

**A CLOSER WALK: A COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC STUDY OF MOVEMENT AND PROXIMITY
METAPHORS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CERTAINTY IN MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN LANGUAGE**

by

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Abstract:

Conservative religious believers often make use of language that represents the perception that there are clear, fixed differences between their view of the world and the worldview of others, and that their view is unambiguously true and other views are not. This thesis explores the validity of that notion through an analysis of conservative religious language from a cognitive linguistic perspective. It first examines the research relating to what is involved in the process of categorising the environment around us and applies it to how that process can lead to and even encourage the perception of conservative religious believers that reality can be simplified into sets of fixed, binary categories. It then investigates whether there are clear, fixed differences between a 15,225 word collection of *Evangelical Times* Christian testimonials and a 29,067 word collection of *islamfortoday.com* Muslim testimonials in terms of their use of movement and proximity metaphors to express their way of believing. This thesis concludes with an analysis of the language of three pairs of conservative Muslims and Christians during a videoed discussion focusing on the differences in their experience as believers. In contrast to the first study's focus on collections of texts, this analysis focuses on individual differences in their use of proximity and movement metaphors and empathetic language. The results of these studies suggest that, despite the fact that such believers perceive their views of the world as clear and fixed, the expression of their perceived experience of interacting with a divine agent can only be accurately described in terms of varying patterns of emphasis. In addition, not only is it sometimes quite difficult to mark out clear differences between different belief communities in terms of this type of language, it is also possible for individuals within the same communities to exhibit as much divergence as individuals from two different communities. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications of these results for the field of inter-faith dialogue, as well as the possibility of widening the investigation beyond these specific groups of conservative religious believers, and even beyond the domain of religious belief.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter will begin with a brief autobiographical note outlining my motivations for choosing to focus on an exploration of conservative religious language. This will be followed by an example of such language taken from a religious testimonial, along with a discussion of how the simplified view of reality represented in the language contained in the extract can become a source of social tension. I will then explain how this thesis will explore conservative religious language by investigating three research questions relevant to this area. I will conclude by introducing key issues related to each of these research questions, before moving on to an overview of the various chapters of this thesis.

1.1 An Autobiographical Note

It is important to begin this thesis by explaining my personal motivation to focus on an exploration of conservative religious language. My parents and siblings were and still are strong, committed independent Baptists who successfully instilled in me an initial firm belief in God. This reached its peak in my early twenties when I underwent a dramatic conversion experience and became convinced that I should devote my life to teaching others about Christ. I embarked on a degree in Theology and it was during my studies that my faith came under pressure. My contact with other Christian groups, Muslims, practising Jews, Buddhists, atheists and agnostics and my study of the historical critical approach to analysing the Bible opened me up to the possibility of multiple interpretations of a reality which I had assumed up until then could only have a single interpretation. Over the next few years I moved from conservative religious belief to a liberal Christian perspective and then to agnosticism. During this transition period, my relationship with my family went through a challenging period as I attempted to persuade my parents that my worldview change was valid and they attempted to persuade me that I had made a serious mistake.

These experiences (both in terms of my own inner struggles and worldview shifts and my experience of interaction with members of my former belief community) provided my motivation to investigate conservative religious language. It is therefore important to highlight from the outset that I do have a very specific personal context that motivates, informs and inevitably affects my academic exploration of notions such as certainty, individual difference, change, and the maintenance of simplified views of the world within the frame of conservative religious belief.

1.2 The Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to explore conservative religious language from a cognitive linguistic perspective. This exploration will focus on how and why conservative religious believers develop, maintain and express simplified views of the world. It will also investigate whether there are clear, fixed differences between the use of particular metaphors in the language of conservative religious believers from competing communities, or whether it would be more appropriate to talk about different patterns of emphasis. This thesis will also explore whether it is possible to identify key similarities between the language of conservative religious believers from different communities and key differences between the language of believers from the same communities. I will also be concerned throughout with the implications that my conclusions could have for the area of inter-faith dialogue. I will begin with a brief introduction to the characteristics of this type of language, before moving on to a discussion of my research questions.

