? Now
 21 what if the envelope were gilt edged? and had a return
 22 address of..the Premier, >Priminister< or
 23 even...!Buckingham Palace?...That would make it a royal
 24 invitation. Now in our today's gospel lesson we have a
 25 special invitation. Please think through this invitation
 26 with me this morning .. as we look at our gospel lesson
 27 and ask some questions about it..because it this is
 28 a...royal invitation. Yes I said royal invitation..how
 29 so? Well let's see who sent it. In verse...in the first
 30 verse of our text we read..Oh Father Lord of Heaven and
 31 Earth...That's as !high as royalty can get. King of
 32 Kings and Lord of Lords....You know those first few
 33 verses of our text the word father is used five times.
 34 Jesus speaks of God as his father. !His father is the
 35 God who created and rules heaven and earth. This Father
 36 sends us..an invitation through his son...Jesus Christ.

37 We think of this as the triune god >Father Son and Holy
38 Spirit<. In our text we read...everything has been
39 entrusted to me by my father. Jesus says...only the
40 Father knows his Son and the Father is known only by the
41 Son..and by those to whom the Son reveals him....Anyone
42 who speaks this way must be God..Jesus is God. This Son
43 took on a human body.. was born..lived..died..and rose
44 again. We can trust him..he comes to you and me not as
45 an advertising gimmick..but as >the Son of God<. Next we
46 asked..who is invited? Only us? In verse twenty eight
47 we read...come to me all..all who labor and heavy ehr
48 laden and I will give you rest. That's those who are
49 weary...and tired .exhausted from carrying the heavy
50 burden as we saw demonstrated in our children's lesson
51 this morning. Those who are working hard. trying to
52 keep the law of God. The ones who feel guilty because
53 they can't keep the law. The law is too heavy for them
54 to carry. Remember in our epistle lesson..there we heard
55 read >that the good things I want to do I don't do and
56 the evil things I don't want to do those are the things
57 I quite often find myself doing<...People are naturally
58 sinful..we try so hard to serve God..but we keep making
59 mistakes..And our conscience keeps on accusing us. We
60 feel guilty. And yet God's standard is still perfection.
61 But there's no way we can be. that good. Why not?
62 Because we are born..sinful. We have three strikes
63 against us from the very beginning..we aren't born
64 neutral..capable of deciding whether we will serve God or
65 Satan..by nature we are already on the wrong side.
66 That's why we need baptism. In Baptism God adopts us as
67 his children..he accepts us. Not to be accepted..is one
68 of the most frustrating and maddening things that we
69 could experience. Being accepted by God does not depend
70 on us..it depends solely on God alone. Jesus was talking
71 to a group of people that includes some proud . fault
72 finding Pharisees. They thought they were so good ..
73 they would be automatically accepted into heaven. They
74 lived by the ten commandments .. and not only the ten .
75 they also made for themselves six hundred thirteen
76 additional commandments. And besides this ..weren't they
77 descendants of Abraham? Surely God would accept them as
78 descendants of Abraham. There are people also today who
79 feel something like that .. They think they are so good
80 ..They are so proud they think they don't need God's
81 forgiveness .. or ..!Well my parents used to go to
82 church .. isn't that good enough for me. And as you and
83 I know .. without forgiveness of sins there is no
84 salvation .. For all are sinners. People can work as

85 hard as they can. The result is being burdened . tired
86 . weary sinners. And it is to such that Jesus says .
87 come to me .. come to me all you who labor and are heavy
88 laden .. I will give you rest. That's the royal
89 invitation. The invitation to what? What's the big
90 occasion? to all who are sick and tired of trying to
91 earn God's favour in a good life the invitation reads I
92 will give you rest. Everyone knows what rest means. it
93 means to stop working .. >Have a< have a coffee break ..
94 go on a vacation .. take a nap. God wants you and me to
95 rest. Rest for our souls .. Labor or work produces a
96 weary hopeless effort in its place Jesus will remove our
97 heavy load of guilt and sin and punishment and forgive us
98 .. our sins. This rest for our soul is available to
99 everyone who believes and trusts in Jesus. He lived the
100 perfect life for us. He paid the price of sin .. his
101 crucifixion . death . his victorious resurrection on
102 the third day .. Jesus exchanged his perfection for our
103 imperfection. Oh how good that forgiveness .. that
104 releases us from sin feels. When we are tired . feel
105 dirty or sweaty .. we apprech >we appreciate< a hot bath
106 or a cleansing shower. Is it any wonder that people like
107 to sing in their shower . thrilled at the cleansing. So
108 also our souls are cleansed in Jesus st(?) Jesus Christ.
109 We want to live in this state of mercy and forgiveness.
110 Jesus says I will give you .. rest .. refreshing
111 forgiving rest . rest for you souls. So whatlya think he
112 wants from us? We get nothing for free do we? There's
113 always a catch isn't there? like the invitation for a
114 free trip or a free weekend or a three day free vacation.
115 The catch is they want you to buy some land .. or a
116 condo . or. invest in a time share. In our text
117 however we read ... wear my yoke for it fits perfectly ..
118 and let me teach you . for I am gentle and humble ...
119 and you will find rest for your souls .. for I give you
120 only . light . burdens. Notice the word yoke is used
121 here. the word yoke is a farm word. a yoke is a wooden
122 frame that fits around the oxen's neck for pulling a
123 heavy load. Chances are you've seen a yoke at Heritage
124 park. Its a crosspiece with two bows that fit around the
125 necks of the animals. So Jesus is asking us .. to be
126 yoked together with him. God's yoke however is not a set
127 of rules and regulations .. but it fits us together with
128 the lord Jesus so we can better walk with him. When we
129 wear the yoke we are pulling together with Jesus. For my
130 yoke is easy and my burden is light he says. this yoke
131 ties us together with him. A certain young lady wrote in
132 a periodical what walking with Jesus did for her life.

133 She started attending worship .. she stopped going to
 134 bars ... her circle of friends changed .. she switched
 135 jobs because her old job prevented her from walking with
 136 the lord. Her priorities changed. Instead of trying to
 137 please people now she was wanting to please God. its
 138 more important to learn to walk with Jesus .. to be
 139 yoked with him. A kite won't fly without a string.
 140 Unless it is in partnership with a string it will simply
 141 fall back to the earth. Cut the string and the kite
 142 crashes. So also Jesus' yoke. It is isn't burdensome
 143 its beneficial. He walks beside us and helps us. He
 144 keeps us going to carry on. We accept his royal
 145 invitation. We walk with him. He makes the yoke easy
 146 and light. We learn from him. Jesus accepted the yoke
 147 from God the Father that he had placed on him. He
 148 suffered torture from his enemies. when we are told what
 149 to do .. we may sometimes resent it .. but when Jesus
 150 invites us together to walk with him we humbly and
 151 willingly obey. Can we refuse this royal invitation?
 152 We're expected to obey. Would you refuse the invitation
 153 of honor to be the parade Marshall of the Calgary
 154 Stampede Parade . Was was Dennis Weaver? Would you
 155 refuse an invitation to have dinner with Ralph Klien ..
 156 or Queen Elizabeth? Few people ever refuse .. but some
 157 do. There were people in Jesus' day .. they thought
 158 they were so good .. they didn't need Jesus >they
 159 didn't have to obey him<. They had their own way of
 160 doing things. There also some like that today. the
 161 mysteries of God are hidden from them because they are ..
 162 self-centred. They want to do it .. ↓ their way. Such
 163 people reject the invitation. .. they send their regrets
 164 to God .. no .. I won't come. They make excuses. Well
 165 there remains only one question. Will you? accept the
 166 royal invitation. We have to examine ourselves to see
 167 whether we simply have membership >in a church< . or
 168 whether we have accepted Jesus Christ as our lords and
 169 saviour. I can ask the question but only you can answer
 170 it. This morning he also invites us to something special
 171 .. to receive his body and blood in the Lord's supper
 172 for the strengthening of our faith >the strengthening< of
 173 our Christian lives. Here Jesus (?) his invitation.
 174 May you and I together accept the royal invitation ..
 175 believing and trusting in Jesus as our saviour and Lord.
 176 May we each day walk willingly . joyfully yoked together
 177 with him. And the peace of God that surpasses all
 178 understanding .. keep your heart and minds in Christ
 179 Jesus until light everlasting .. Amen

Accomplishing an invitation

As is typical of all sermons transcribed, this piece of data begins with an overview of a biblical text. Immediately following this overview, the speaker asks a series of questions which an individual would putatively ask upon receiving an invitation. The pertinent lines are displayed below for ease of reference.