The *Evangelical Times*, a well-known UK Evangelical Christian newspaper, publishes a special Christmas edition each year. This edition features a collection of biographical stories of people who have been converted to Christianity. On the front page of the 2010 Christmas edition is an article entitled “My Story of God’s Love” (Christian Text 1 in the collection of Christian testimonials I will examine in chapter three of this thesis). It is an account of a female convert who was brought up in a

religious family, but lacked a personal faith of her own, while also becoming involved in a relationship with a non-Christian. Below is an extract from the testimonial:

I began to ask questions like, "Is this really the life that God wants me to be living?" I also thought, "If I die tomorrow, where would I go?" I was scared that I might be on my way to hell, not heaven ... As I continued to pray for guidance, it became clear that this man wasn't in God's plan for me. A few days later, a Christian lady shared with me how she had married the wrong man. She knew he wasn't the one, even on her wedding day! It scared me – what if I was to do the same? She then shared with me how God had changed her life. She told me the good news: Jesus died on the cross for every wrong thing we've ever done and will do. He took the punishment that should be ours. If we believe in him, then we are forgiven and saved from hell. In that moment the penny dropped – Jesus died "for me"! All the times I'd gone my own way and messed up, he died for all of it. He died for the shame I was feeling and the guilt over my sins. There was nothing I could do to make me right with God. I'm made right because of what Jesus Christ did for me. I prayed, accepting that I was a sinner. I asked Jesus to come into my life as Saviour and change it to how he wanted it to be. After this prayer I had deep peace. I knew I had just done something life-changing. Now God was "number one" in my life and everything else was clear ... Years on, God has blessed me so much. I am married to a Christian man and know he is the right man, because I asked God at the start! My testimony is a story of love – God's love. He is the only one who can save you, love you and lead you in life. People let you down, but God never does. Becoming a Christian isn't by walking through a church door on Sundays or being "religious", it's by having a relationship with God. Come to God in prayer; ask for forgiveness; acknowledge that Jesus died in your place; and wait in faith and excitement to see where he takes you!

Such biographical stories or conversion experiences are also referred to as testimonies or testimonials, and usually talk about a transition from one way of viewing the world to another. The initial worldview is invariably evaluated as obviously incorrect and inferior, while the second worldview is invariably construed as clearly correct and superior. It is important to note that this type of religious discourse is usually not intended to actively promote conflict. However, it is inevitable that belief communities that view each other as absolutely incorrect or, as in this example, not "right with God", will co-exist with varying degrees of tension and actively promote separation from each other. The argument that religious belief can in *some* circumstances encourage various degrees of conflict or tension and even violence between individuals and communities is now generally accepted (Holden 2009; Little 2007; Marini 2007). This chance of conflict or tension may be increased in the case of strong, conservative believers who tend to define themselves through their sense of *exclusivity* (Holden 2009: 39-42). For example, conservative Christian or Muslim believers are in a situation where for them to be right requires all other worldviews to be absolutely wrong.

To put it another way: if they are on their way to heaven, then it follows that all those who disagree with their beliefs are, for example, on their way to “the conscious eternal torments of hell” (Driscoll 2007; cf. Mawdudi 1999). In the language of conflict resolution research, this inevitably brings them into a *competitive process* (cf. Deutsch 1973, Pearson d'Estrée 2003) with other worldviews. This process is further strengthened and entrenched through committed believers’ sense of a self-evidently correct and simplified view of reality, to the point where meaningful engagement with their worldviews outside of evangelisation, persuasion and debate is often problematic.

Conversations between conservative believers and non-believers often revolve around differences in the *things* believed. Indeed, the aim of many forms of dialogue is precisely the creation of “opportunities that allow people of faith to air their differences” (Holden 2009: 174). This focus on differences between the reified concepts associated with different belief systems can often foreground the competitive processes alluded to above. Conversations with committed, conservative believers can often degenerate into entrenched stalemates where belief is simply re-affirmed in different ways, and where both sides can often revert to talking *at* each other rather than engaging in a functional discussion. This entrenchment is seemingly exacerbated by the ability of conservative religious believers on all sides to interpret any relevant situation or aspect of their environment as clear support for their own worldview and clear evidence against competing worldviews.

Having briefly introduced some of the characteristics of conservative religious language, I now wish to outline in more detail how I aim to structure my analysis of this type of language. Before any type of analysis is possible, it is first necessary to explore and discuss the underlying presuppositions that will act as a frame for that analysis. I will therefore begin with an exploration of how and why conservative believers form worldviews that they perceive as absolute and rigid. This exploration will cover two distinct areas. First of all, I will focus on research relating to humans in general in terms of *what is involved in the process of categorising the environment around us*. I will then apply that

research to the question of *how that process can lead to and even encourage the perception of conservative religious believers that reality can be simplified into a set of clear and fixed absolutes that should be viewed as beyond doubt.*

My rationale for splitting this exploration into two distinct areas is that before I am able to explore the process of categorisation used by conservative religious believers, it is first necessary to explore what researchers have so far uncovered about the categorisation processes employed by people in general. It will then be possible to apply these findings to conservative religious believers, allowing me to examine in more detail their need to form simplified categories and their ability to interpret data from their environments as support for their worldviews. In order to effectively examine these issues, I will draw on a *Cognitive Linguistic* approach to exploring how people categorise the information obtained from their environments. I will introduce this approach in section 1.3 below, along with an overview of why this approach is particularly suitable for addressing these specific issues.

The above exploration contains the premise that conservative religious believers are typified by their need to perceive reality in simplified terms where one belief community is clearly right and all the others are very different and clearly wrong. However, if the focus were on the language of experience instead of the language of doctrinal creeds, would it be more difficult for those believers to talk about clear, distinctive differences between members of different conservative religious belief communities? This focus on perceived experience is based on the argument that in terms of doctrinal creeds, it may be possible for believers in the same belief community to attempt to foreground stark, rigid lines of static difference between “true” believers and non-believers.

However, when the focus shifts to the domain of experience, it may become more difficult to talk in terms of clear, fixed differences, and easier to talk in terms of variable, situated patterns of emphasis. It would be impossible for me to analyse a data set large enough for me to be able to make claims for all conservative religious language, but it is possible for me to analyse examples of a specific type of

language produced by two specific belief communities. I would then be able to investigate whether it would be more appropriate to talk about the differences in that type of language between those two communities in terms of situated patterns of emphasis rather than clear, rigid differences.

The two belief communities I will focus on will be the UK Protestant Evangelical Christian community represented by the *Evangelical Times* and the US conservative Sunni Muslim community represented by the website *islamfortoday.com*. The genre of language that will be the focus of my analysis will be the genre of the testimonial, and the type of language focused on will be movement and proximity metaphors. My research question will be:

Are there clear, fixed differences between Evangelical Times Christian testimonial authors and islamfortoday.com Muslim testimonial authors in terms of their use of movement and proximity metaphors to express their way of believing?

The results of this analysis will also naturally lead to one further question. If it could be demonstrated that there are no clear, fixed differences in this area, what could be the potential implications for the area of inter-faith dialogue? In order to effectively address the above research question, I will draw on an analysis of movement and proximity metaphors relating to a believer and a particular divine entity in two collections of religious testimonials, one from a Muslim website *islamfortoday.com* and one from a Christian magazine, the *Evangelical Times*. I will introduce these sources of data in section 1.4 below, along with my reasons for focusing on this type of language and a discussion of their relevance to the language of religious experience.

The previous research question revolves around the types of differences that can be detected between two different belief *communities*. This will inevitably entail looking at the various members of a belief community as a collective entity. In contrast, I also wish to focus on an examination of the differences and similarities between *individuals* from the *same* belief community, and also individuals from *different* belief communities. Is it possible that, in terms of perceived experience, some individuals appear closer to members of opposing belief communities than they do to

members of their own belief community? Again, a second related question will be whether the conclusions of this exploration could have useful implications for the area of inter-faith dialogue.