16 In Christ Jesus dear Christian friends. What happens at
 17 your home when an invitation arrives? You wonder from
 18 where its from?..or for whom?...or who . is invited to
 19 attend? And What are they invited to attend? What's the
 20 big occasion? And will you accept ..the invitation? Now
 21 what if the envelope were gilt edged? and had a return
 22 address of..the Premier, >Priminister< or
 23 even...!Buckingham Palace?...That would make it a royal
 24 invitation. Now in our today's gospel lesson we have a
 25 special invitation. Please think through this invitation
 26 with me this morning .. as we look at our gospel lesson
 27 and ask some questions about it..because it this is
 28 a...royal invitation. Yes I said royal invitation..how
 29 so?

After the initial questions about an invitation (lines 16-20), the speaker asks the audience to consider the reception of an unusual invitation from someone of great social importance, a "royal invitation"(lines 20-24). The speaker then describes the biblical passage as not only an invitation, but a royal invitation.

The metaphor of invitation allows the audience to make use of their everyday life experience. As with the instances of Sunday School and 'miraculous recoveries', discussed in the

last analysis, invitations are something which nearly everyone is familiar with either directly or indirectly. The series of questions which are asked (who is it from? what is the occasion?) denote actions which the audience can envision themselves performing. Finally, "invitation" references certain types of things which have been apprehended by the audience in previous times. By describing the biblical passage as an invitation, the speaker reflexively delineates a means of interpreting the passage. This is not the ancient words of a prophet written down several hundred years ago, or at least it is not just these words; it is an invitation, something I have seen, touched, held in my hands and responded to, and seen others do likewise.

Describing the passage as an invitation allows the speaker to do several things. First, he is able to ask and answer questions straightforwardly in the same manner a person would any other invitation. Consider the excerpt below:

27because it this is
 28 a...royal invitation. yes I said royal invitation..how
 29 so? Well let's see who sent it. In verse...in the first
 30 verse of our text we read..Oh Father Lord of Heaven and
 31 Earth...That's as high as royalty can get. King of
 32 Kings and Lord of Lords....

In this portion of the sermon, the speaker is concerned with portraying the passage as not just an invitation, but a royal invitation. The speaker is able to do this by simply 'reading the invitation' to see who it is from. It is, of

course, from the "Lord of Heaven and Earth...That's as high as royalty can get." By reading the passage as an invitation, the speaker has no need to delve into any theological considerations of the passage. It can be read as easily as the "Jon Doe invites you to X" part of an invitation. As with the notion of overspill, the metaphor of invitation is repeated numerous times throughout the sermon, reinforcing its efficacy.

The invitation as a genuine invitation

During the course of the sermon the speaker constantly elaborates on the invitation the audience has received. Through this process, the genuine nature of the invitation is established. As will be demonstrated below, the speaker makes the invitation available as an invitation from God in both the source and the content of the invitation. Let us look at some of these instances.

Lines 32 through 45 work to establish the source of the invitation as being God. It is noted that Jesus not only speaks of God as his father, but does so on multiple occasions and in a brief amount of time (lines 32-34). The use of the term 'father' is no mere extension of the concept, as when a congregation prays "Our Father, who art in Heaven." Rather, Jesus is not metaphorically, but actually, the Son of God, part of the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

(lines 37-38). As the son of God, Jesus serves as the messenger for the invitation (lines 35-36). But he is more than this. As "everything has been entrusted to him" and only "the Son can know the Father", Jesus *must be and is* God. As will be demonstrated below, this is accomplished in a series of moves.

38In our text we read...everything has been
 39 entrusted to me by my father. Jesus says...only the
 40 Father knows his Son and the Father is known only by the
 41 Son..and by those to whom the Son reveals him....Anyone
 42 who speaks this way must be God..Jesus is God. This Son
 43 took on a human body.. was born..lived..died..and rose
 44 again.

In this excerpt, the speaker establishes the necessity of Jesus' divinity as *apparent* in the way Jesus describes himself. He then makes a flat out statement of the divine nature of Christ, treating it as a simple matter of fact. This is immediately followed by a demonstration of this divine nature: Jesus took on a human form (implying a non-human existence prior to this), died and *rose again*.

The speaker makes the divine origin of the invitation apparent in the nature of the invitation as well. The invitation is established as one which is in accordance with the teachings of Christ. "We can trust him. He comes to you and me not as an advertising gimmick .. >but as the Son of God<" (lines 44-45). This line establishes that the invitation is not mere hype or exaggeration, but one delivered

in the way that a benevolent God would deliver it. This is made apparent in the following extract:

111So whatly think he
 112 wants from us? We get nothing for free do we? There's
 113 always a catch isn't there? like the invitation for a
 114 free trip or a free weekend or a three day free vacation.
 115 The catch is they want you to buy some land .. or a
 116 condo . or. invest in a time share. In our text
 117 however we read ... wear my yoke for it fits perfectly ..
 118 and let me teach you . for I am gentle and humble ...
 119 and you will find rest for your souls .. for I give you
 120 only . light . burdens.

The speaker here demonstrates the differences between the invitation of Jesus and a human one, an "advertising gimmick." Jesus demonstrably has no ulterior motive to his actions. The speaker reminds us that when we receive an invitation, there is often a dubious motive behind it. This is then contrasted with the invitation as presented by the biblical passage. It would seem perverse for God to have some hidden agenda for making an offer. Lines 116-120 clearly establish that this is not the case. The invitation here involves only benefits for the receiver. The benefits of accepting the invitation are then listed (lines 131-137) in the concrete example of a young woman.

Citing the negative

One very interesting aspect of this sermon is the way the speaker cites negative conditions as a resource for making God available. Perhaps the best example of this is the following excerpt:

70 Jesus was talking
 71 to a group of people that includes some proud . fault
 72 finding Pharisees. They thought they were so good ..
 73 they would be automatically accepted into heaven. They
 74 lived by the ten commandments .. and not only the ten .
 75 they also made for themselves six hundred thirteen
 76 additional commandments. And besides this ..weren't they
 77 descendants of Abraham? Surely God would accept them as
 78 descendants of Abraham. There are people also today who
 79 feel something like that .. They think they are so good
 80 ..They are so proud they think they don't need God's
 81 forgiveness .. or ..!Well my parents used to go to
 82 church .. isn't that good enough for me. And as you and
 83 I know .. without forgiveness of sins there is no
 84 salvation .. For all are sinners.

The excerpt describes the Pharisees and their rejection of Jesus or, in the sermon's terminology, rejecting the invitation. The reasons for which the invitation is rejected are cited and described as erroneous and faulty. For instance, the Pharisees are "fault finding", "they thought they were so good .. they would be *automatically* accepted into heaven." What is implied here is that the rejection of Jesus' word is based on a failure of character, namely self-importance.

The speaker elaborates this in the subsequent lines: "Surely God would accept them as descendants of Abraham." The speaker then establishes a parallel with individuals of today, who reject God's forgiveness due to pride or lack of effort.

The style in evidence here is remarkably similar to what Mulkay and his colleagues (e.g. Mulkay and Gilbert 1981; Gilbert and Mulkay 1983, 1984; Mulkay, Potter and Yearley,

1983) have referred to as 'accounting for error' or the 'contingent repertoire'. In their analysis of scientists discourse, Mulkey and Gilbert state that:

Correct belief is treated as the normal state of affairs. it is regarded as relatively unproblematic and, on the whole, as requiring no special explanation. In contrast, error is almost without exception portrayed as due to the intrusion into research of non-scientific influences which have distorted scientists' understanding of natural phenomena (1982:166).⁶

In the case we have at hand the Pharisees and certain individuals of today reject the need for God's forgiveness out of pride and a false sense of worth, when "You and I both know without forgiveness....there is no salvation."