In order to focus in detail on specific individual differences, I will draw on an analysis of three videoed discussions between Muslims and Christians that were designed to focus the believers on the language of experience. These discussions will be designed to focus on some of the metaphorical language that was highlighted as particularly interesting in the analysis of the testimonials. My decision to use a structured, interactive format will also allow me to explore whether conservative religious believers show signs of convergence and empathy in their language. This second research question will therefore be:

Is it possible to identify signs of convergence and empathy in the language of Muslim and Christian conservative believers when they are encouraged to discuss their experience of being a believer during structured videoed discussions? Are there similarities in the use of proximity and movement metaphors in the language of individual conservative Christian and Muslim religious believers, and differences in the use of this type of language among conservative religious believers from the same belief community during the course of those videoed discussions?

I will introduce the structure of these discussions and my method of analysis in more detail in section 1.5 below.

Having very briefly introduced the research questions that this thesis will address, I am now able to discuss in more detail how I intend to address each of these questions. I will begin below with an introduction to the Cognitive Linguistic approach to categorisation and the notion of cognitive models.

1.3 Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive Models and their Relevance to this Thesis

Cognitive Linguistics is an approach to analysing language that draws on research within the field of Cognitive Psychology in order to investigate the conceptual underpinnings of the use of language. This involves taking seriously the premise that there is an intimate connection between conceptual frameworks that operate beneath the level of language and language itself (e.g. Evans and Green 2006: 6-9; Lakoff 1987: 70-74; Taylor 2002: 62-65). This thesis will include investigations into the possible structure of these conceptual frameworks, which can be defined as ever-changing *cognitive models* formed through the way the human mind continuously categorises and construes various aspects of reality (Evans 2009; Lakoff 1987). The underlying goal of Cognitive Linguistics is therefore to connect research into the cognitive basis of language with more generic cognitive processes in the brain, such as those related to how we conceptually organise and categorise incoming data (Geeraerts and Cuyckens 2007). I will argue that this approach invokes the premise that the way we view or construe the world is determined, up to a point, by a constant interaction between the particular language that we speak (Gumperz and Levinson 1996; Littlemore 2009), that the use of language in a dynamically unfolding discourse (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008: 162), the arrangement and structure of our cognitive frameworks (Evans 2009; Lakoff 1987) and the conceptual ramifications of having a physical body and a sensorimotor system (Gibbs 2005; Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 77). An important implication of this is the argument that will act as the central starting point of this thesis: there can be no pure, objective knowledge of the world disconnected from situated discourse, and the underpinning organisation of our cognitive frameworks at a particular time in conjunction with the fact of embodied existence (Al-Zahrani 2008: 52; Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 210-222; 1999: 106-107).

If there is indeed a relative aspect to all our knowledge of the world, it may be expected that we live our lives in states of perpetual uncertainty and ambiguity. However, this is often not the case. We often feel very sure about our worldviews, and often feel that other worldviews are clearly and

obviously incorrect (cf. Wisdom 1983). The testimonial and discussion data I have collected also suggests that certain belief systems are developed by belief communities who passionately disagree with the view that our knowledge of the world is, to some degree, relative. There is therefore a disconnection between the proposed notion that all knowledge is to some extent relative, and our everyday sense that our view of the world often appears to be clearly right and other opposing views clearly wrong. This thesis will argue that the best way to address this issue is to explore how and why humans categorise the world around them. Human beings all have the ability to categorise the things they encounter and in many respects our survival depends on how successfully that ability is used (Taylor 2003: xi), but the human process of categorisation is not a detached, objective process. It would be more accurate to describe it as a functional process that is intimately related to the fulfilment of specific and subjective goals (Goldberg 2006: 103). These processes have the potential to lead, as I believe my analysis of the data will show, to the production of very fixed views of the world and our purpose and goal in it (cf. Gibbs 2005: 92; Lakoff 1999: 60-61).

Another key point that needs to be made here is that, despite the inherent subjectivity of abstract worldviews, it is difficult to deny that such rigid worldviews can often have an important social function for certain individuals. A sense of certainty may, for example, help them to make important decisions under pressure, reduce anxiety relating to difficult aspects of life such as the prospect of one's own death or the death of loved ones, endure difficult conditions, and enhance their performance by being able to cultivate an unshakable belief in a clear purpose for their actions. However, this sense of certainty would not be as effective if the individual was aware that it was based on a cognitive sleight of hand. In order to maximise the perceived effectiveness of worldviews for some communities and individuals, there *must* be a clear *perception* that the categories they use are objectively correct and others are obviously wrong. However, the fact remains that reality is overwhelmingly complex and confusing and perpetually in a state of dynamic flux (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; Miller and Page 2007; Mitchell 2009). There must therefore be an inevitable tension between the shifting ambiguity of reality and the functional need to develop worldviews that

construe reality as static and unambiguous. The maintenance of these worldviews will therefore need to draw on powerful cognitive strategies – strategies that must have the potential to consolidate the *perception* that the true nature of our environment and our part in it is very clear and simple, although it is in fact infinitely complex and confusing.

A large amount of research has been carried out by Cognitive Linguists that is directly relevant to such cognitive strategies. Lakoff's (1987: 68) notion of *Idealised Cognitive Models* or ICMs proposes that the human mind makes use of *image schemas*, *propositions*, *metonymy* and *metaphor* in order to filter, categorise and construe the data we receive from our environments.

Image schemas represent deeply embedded, highly abstract frameworks that cause humans to view reality in a particular way. One such proposed schema that appears to be of particular relevance to religious discourse is the *source-path-goal* schema. The premise underpinning the source-path-goal schema is the notion that we are constrained to view many entities and events as coming from, being, and going somewhere (Gibbs 2005: 91-93; Lakoff 1987: 275; Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 32-24; Semino 2008: 7; Turner 1996: 18). This abstract structuring of our minds in terms of origins, paths and destinations could well be viewed as one of the key explanatory factors involved in the need for communities to cultivate absolute beliefs regarding creation narratives and eternal destinations such as heaven and hell.

Propositions include the categorisation of reality according to specifications that can often be represented as statements, such as defining a segment of time as a week consisting of seven days (ibid.). This particular example of a seven-day week is of course viewed by most as an essentially arbitrary specification imposed upon reality. However, it can also often be viewed by some religious individuals or communities, such as Evangelical Christians for example, as a divinely appointed absolute that encodes crucial, objective knowledge about the Universe in the form of a "basic principle of life" (Eveson 2001: 54-56).

Metonymy is another element of Lakoff's notion of cognitive models that is crucial in any exploration of how we categorise reality. It can be defined as expanding a particular part of something so that it represents the whole of that thing – referred to as *source-in-target* metonymy or “domain expansion” – or representing something by reducing it down to one of its parts – referred to as *target-in-source* metonymy or “domain reduction” (Ruiz de Mendoza and Campo 2002: 58-59; Ruiz de Mendoza and Hernández 2001: 5; Ruiz de Mendoza and Sáenz 2003: 7; Ruiz de Mendoza and Velasco 2002: 7). One example of such domain reduction can be seen in the way Evangelical Christians talk about the importance of saving *souls*. In this example they are using one perceived aspect of a human being, this notion of a soul, to represent the human being as a whole. Conservative religious discourse is filled with vocabulary that represents individuals and communities by one perceived aspect of their behaviour or status, for example: *sinners, adulterers, non-believers, true believers, disciples of Satan, followers of Christ, souls, the lost*, etc. The inevitable result of such metonymic strategies is that highly complex entities and situations can often be effortlessly reduced to and treated as very simple, often binary, stereotyped constructs.

Perhaps the most important element in terms of this thesis is metaphor, which involves drawing on a more basic, concrete domain to describe a more elusive and abstract domain (Charteris-Black 2004: 15, 21; Deignan, Littlemore and Semino 2013; Gibbs 2005: 90-96; Pragglejaz Group 2007: 3; Steen 2007: 88-89). One very common example of this is “I see what you mean” in place of “I understand what you mean”, where the domain of *seeing* is being used to say something related to the domain of *knowing*. In such cases, the implicit target domain is often placed in capitals or inverted commas by conceptual metaphor researchers, for example KNOWING IS SEEING or “Knowing is seeing” (Gibbs 2011a: 531). This use of basic domains helps the human mind to construe the complex and abstract as something more simple, obvious and self-evident, so that “an abstract notion is conceived as if it had a physical reality” (Charteris-Black 2004: 15), or as Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 95) put it, the use of metaphor “allows us to understand one aspect of the concept in terms of a more clearly delineated concept”. Deignan (2005: 23-24; 2010: 46-47) takes it further with the argument that