We can see this method deployed again later in the sermon. In lines 152-157 we are presented with situations where it would seem odd if the person refused the proffered invitation. The statements which follow are given again below.

157There were people in Jesus' day .. they thought
 158 they were so good .. !they didn't need Jesus >they
 159 didn't have to obey him<. They had their own way of
 160 doing things. There also some like that today. the
 161 mysteries of God are hidden from them because they are ..
 162 self-centred. They want to do it .. ! their way. Such
 163 people reject the invitation. .. they send their regrets
 164 to God .. no .. I won't come. They make excuses.

In this excerpt, the people are described as continuing

⁶ The authors explain that 'correct' and 'error' are not their determinations but the scientists'. This is the case of my own analysis.

to do things "their way" because they are self-centred. There can be little doubt that "their way" is implied as 'not the right way', as it is not God's way. Rather than having an acceptable reason for their rejection, the people are just "making excuses".

What is interesting about these formulations is the means by which these negative conditions (people rejecting God or Jesus) objectify the opposing condition. For example, in the excerpt immediately above, when we are told that "they thought they were so good they didn't need Jesus, they didn't have to obey him", the implication is that, in reality, they *did* indeed need Jesus and also *needed* to obey him.

The need to accept the invitation represented by the biblical passage is made manifest throughout the entirety of the sermon. Humans are simply unable to withstand the laws of God (lines 51-54). This need is not presented as a point of theology, but as simple facts of life:

57People are naturally
 58 sinful..we try so hard to serve God..but we keep making
 59 mistakes..And our conscience keeps on accusing us. We
 60 feel guilty. And yet god's standard is still perfection.
 61 But there's no way we can be. that good. Why not?
 62 Because we are born..sinful. We have three strikes
 63 against us from the very beginning..we aren't born
 64 neutral..capable of deciding whether we will serve God or
 65 Satan..by nature we are already on the wrong side.
 66 That's why we need baptism. In Baptism god adopts us as
 67 his children..he accepts us. Not to be accepted..is one

[^] See Mayer (1956: 148-49).

68 of the most frustrating and maddening things that we
 69 could experience. Being accepted by God does not depend
 70 on us..it depends solely on God alone.

The description, as presented here, makes the error of those who reject the invitation all the more apparent, and hence the correct position of accepting the invitation all the more correct.

TRANSCRIPT THREE: ANGELS AMONG US

The third and final analysis looks at the transcript below. It differs from the previous two in that it is concerned less with explicating the teachings of the Bible than with the discussion of a single topic: angels.

1 Our text this morning is taken from Psalm one hundred
 2 three ... reading from verses nineteen to >22 as
 3 follows<.
 4 The Lord made the heavens his throne ... from there he
 5 rules over everything there is. Bless the Lord you
 6 mighty angels of his who carry out his orders . listening
 7 to each of his commands. 'Yes bless the Lord you armies
 8 of his angels who serve him constantly. Let everything
 9 everywhere bless the lord .. and how I bless him too. So
 10 far the words of our text.
 11 In Christ Jesus dear Christian friends. In our Apostles
 12 creed we confess .. I believe in God the father almighty
 13 .. creator . of heaven and earth. >God created< all
 14 things seen and unseen . the wind the atom distant gala
 15axies .. the visible and the invisible. Now of the
 16 invisible creation ... angels are undoubtably . the 'most
 17 important of God's creation. Our topic this morning is
 18 .. God's .. holy .. angels. This is a second in a series
 19 of sermons on the apostles creed. >Let's first of all<
 20 consider the nature of angels. The creation of angels is
 21 not listed in Genesis chapters one or two .. but since
 22 god ended (cough) the work of creation on the seventh day
 23 .. we conclude . that the angels were created 'sometimes
 24 during those first six days of creation. Angels ... 'what
 25 are . angels? Well first we notice .. that angels are
 26 invisible spirits .. that is . they don't have flesh and

27 bu blood >they don't< have bodies like we do. †However
 28 .. there are times when angels may and have taken on . a
 29 human form and made themselves visible. For example .
 30 when angels visited Abraham and his wife Sarah to tell
 31 them they would have a son >and then those< and then two
 32 angels continued on to Sodom and Gomorrah .. to warn Lot
 33 and his family about the destruction of those two cities.
 34 It was one of the head angels an archangel by the name of
 35 Gabriel that visited Zacharius in the temple of Jerusalem
 36 and told him he and his wife would become the parents of
 37 a son ... John the Baptist. It was only six months later
 38 when that same angel went and visited Mary . in Nazareth
 39 and told her that she would become the mother ... of the
 40 saviour. But generally .. angels are invisible we can't
 41 see them. Angels are in great number. Out text speaks
 42 of armies of angels. At Christmas time we speak of the
 43 multitude of the heavenly host. On Maundy Thursday at
 44 Geseminey .. there the gospel writer tells us that Jesus
 45 had at his disposal seventy two thousand angels .. if he
 46 wanted them. This church is undoubtedly filled . with
 47 angels. They are also in your home .. at work .. with
 48 you when you drive your car. Every Christian has at
 49 least one angel. Children have angels protecting them.
 50 There's never a shortage of angels. We also include
 51 angels in our prayers. In Luther's morning and evening
 52 prayer we pray .. into your hands I commend myself >my
 53 body< and soul and all things. Let your holy angels ..
 54 be with me . that the wicked foe may have no power over
 55 me. Angels are . powerful. They are mighty. Just as
 56 the invisible wind has power >so angels< have †more
 57 power. Our text calls them . †mighty angels . angels
 58 that excel in strength. When Syria .. was at war
 59 against Sumeria .. the prophet Elijah prayed to God to
 60 send ur an army of angels .. who struck the enemy
 61 soldiers with blindness. These invisible angels exerted
 62 great power .. over the visible .. Syrian army .. and
 63 they went home in defeat. >Let us also consider the work<
 64 of angels .. since God made them magnificently and in
 65 such great number .. we conclude .. that they must serve
 66 some good †great purpose >and they do<. First . they
 67 carry out God's commands >did you catch that< in our
 68 text? Bless the Lord you mighty angels of his who carry
 69 out his orders .. listening to each of his commands.
 70 †Angels don't run wild nor do they make independent
 71 decisions . they follow God's commands .. God's
 72 instruction. The television series . Touched by an Angel
 73 which is aired on Saturday nights does a good job in
 74 giving us an idea of angels at work .. and what they do

75 and what they don't do. 'Secondly .. angels serve
 76 especially 'believers. That's their . special
 77 assignment. In Hebrews chapter one we read .. angels are
 78 spirit messengers .. sent out to help . care for those
 79 who inherit 'salvation. Isn't that a nice term for
 80 Christians .. those who inherit . salvations. For
 81 example .. in Babylonian captivity .. Daniel .. ah ..
 82 >take was taken< from Judea into Babylonian captivity and
 83 there because he prayed openly to the true God was thrown
 84 into the lion's den .. but an 'angel .. kept the lions
 85 from harming him. And they three contemporaries of
 86 Daniel .. the three men in the fiery furnace were also
 87 protected from the fire .. that their hair weren't even
 88 singed . an angel was protecting them. When King Ahab of
 89 Israel wanted to kill the prophet Elijah .. the prophet
 90 . escaped into the desert. He was fed .. by an angel.
 91 Remember Saint Peter in prison bet behind locked doors
 92 sleeping between two schur soldiers who were guarding him
 93 .. he was awakened by an angel .. his chains fell off his
 94 hands .. and the gate opened .. and the angel led him ..
 95 out of pra prison to freedom. Looking at a wrecked car
 96 ... have you ever said 'its a miracle that anyone came
 97 out of there alive? 'Maybe it was an angel ... who was
 98 protecting them. In Psalm thirty four we read . the
 99 'angel of the lord guards an rescues all who reverence
 100 him. Maybe you have memorized that wonderful promise in
 101 psalm ninety one .. he will give his angels charge of you
 102 . to guard you in all your ways .. on their hands .. they
 103 will bear you up .lest you dash your foot against a
 104 stone. >Have you noticed< .. how children especially will
 105 fall again and again .. even tumbling down . stairs ..
 106 without serious injury? The bible tells us .. that they
 107 have 'angels . protecting them. >But that's fine< .. but
 108 how about the times we are injured ... when we break a
 109 bone a bone in our body .. or are stung by a wasp .. or
 110 are sick in the hospital or have an accident .. maybe ..
 111 just maybe .. angels let us get hurt .. to keep us out of
 112 'greater danger or .. to change the direction of our life
 113 .. to recall us. Maybe by observing our suffering our
 114 patience and our faith .. others will be able to see .
 115 and learn .. and turn to the lord Jesus. 'Maybe we
 116 forgot to ask God for his protection of his angels 'on
 117 that particular day. There are many reasons .. (turns
 118 page) we don't have all the answers. Or maybe God wants
 119 us to appreciate our good health. It seems we appreciate
 120 good health the most ... 'when we're sick .. you notice
 121 that? Thirdly .. angels . praise God. Again we read in
 122 our >text 'yes< . bless the Lord you armies of his angels

123 who serve him constantly let everything everywhere bless
 124 the Lord. Think also of the praising the angels did in
 125 Bethlehem two thousand years ago .. the night Jesus . was
 126 born. And there they were saying glory to God in the
 127 highest and on earth peace goodwill toward mankind. In
 128 Revelation chapter seven Saint John wrote .. blessing and
 129 glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and
 130 might be to God for ever and ever. Fourthly . and lastly
 131 .. angels carry our souls .. to heaven. Again the teevee
 132 program Touched by an Angel .. does just a beautifully
 133 and scripturally accurate job in depicting this. In the
 134 story of the rich man and Lazarus .. as Jesus told .. the
 135 angels .. carried Lazarus' soul . to heaven. The angels
 136 have done the same . with the soul of my father . and
 137 mother and your parents .. and others who have died in
 138 the lord. If I remember correctly Canadian Airlines has
 139 approximately eighteen flights going to Edmonton every
 140 weekday. Think of the thousands of thousands of flights
 141 angels take to heaven everyday. >And they're all free<
 142 .. just as our salvation is free. And then on the last
 143 day .. soul and body will be reunited. In our gospel
 144 lesson this morning the parable of the weeds among the
 145 wheat. Did you notice angels in that gospel lesson?
 146 They are the reapers .. as it is mentioned in that
 147 lesson. A story is told about an elderly grandmother
 148 away from home .. visiting her son .. who became . and
 149 she while visiting there she became seriously ill. The
 150 doctor suggested .. that she fly back home. However that
 151 was not possible her illness was too serious. Instead
 152 she responded .. I don't want to fly a plane . I want to
 153 fly an angel .. and she did. A few minutes later she
 154 died. God . has blessed us richly .. with angels. If
 155 you want to learn more about angels take a commentary and
 156 read the various passages in the scripture with angels
 157 for another one .. Billy Graham's book .. God's secret
 158 Agents also gives us some .. very rich information on
 159 angels .. god's secret angels. Bless the Lord you mighty
 160 angels of his who carry out his orders listening to each
 161 of his commands. Yes bless the lord you armies of his
 162 angels who serve him constantly. Let everything every
 163 everywhere bless the Lord. Oh how I .. bless him too.
 164 Amen. And the peace of God hat surpasses all
 165 understanding .. keep your heart and minds in Christ
 166 Jesus until light everlasting .. Amen.

The first thing we notice about this sermon is that the

biblical extract which begins the sermon is much shorter than the other two. This is most likely due to the sermon being part of a series on the apostle's creed. Unfortunately, there was a malfunction in the taping of the first of this series of sermons, resulting in only a portion of that sermon being available for review. There is no barrier to looking at this sermon on its own, however. In this transcript I will be most interested in how the speaker makes the factual status of angels available to the audience.

Introducing angels

The talk directly following the biblical passage (lines 4-10) introduces to the audience the topic of the sermon. The relevant section is given below.

11 In Christ Jesus dear Christian friends. In our Apostles
12 creed we confess .. I believe in God the father almighty
13 .. creator . of heaven and earth. >God created< all
14 things seen and unseen . the wind the atom distant gala
15 galaxies .. the visible and the invisible. Now of the
16 invisible creation ... angels are undoubtably . the 'most
17 important of God's creation. Our topic this morning is
18 .. God's .. holy .. angels.

We notice here that the speaker states that God created both seen and unseen things. The speaker then lists some items which have been created: the wind, the atom and distant galaxies. These clearly are meant to exemplify the category of the unseen creation. The speaker then repeats the dichotomy between the visible and invisible aspect of creation. Angels are then introduced as the most important

member of the invisible creation (lines 15-17).

There is one particular aspect to this piece of talk which I want to draw attention to. By arranging creation into invisible and visible aspects, and placing angels in the former, the speaker places angels into a category of things and entities which includes such items as the atom and the wind. Membership in a category implies sharing features with other members of the same category (Benson and Hughes, 1983: 133-34). The atom and wind are objects which, while unseen, are part of our general knowledge of the world. We all know about the wind, we have felt it; we all know about atoms, we learned about them in school and are aware of nuclear reactors and weapons. This makes angels available as entities similar to those listed above. Angels, like atoms, are things we cannot see, but *know* to exist.

Discernable properties

The majority of the sermon is concerned with examining the nature and work of angels. As has been noted in the previous sermons, the method of presenting this consists of bald statements of fact. Consider the example below:

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19 .....>Let's first of all<
20 consider the nature of angels. The creation of angels is
21 not listed in Genesis chapters one or two .. but since
22 god ended (cough) the work of creation on the seventh day
23 .. we conclude . that the angels were created !sometimes
24 during those first six days of creation. Angels ...!what
25 are . angels?

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Note here, in lines 20 to 24, that while the creation of angels is not listed in Genesis, they must have been created during the six days of creation; that is, it is logically necessary for them to have been so. The statement does not suggest 'if angels exist, they would have been created in the first six days,' but *since* angels exist, they *must* have been created in those first six days.

The speaker then asks the question: what are angels? This leads to a series of answers which take up a large portion of the total sermon. Each of these answers comes to the social audience as simple answers to this simple question. The first answer comes immediately after the question is stated:

24 Angels ...!what
 25 are . angels? Well first we notice .. that angels are
 26 invisible spirits .. that is . they don't have flesh and
 27 bu blood >they don't< have bodies like we do. !However
 28 .. there are times when angels may and have taken on . a
 29 human form and made themselves visible.

That angels are invisible spirits is something which is *noticed*, presumably through reference to scriptural authority. Throughout the course of the sermon numerous other aspects of angels are presented to the audience. Angels are in great number (line 41), and they are powerful (line 55). Angels are also stated to perform some specific purpose. As with the time of their creation, the purpose of angels is also given as a logical necessity:

63>Let us also consider the work<
 64 of angels .. since God made them magnificently and in
 65 such great number .. we conclude .. that they must serve
 66 some good !great purpose >and they do<.

The speaker is able to list the functions which angels perform in the same manner that he can their specific features. Angels carry out God's commands (lines 66-67). They also serve people who believe in God (lines 75-76). Angels praise God (line 121), and they carry souls to heaven (lines 130-131).

The formation of a list, such as the speaker has done in this sermon, performs a specific function in discourse. It makes available to the audience features of entities or objects as *known* details. It does the same thing as telling someone "I have a oak coffee table which is stained dark brown in my living room." This statement does not merely describe a coffee table, it makes available to the reader the existence of a coffee table in my living room. Or, if the reader would prefer something less made up (I do not have a stained brown coffee table in my living room, unless you count the stains from spilt coffee. It most assuredly is not made of oak. Nor, considering the size of the apartment, could I be said to even have a living room), let us take an example from the anthropological literature:

Any Dene Tha account of reincarnation is likely to include a combination of several of the following elements: (a) annunciatory dreams that tell a mother-to-

be, a father-to-be or other close relative that someone is about to be reincarnated; (b) visions of a dead person roaming public places or private homes in the hopes of entering a woman's body; (c) waking recollections of past lives. ... (Goulet, 1996: 695; the complete list had three more items).