metaphor does not just neutrally represent an abstract domain in simpler terms, but inherently produces “over-simplification”, “distortion” and the concealing of certain characteristics from that domain. Cognitive Linguistic researchers and those researchers who work closely with them have focused a great deal of attention on groups of metaphors that will be of particular importance to this thesis. These include viewing life as a journey (e.g. Charteris-Black 2004: 93-95; Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 60-63; Lakoff and Turner 1989: 9-10; Ritchie 2008; Semino 2008: 6-7,75), as well as the spatial representation of concepts (e.g. Lakoff 1987: 283; Zlatev 2007: 318-343; Evans and Green 2006: 68-79).

I have so far focused on introducing those aspects of cognitive models that explain how conservative religious believers develop and maintain their sense of certainty in a simplified view of reality. However, there are other aspects of cognitive models that inevitably exist in tension with the development and maintenance of this static, clear-cut perception of the world. I will therefore primarily focus on these aspects when I come to consider how the field of inter-faith dialogue could benefit from a consideration of cognitive models. The first of these is the notion of *episodic memory*. This way of encoding memories is based on research in Cognitive Psychology that posits that humans encode and store information as both things and situations (Evans 2009; Ryan, Hoscheidt and Nadel 2008; Tulving 1985). The significance of this in terms of this thesis is that doctrines are often *construed* and expressed as static things or entities, such as the doctrine of the unity of God in Islam and the competing doctrine of the Trinity in most forms of Christianity, feeding the conservative religious perception that reality can be carved up into simplified binary categories. I am not arguing here that doctrines are in reality static entities. They can easily be viewed as very complex, fluid and highly abstract ideas that develop and adapt over time and varying contexts. However, the point I am making here is that doctrines are often *perceived* by conservative religious believers to be objective, static, simplistic entities that a true believer holds to and a perceived non-believer does not. They are often used as a very strong either-or membership marker, and often become

construed as concrete entities or things that a believer must *hold to, hold fast to, grasp* or *not turn away from* or *reject* (see for example 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 13, King James Version).

In contrast to this perception of doctrines as static things, episodic situations are memories that are encoded or remembered as a connected series of images with multiple elements viewed from an often shifting perspective. To put it simply, this requires episodic memories to be encoded with “when, where and how those events were encountered” (Katz and Taylor 2008: 151). This inherent dynamic complexity makes them much more difficult to view in static, simplified terms, as well as being far harder for a belief community to monitor and control. My intention to focus on language related to the expression of experience is therefore essentially another way of saying that my intention is to focus on episodic language relating to an individual’s dynamic interaction with his or her way of believing. Another phrase that I will use to encompass the area of the language of experience that I am interested in is *action and relationship language*. This phrase refers to any language that relates to the believer acting on something or being acted upon, as well as language that is used to describe the perceived relationship between the believer and the object of his or her belief.

This desire to focus primarily on the language of experience is also influenced by the growing importance of applying the findings of *Complex Systems Theory* to the study of language (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008). The notion behind this theory is that processes related to discourse and the way we think and feel should not be viewed in static or linear terms. They should instead be viewed as constantly evolving, dynamic, self-organising processes that influence and are influenced by an innumerable array of contextual variables (Cameron 2010c). Such processes may achieve various patterns of temporary stability in the form of patterned movement between two states or restricted local movement within a particular state (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008). However, the landscape through which this movement takes place is always in a state of flux, and therefore some form of change is inevitable and unavoidable. If my intention is to map such patterns and track

these shifts, I need to avoid the language of theoretical doctrine that appears to minimise and in some sense cover up the fact of dynamic flux. Instead, I need to focus on the language of personal experience because such language must always be seeking to dynamically connect ever-changing situations and entities from a perspective that is always in the process of some form of development.