The quotation above, taken from a paper concerning Dene Tha beliefs on reincarnation, makes available: (a) that there are a people called the Dene Tha; (b) that they believe in reincarnation; (c) that the author, Goulet, has knowledge of this as he is able to list these things in the first place implying (d) that other persons would be able to encounter these items themselves. In relation to this final point, let us consider the extract below.

154If
 155 you want to learn more about angels take a commentary and
 156 read the various passages in the scripture with angels
 157 for another one .. Billy Graham's book .. God's secret
 158 Agents also gives us some .. very rich information on
 159 angels ..god's secret angels.

In this extract, the speaker refers the audience to other sources, including Billy Graham's book on angels, which contains "rich information" on angels. This of course implies that there is information to be had on angels, the facts are 'out there' to be found. We see a similar effect created through the citation of a television program about angels. The program is described as doing a good job of showing angels at work (lines 71-74) and as being scripturally accurate (lines 131-133). This implies that such programs can be

from its documents, the pattern also tells us what the documents are documents of. Following Smith (1990: 139), I wish to designate a sub-type of this method where a pattern or schema (e.g. angels are invisible but have taken on physical form) is used textually to organize a group of individual incidents. This I refer to as the documentary method of *presentation*, acknowledging its primary effect is geared to an audience. By acknowledging this "...the documentary method of interpretation appears as an active process not just in the [hearer's] head but as a social course of action (Smith, 1990: 141)."

For example, the first characteristic of angels which the speaker attends to is their invisibility. While normally invisible, angels may take on a human form.

24Angels ...!what
 25 are . angels? Well first we notice .. that angels are
 26 invisible spirits .. that is . they don't have flesh and
 27 bu blood >they don't< have bodies like we do. !However
 28 .. there are times when angels may and have taken on . a
 29 human form and made themselves visible.

The speaker then recounts specific occasions when angels have made themselves visible to individuals. These include: informing Abraham and Sarah they would have a son (lines 30-31); warning Lot about the destruction of two cities (lines 31-33)and; Gabriel informing Zacharius and Mary respectively of their impending and important future parenthoods (lines 34-40). The speaker then concludes in lines 40 and 35 "But

generally .. angels are invisible we can't see them."

In this portion of the discourse, the speaker makes available the invisible nature of angels through the times that they are visible. The instances cited are all special or unusual, representing significant events.² These are constituted as such by the closing statement "but generally ... angels are invisible." The rarity of these cases therefore upholds the organizing principle of invisibility.

We can identify the documentary form of presentation throughout the entirety of the transcript. For example in lines 75 to 79 we are told that angels serve believers. In lines 80 through 95 we are given several examples of angels protecting the faithful: Daniel and his contemporaries in lines 81 to 88; the prophet Elijah in lines 88-90; and Saint Peter in lines 91-95.

Angels in action

While it would be possible to analyse this further, I believe it would be more instructive to look at some of the effects created via the documentary method of presentation. Through the course of the sermon, angels are rarely portrayed as inactive; there is always a visible consequence to their presence. The speaker thereby is able to demonstrate both the

² For a more detailed discussion of the physical appearance of religious entities, see Berryman (n.d.).

objective nature of angels (ie. their actions have perceivable consequences) and make angels available as angels through the actions they perform. This will be examined in more detail below.

55Angels are . powerful. They are mighty. Just as
 56 the invisible wind has power >so angels< have imore
 57 power. Our text calls them . Imighty angels . angels
 58 that excel in strength. When Syria .. was at war
 59 against Sumeria .. the prophet Elijah prayed to God to
 60 send ur an army of angels .. who struck the enemy
 61 soldiers with blindness. These invisible angels exerted
 62 great power .. over the visible .. Syrian army .. and
 63 they went home in defeat.

In this extract the speaker is demonstrating the power which angels have. He cites a historical incident, a battle, where angels took a part. The consequence of the angels' presence was the enemy being defeated. There is no mention of the Sumerian army marching into battle or needing to. It is the angels who win the day here.

We also notice the means by which the angels achieve victory: *they strike their opponents blind*. This demonstrates the superhuman abilities which angels should possess. Angels need not don armor and sword to defeat a human army, they can manipulate the material world in *ways humans can not*. Also note here the contrast between the *visible* Syrian army and the *invisible* angels. This implies that the Syrians were not aware they faced angels in the battle; the angels were able to make use of their superhuman abilities without taking on

visible form. The effect, however, was visible. That the Syrians were struck blind is undeniable, whether or not anyone saw the angels perform the feat. It could be seen as easily as the massed force of the Syrians could be seen.

A similar procedure is evident in the discussion of how angels serve believers. In the excerpt below, the speaker discusses how an angel aided Daniel's contemporaries while in captivity in Babylonia.

82And they three contemporaries of
 83 Daniel .. the three men in the fiery furnace were also
 84 protected from the fire .. that their hair weren't even
 85 singed . an angel was protecting them.

In this instance the angels are demonstrated as angels by their ability to protect an individual from heat energy. We see here that the angels did not need to pull the three people from the furnace nor did they need to put the furnace out. The angels were able to keep the three safe by means unavailable to humanity. We also see that the angel's power was sufficient to protect them from all harm. The three persons did not merely survive the fiery furnace, they did not even singe their hair.

The speaker again demonstrates the abilities of angels in the means by which they free Saint Peter in lines 91 to 95. Here the chains "fall off" his hands rather than the lock being picked. They are able to wake Peter without disturbing the guards he is sleeping between. The gate merely opens, the

angels do not have to bash through it or force it in any way.

Angels everyday

Through the documentary method of presentation, the speaker demonstrates how the audience may see, or may have already seen, the activities of angels. For example, when discussing the large number of angels, in lines 41 to 50, angels are listed as in the church, in your car and so forth. I will now look at how the speaker accomplishes the presence of angels in the everyday world in more detail.

95Looking at a wrecked car
 96 ... have you ever said its a miracle that anyone came
 97 out of there alive? Maybe it was an angel ... who was
 98 protecting them. In Psalm thirty four we read . the
 99 angel of the Lord guards an rescues all who reverence
 100 him.

This excerpt, delivered directly after the episode involving Saint Peter, is part of the discussion of how angels serve believers. In the excerpt, the speaker draws upon the audience's memories and imaginations to supply the situation. He does not need to give a detailed description of which car or what incident; the audience can provide them for themselves. He then cites a probable reaction to such an occasion, "have you ever said its a miracle that anyone came out of there alive?"⁹ It is then suggested that perhaps an angel protected the person(s) in the automobile. A passage of

⁹ I can think of two such occasions involving member's of my family where I stated almost precisely the speaker's words.

the Bible is then referred to to demonstrate that angels indeed do this.

The speaker in this portion of the sermon uses the already demonstrated *fact* (i.e. lines 75 through 95) that angels serve believers as a means to explain a potentially anomalous circumstance. Lines 75 through 79 deliver what can be referred to as an underlying pattern, that being that one of angels' chief activities is to serve believers. Lines 81 to 95 give instances which demonstrate this pattern, also informing the audience what is meant by *serve*. In line 95, the example of the ruined car begins. The lack of a break in the talk implies this is another instance of the pattern. The only notable difference between this extract and the others is the inclusion of the word "maybe" in line 97, suggesting a more tentative conclusion. However, lines 95-100 provide reasons for arriving at such a conclusion, and thereby *shore up both the pattern and this instance as a document of it*. This is aided by the type of situation cited, where the only competing explanation is chance or simply luck, which is implied by the phrase "It's a miracle that anyone came out of there alive."

The consequence of this formulation is to make the actions of angels available in the daily life of the social audience, providing the members a means to identify these

actions. We see this again in the next excerpt which was delivered immediately following the previous one.

100Maybe you have memorized that wonderful promise in
 101 psalm ninety one .. he will give his angels charge of you
 102 . to guard you in all your ways .. on their hands .. they
 103 will bear you up .lest you dash your foot against a
 104 stone. >Have you noticed< .. how children especially will
 105 fall again and again .. even tumbling down . stairs ..
 106 without serious injury? The bible tells us .. that they
 107 have angels . protecting them.

In this excerpt we have a continuation of the description of how angels serve believers (lines 100-104). We then have another situation deserving of an explanation: "even tumbling down . stairs .. without serious injury." Once again, this is presented as a document of the underlying pattern by *restating* the pattern, for "the bible tells us .. that they (children) have angels . protecting them.

There are two more instances which make angels visible in the everyday. The first of these involves angels taking the speaker's and perhaps some members of the audience's parents to heaven (lines 135-138). Of note here is the simple assertion the angels took the speaker's parents to heaven. This personal reference demonstrates the sincerity with which the sermon is given. The speaker is not mechanically delivering church teachings, but presents himself as personally holding what he speaks of to be true. The second instance involves the story of the dying grandmother (lines 147-154). Note here how the grandmother states that she

wishes "to fly an angel", and that she gets her wish.

I should note that immediately following the last excerpt, the speaker notes that we are not always protected from injury (lines 107 to 110). Notice here, however, that the speaker is able to supply reasons for this. The reasons are for our own best interest, or to the advantage of others, or the result of our own inaction. Finally, it is claimed that there may be reasons which we do not know. Thus, instances which do not support the pattern as set out may uphold it in other ways or be designed for a slightly different purpose. Like the case of Zeitlyn's (1990) diviners, the pattern is upheld by broadening its possible parameters.

DISCUSSION: SERMONS IN CONTEXT

I have so far dealt with each sermon as an isolate. To conclude the analysis, I would now like to address some aspects which all three analysed here share in common.

The reader should note the uninterrupted nature of the discourse which has been analysed. Aside from the occasional cough or quickly silenced child, the speaker is the sole producer of sound in the church. Even the organ has stopped during the sermon. The speaker need not worry that the statements made will be contradicted by someone in the audience, nor debated afterward by an opponent. This also allows the speaker to decide which particulars will be

relevant to the discourse.

The speaker's ability to control the floor derives from the occasion in which the talk is being performed and his station in that occasion. The speaker's station is made apparent through the title of Pastor and the speakers vestments, which are of course dissimilar from those of the social audience. During the course of the service, the speaker, a lone individual, faces the entirety of the social audience and the social audience in its entirety faces him.

These make available the speaker's role as an expert. Like possessing the title of Ph.D. (or M.A. supposedly), the right to use the title 'pastor' and wear the vestments associated with that office comes from holding specialized knowledge. The pastor is considered to be knowledgeable in scripture and its meanings. It is from this designation of special knowledge that the speaker's authority to speak uninterrupted comes.

The reader will have probably noted that each sermon begins with a scriptural passage. Usually the sermon will be based upon one of the biblical readings delivered during the day's service, though this need not be the case. In sermon three, the scriptural passage was not mentioned earlier in the service, for example. It seems that there need not be a scriptural passage included in the sermon, but there always is

one.

The sermon should not be seen as predicated upon the scripture which introduces it. In the second sermon, for example, there is very little in the scriptural passage which unambiguously suggests that it is an invitation. Nor is the speaker limited to this one passage in presenting the sermon. The biblical passage is made available as an invitation through the work of the speaker, but the substantive qualities of this invitation are grounded in the passage, as in the following excerpt:

45 Next we
 46 asked..who is invited? Only us? In verse twenty eight
 47 we read...come to me all..all who labor and heavy ehr
 48 laden and I will give you rest.

In the passage here, the question about the invitation is answered by the scripture, but the scripture can only provide such an answer because the speaker is asking such questions.

The scriptural and the non-scriptural components of the sermon are therefore reflexively tied to one another. The non-scriptural components elaborate upon and provide meaning to the scriptural ones; the scriptural components act as a grounding authority for the non-scriptural. Thus the sermon makes the passage into an invitation, yet the passage authorizes what that invitation is reported as saying.

To examine the point which I am trying to make here, let

us consider what the speaker does not do. He does not begin a sermon by quoting a newspaper or a novel. Neither does he begin with theological writings which he may have studied during his tenure at a seminary. He begins with what the audience has come to expect in a sermon; that is, he designs his talk for the audience at hand. This is referred to as recipient design (Watson, 1994: 416). He knows he speaks to a gathering of the faithful, and speaks accordingly. Unlike Wooffitt's interviewees, he does not design his talk around the expectation that he will be disbelieved (1992: 92). Rather, the talk centers around the exact opposite assumption. The speaker assumes what he says to be true and, more importantly, *assumes his audience does as well*. This is most readily apparent in the instances when the speaker speaks for the audience. Consider the following instance from the second sermon:

142It is isn't burdensome
 143 its beneficial. He walks beside *us* and helps *us*. He
 144 keeps *us* going to carry on. *We* accept his royal
 145 invitation. *We* walk with him. He makes the yoke easy
 146 and light. *We* learn from him. Jesus accepted the yoke
 147 from God the Father that he had placed on him. He
 148 suffered torture from his enemies. *when we* are told what
 149 to do .. we may sometimes resent it .. *but when Jesus*
 150 invites *us* together to walk with him *we* *humbly* and
 151 willingly obey.

That the speaker is able to assume that his audience believes as he does allows him to say much of what he says. That he is able to assume this is dependent upon the occasion

of the speech. The sermon, of course, occurs within a church on Sunday, during the time designated for worship. Thus the audience could be considered as being in attendance for this purpose. While there may be other reasons for an individual to be in attendance (I, for example, being there to witness the service and garner recordings for transcripts), none of these reasons are made manifest during the course of the service. Everyone present participates in the actions which denote a member of the church (they sing the hymns, recite the prayers, and most importantly the Apostle's Creed at the service's end).

The speaker also receives support for his statements by assuming that the audience holds the same beliefs. While the audience never speaks out loud, they are still part and parcel of the overall process. The speaker does not speak in order to hear himself talk; he is obviously aware that the audience is paying attention to what he is saying, as is evident in the excerpt above where he includes them in the talk. The speaker therefore is monitoring the audience's reaction to his speech, and knows that they are monitoring what he is saying (Watson and Irwin, 1996: 98-99). Through their lack of negative reaction, the speaker may assume that they agree with his

statements.¹⁰

That the speaker presumes that the audience shares his beliefs is also evident in the bald assertions which are made. I have noted this in the analyses previously, and so I will not bore the reader with examples. What should be noted however, is how these statements can be made only with this presumption in operation. Hence, the social setting is an integral part of the speaker's success. For the speaker to make statements regarding angels protecting children while at a meeting of, say, a parent-teachers' association would probably not go uninterrupted. If the speaker were to discuss angels riding with us in our cars to a group of persons on a street corner, the effect of the talk would be radically different. First of all, the listeners would not know who the speaker was; they would not be aware that the speaker does this on a weekly basis. Hence, the authority of his position would be entirely absent, and the listeners would judge the talk on an entirely different basis. Secondly, the audience would not know why the speaker is speaking as he is. Being outside of the church would rob the speaker of the setting in which such discourse would be expected. The audience would then be looking for reasons for the talk, seeking to normalize

¹⁰ At least nominally. He is able from this to assume that no one finds what he has said to be morally questionable (Watson and Irwin 1996: 99).

it (Garfinkel, 1967: 47). Finally, and most importantly, as the audience would not be at the street corner for the express purpose of worship, the speaker could not assume that the audience's members shared his beliefs. As noted above, it is unlikely that his pronouncements would pass without comment. It is also less likely that the membership of the audience would remain the same throughout the length of the sermon. The sermon giver on the street corner would more likely be in the position of Wooffitt's informants, and subjected to assumptions about the adequacy of his or her faculties.

The occasion of the sermon is therefore integral to its accomplishments. I will now conclude with a discussion of these accomplishments.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have argued in favour of the social constructionist position that reality is socially constructed, and have sought to demonstrate how it is constructed in a particular setting. In chapter one, I introduced the problem which I would focus on: the means by which "invisible" spiritual entities are made available to and by believers. In chapter two I outlined the theoretical position of social constructionism. Chapter three was dedicated to examining some methodological and analytic concerns and precedents which inform this research. In the preceding chapter I analyzed in detail the data provided from three sermons.

OVERVIEW OF ANALYSES

To summarize the analysis, I will discuss some of the means by which the speaker accomplished the task of making divine and spiritual beings available. The list below is by no means meant to be exhaustive, and suffers from the irreparable property that all lists share: one can always add another item. The items are not mutually exclusive. I present this list to discuss some of the commonalities all three transcripts demonstrate.

1. Taken for granted exposition. Throughout all three

transcripts, the speaker assumes, and assumes that the audience assumes, the existence of the beings and occurrences of which he speaks. He speaks of angels as he would atoms; people are born naturally sinful. There are rarely qualifying statements made in regards to any claim. For example, the house Obetedum was blessed because it *did* house the Ark of the Covenant. Statements such as this one are merely facts to be presented, they require and are given no more discussion than a historian would to stating that the Normans won the battle of Hastings in 1066. Like the historian discussing the major events of a time period, the speaker draws together facts in the presentation of his argument. He can demonstrate logically that angels were created in the first six days and that they must serve some purpose because all creation took place in these first six days and that angels possess the powers that they possess.

Pollner's (1974, 1975) work on reality disjunctures are instructive here. As Pollner shows, the resolution of the reality disjuncture depends on the *assumption* of a commonly shared world. This assumption, or incorrigible proposition as Pollner (1974: 43) termed it, can function as a resource in making sense of the surrounding world. Stated another way, worldviews reflexively maintain themselves (Mehan and Wood, 1975: 8-14). Hence, just as the Azande (Evans-Pritchard,

1937: 330) are able to maintain the notion of an infallible oracle through 'secondary elaborations', and the Mambila diviners are able to discover patterns among possibly contradictory answers from their spider oracles, so in our case is the pastor able to find good reasons for instances which do not fit the pattern he has maintained. For example, in the first sermon when the speaker discusses how the physical body may receive benefits from the overspill of spiritual blessings, he notes that:

93So physical blessings
 94 followed as a result of 'spiritual blessings. The body
 95 is part of the total person .. it is important .. but
 96 this does not mean that there will always be total
 97 healing for the body in every case. We still have sin in
 98 our lives we are not perfect beings we're born that way.
 99 We have limitations we have weaknesses and illnesses.

And so, like the person who multiplies six by six and gets 32, we assume that we have committed an error somewhere, for the math itself cannot be wrong.

I have paid particular attention to the speaker's assumption of the divine for the simple reason that all other work done through his discourse is dependent upon it. I will now discuss some other methods which the speaker employs.

2. The documentary method of presentation. Earlier I stated that the documentary method of presentation was a means of organizing individual incidents in order to show how they represent an underlying schema. The schema and the document

of it are reflexively tied together, as the document helps the audience to understand the schema while the schema informs us what the document is a document of. This was discussed in relation to the third sermon with regard to the how the speaker documents the work of angels. It should be clear, however, that a great deal is accomplished through this means of presentation in all three transcripts. Let us look again at an excerpt from the first sermon.

72Now mankind's physical .
 73 mental and emotional make up would enjoy the 'overspill
 74 of Jesus' love and blessing. We see how this happened in
 75 old testament times . when for example Joseph became a
 76 slave in the house of (?) in Egypt and the Lord blessed
 77 the house of Potiphar we are told in Genesis chapter
 78 thirty-nine ... that's blessing by association . or the
 79 overspill .. of God's blessings.

In this example, which was originally discussed to point out the numerous instructions it gives to read events as part of the overspill process, we can also note how these instructions make these instances *instances of the overriding schema of overspill*. Examples of such instances are numerous throughout each transcript. This is hardly surprising given the inescapable nature of the documentary method of interpretation, of which I include the above excerpt as a sub-type.

Through the documentary method of presentation, the speaker accomplishes several tasks in making spiritual entities available to the audience. He provides a schema by

which to organize numerous particulars; through the exemplification of the particulars, the viability of the schema is endorsed.

3. Consequential Implication. Closely associated with the documentary method of presentation is a device which I have termed consequential implication. To refresh the reader's mind, consequential implication is a device whereby the speaker uses a consequence or effect to warrant the presence of its putative source. It can be seen as one form of documentary presentation. I have already looked at this device in terms of its use in the first sermon. Let us look at an example from transcript two.

129 For my
 130 yoke is easy and my burden is light he says. this yoke
 131 ties us together with him. A certain young lady wrote in
 132 a periodical what walking with Jesus did for her life.
 133 She started attending worship .. she stopped going to
 134 bears .. her circle of friends changed .. she switched
 135 jobs because her old job prevented her from walking with
 136 the Lord. Her priorities changed. Instead of trying to
 137 please people now she was wanting to please God.

In this excerpt, the consequence is the drastic changes in the young lady's behavior, the source is walking with Jesus (accepting his invitation in the metaphor of the sermon). Notice that the audience receives only one possible source to explain the change in the young lady.

Consequential implication is a very common form of rhetoric, and therefore could easily be adapted to the

analysis of various other forms of discourse. In particular, academic discourse seems highly likely to make use of such arguments. Many sociobiological arguments regarding kin selection theory (e.g. Daly and Wilson, 1983: 45-51) employ this device. That Japanese macaques groom kin more than non-kin, and close kin more than those more distantly related, *implies* the presence of a genetic predisposition to nepotism. It must be implied, for it can certainly not be demonstrated in the black box of the chromosomes.

4. Contemporary Relevance. I have noted several occasions where the speaker pays attention to demonstrating the presence of the divine in contemporary situations. This was most notable in the first sermon, where the process of overspill was demonstrably present in the work of the church's Christian Education staff. This was also evident in regard to the work of angels, where the speaker demonstrates how angels are present and active in the here and now; they don't just render ancient armies blind and save Daniel from the lions, but also save people from car accidents and keep overactive children from serious harm. We can also consider again the excerpt above, as it demonstrates the effect of a contemporary individual accepting Jesus' invitation.

I have argued that the work that such formulations accomplish is to let the audience "see it for themselves." It

allows the audience to make use of instances from their own experiences and memories as a means of making spiritual beings available. Such instances thereby become documents of the work of the divine.

I have also noted how the speaker employs contemporary imagery in the construction of the sermons. This is particularly evident in the second transcript, where a biblical passage is described as an invitation. We can also note the employment of numerous statements for illustrative purposes. Accepting Jesus' invitation is like having a coffee break, or as cleansing as a shower. The television program "Touched by an Angel" is cited as an acceptable means to learn about angels and so forth. These images perform the same function as the more demonstrative examples above: they allow the audience to provide the documents for the schema being put forth. The use of contemporary imagery is notable in another sense however. Consider the extract taken from the second transcript below:

89The invitation to what? What's the big
90 occasion? to all who are sick and tired of trying to
91 earn God's favour in a good life the invitation reads I
92 will give you rest. Everyone knows what rest means. it
93 means to stop working .. >Have a< have a coffee break ..
94 go on a vacation .. take a nap. God wants you and me to
95 rest. Rest for our souls .. Labor or work produces a
96 weary hopeless effort in its place Jesus will remove our
97 heavy load of guilt and sin and punishment and forgive us
98 .. our sins.

In this extract the speaker uses such commonplace activities

as "coffee breaks" and "vacations" to render understandable the actions of spiritual beings. In other words, contemporary imagery is used as a frame to understand biblical scripture, and the scripture in turn serves as a frame to interpret the contemporary imagery.

The demonstration of contemporary relevance and contemporary imagery accomplishes one final task. As the audience is able to draw upon their own experience to "see it for themselves", the speaker thereby makes the work of spiritual beings a *publicly shared phenomenon*. It is no longer within the realm of the speaker's discourse, but available outside of the church in the lived-in world.

5. Making the Spiritual Recognizable. The speaker makes the actions of spiritual entities actions recognizable as such; they are descriptably not human actions. Berryman (n.d.: 290) notes that his informant describes Christ as somewhat translucent. Jesus does not walk, but slides. Further, the vision is a "vision" by the fact that her husband can not see the apparitions. In our case, the speaker makes divine actions available as divine actions through contrast with the mundane. Whole armies are struck blind, miraculous cures occur, or people come out of situations unscathed where they should not. This is also accomplished through reminding the audience of Jesus' miraculous actions, as in the case below

from transcript two:

99 He lived the
100 perfect life for us. He paid the price of sin .. his
101 crucifixion . death . his victorious resurrection on
102 the third day .

The crucifixion story is mentioned often in both the first and second transcripts. It makes Jesus available as divine Jesus rather than historical Jesus.

6. Exclusionary Exposition. In sermon two I described how the speaker cited positions counter to his own in order to make God (as Christ) available. The speaker accomplished this by demonstrating the necessity of accepting God and Christ. Those who did not accept this were described by the speaker as suffering from various flaws of character. In so doing, the speaker demonstrated a method of speech remarkably similar to Mulkay and Gilbert's (1982; Gilbert and Mulkay 1984) contingent repertoire. It should also be noted that throughout the entirety of all three transcripts, the speaker is firmly in what the self-same authors would term the empiricist repertoire, which merely reports things such as they are with no qualifiers. During the course of the sermons, the speaker rarely cites possible evidence against what he is saying. The cases where he does have been dealt with under heading one, and these instances actually support the propositions being made in the same way that exceptions

are said to prove the rule.

This manner of presentation stems of course from the speaker assuming the truth of what he speaks of. The audience therefore never receives any reason to suspect otherwise. The sermon therefore comes across as a coherent and logically whole exposition.

7. Citation of Proper Authority. I noted in the last chapter that the speaker consistently draws upon a scriptural passage in the construction of each sermon. I have argued that this passage lends authority to the sermon's content. In the few cases that it is not the scripture which is cited, we have Martin Luther, whose historic and theological significance are not in need of discussion, and Billy Graham, a well known evangelist. These of course serve the same purpose as my citing of Gilbert and Mulkey or Bruno Latour. They both serve to demonstrate the speaker's knowledge and authorize whatever is being said with external validation.

THE AVAILABILITY OF SPIRITUAL BEINGS

Through this thesis, I have reconsidered a question posed by Berryman: how do believers objectify an empirically unavailable God? The preceding analyses have suggested some of the methods by which this was accomplished in a single setting. I now wish to advance some conclusions which the analyses suggest.

Berryman suggests that religious viewpoints require a modification of the interchangeability of standpoints. To be everywhere, the believer's God must be invisible. To be all-powerful the believer must not be able to see God act. However, Berryman somehow comes to the unfortunate conclusion that:

Religion is not at the center of a conception of the real that would be different from the one achieved through mundane reason. *Religion is simply not in the business of producing descriptive accounts of the empirical world* (n.d.: 302, emphasis added).

My own analysis does not support such a conclusion. The speaker in the cases examined is manifestly describing the empirical world. Pieces of biblical history are not presented as allegory nor as myths, but as historic occasions which indicate the activity, power, and presence of an objective deity. They indicate it in the same way that habitual forms of actions between a man and his sister's son indicate a structural relationship (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952), or the Dene-Tha use of various markers to objectify the reality of reincarnation:

If someone like you has doubts about it [reincarnation], there are signs to show you, signs that people can show, to make you believe (Goulet, 1996: 695).

Berryman here seems to make the same type of statement as Southwold (1979). Southwold, it will be remembered argues that religious beliefs are held to be symbolically as opposed

to factually true. The distinction between the two is based upon the empirically indeterminate and axiomatic nature of religious beliefs. He then states:

I have little doubt that many, if not most, religious believers take the simpler and more robust view that their tenets are factually true as well as symbolically true. This is but subtly different from the *appropriate* view, and we should hardly describe people as irrational because they fail to mark such a difficult distinction (Southwold, 1979: 643, emphasis added).

I agree that we should hardly call these people irrational, but we should question any researcher who presumes to instruct his or her informants on how they *actually* hold their beliefs! Ethnomethodologists have forcefully repeated that the orientations of the analyst should not replace those of the subject (e.g. Watson, 1992: 5). Even granting the distinction between "symbolically" versus "factually" held truths (which I do not), such a distinction is one to be made by members and not the analyst. My own data suggest that the empirical world is an indispensable part of the speaker's resources in making the divine available. That he makes claims about this world is indisputable. That he holds the existence of God, the resurrection of Christ, and the actions of angels to be factually and empirically true is also self-evident.

Berryman and Southwold appear to set limits on how empirical claims can be made. Such limits are not the

business of the researcher, but of the members themselves. Whether or not any such claim is empirically refutable is a problem to be addressed by members, not the analyst.

FINAL COMMENT

As was noted in chapter one, anthropologists have been proposing ideas about the nature of religious belief since the discipline's foundation. The approach adopted here has differed from previous approaches in that it looks at beliefs as works in progress. Contrary to Geertz (1966: 4), religious beliefs do not come clothed in an aura of factuality which makes them "uniquely realistic." This clothing is perhaps there, but it is woven by the believers themselves. As is evident from the transcripts analyzed here, the bible does not speak for itself. Scripture is embedded in the sermon, it authorizes it, but the sermon itself is constitutive of the meaning of that scripture. I have demonstrated some of the methods by which a pastor works on providing the "cloth of factuality" to his audience. As Ruel (1982: 28) argues, what should be important to the anthropologist is "the task of construing the sense of reality of what it is they believe, and it is one of the skills of anthropology to do precisely this by contextual explication." The approach of social constructionism provides a means to perform this task.

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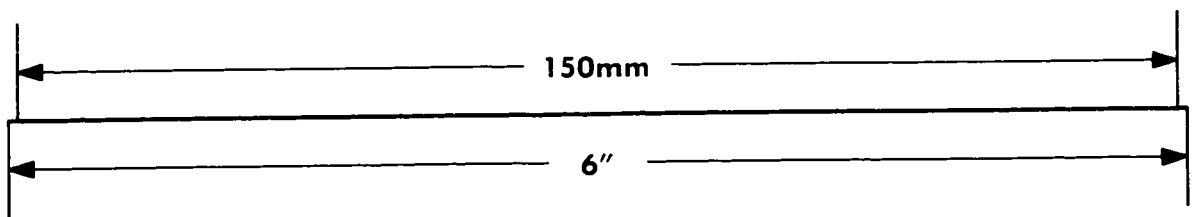
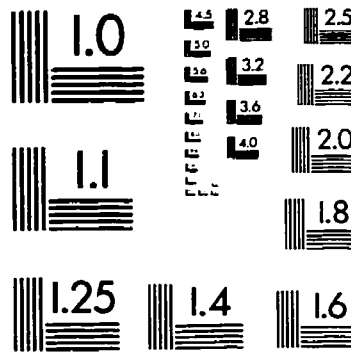
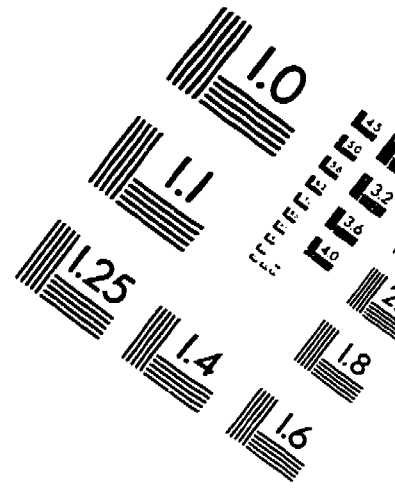
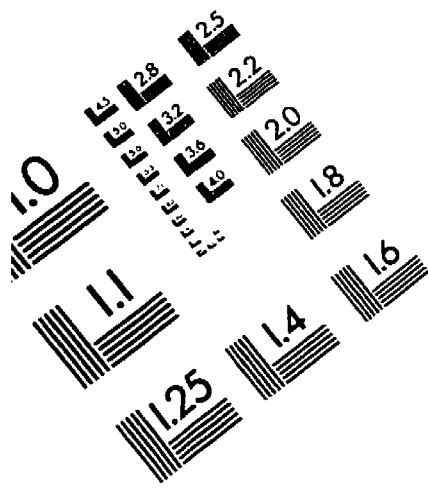
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