Having briefly introduced some of the key ideas relating to the Cognitive Linguistic approach, I am now able to proceed to an introduction of the texts that will provide the basis for my exploration of the second research question. My analysis of these texts will focus on their use of particular metaphors, which will involve a further expansion in the sections to come of the brief discussion above of the relevance of metaphor to an analysis of religious discourse. I will therefore first begin by introducing the texts in which the metaphors are located – a collection of testimonials from *islamfortoday.com* and the *Evangelical Times* - as well as issues related to the term *conservative religious believer*.

1.4 An Introduction to the Issues Related to Movement and Proximity Metaphors in Religious Testimonials

This section relates to the second research question: Are there clear, fixed differences between Evangelical Times Christian testimonial authors and islamfortoday.com Muslim testimonial authors in terms of their use of movement and proximity metaphors to express their way of believing?

One of the key methods available to researchers for analysing the nature of an individual's experience is of course to focus on what that individual says about their experience. This requires selecting authentic texts that are characterised by expressions of experience rather than more theoretical language about their beliefs. One such type of text that fits this criterion is the religious testimonial, which can be viewed as a distinctive sub-genre in that it generally exhibits a predictable framework. Such testimonials usually involve three principal parts: a selective account of the

author's life story before their transition to a new belief system, an account of the transition itself, and a selective account of the author's life story after the transition. There may be extensive overlap between the first and the second parts, as well as between the second and third parts, but invariably the first part involves a negative construal of the author's life, while the third part involves an idealised, positive construal. The element of religious testimonials that makes them especially suitable for any analysis of the language of experience, and therefore the expression of episodic memories, is of course the central importance of the notion of personal story.

This thesis therefore focuses on an analysis of collections of Muslim and Christian testimonials, and more specifically a collection of testimonials from the Muslim website *islamfortoday.com* and the Protestant Evangelical magazine, the *Evangelical Times*. Both the *islamfortoday.com* website and the *Evangelical Times* magazine represent specific groups within Islam and Christianity. The *islamfortoday.com* website is an English language, US-based resource for conservative Sunni Muslims that is keen to promote an inclusive approach to Islam that construes Shia Muslims as having only minor disagreements with Sunni Muslims. It also explicitly attempts to separate itself from views that could be related to religious extremism. The *Evangelical Times* is a conservative, UK-based magazine for Protestant Evangelical Christians that is principally aimed at those independent churches that have separated themselves from more liberal, ecumenical groups.

For the purposes of this thesis, I define a Sunni Muslim as an individual who operates with an absolute belief that the Qur'an is the word of God, and also demonstrates a mainstream approach and commitment to the five pillars of Islam: the profession of faith, praying at specified times, the giving of alms, pilgrimage and fasting. I define a Protestant Evangelical Christian as an individual who operates with an absolute belief that the Bible is the word of God, and also believes that their salvation is not achieved through works, but through faith in the death of Christ on the cross (Flinn 1999). These definitions are not controversial, although my use of the term *conservative* may provoke some disagreement. Some Muslim believers may argue that there is no cohesive group of

Muslims that do *not* have an absolute belief that the Qur'an is the word of God, so in a sense all Muslim belief communities must be by definition conservative, rendering the term redundant. My answer to this is that there are many Muslims who interpret the Qur'an in a way that more conservative Muslims would strongly disagree with. For example, many Turkish Muslims will drink alcohol and many Turkish women do not feel that it is necessary for them to cover their head in public. In addition to this, many Muslims put forward the argument that some of the prescriptions in the Qur'an may have been appropriate for the time they were written in, but should not be rigidly applied today. It is correct that the Muslims who hold to this more progressive approach to the Qur'an have not formed themselves into cohesive organisations in the same way that liberal Christians have done, but they still exist in sizeable numbers in various parts of the world. When I therefore use the term conservative to refer to either Muslims or Christians, I am referring to an individual or a group that is committed to the belief that their sacred text is not only the word of God in an unqualified sense, but is also absolutely applicable to all places and all times.

Another point that needs to be highlighted is that my above identification of specific groups within Islam and Christianity is intended to reinforce the view that it is impossible to disentangle the expression of a process of belief from a very specific time, setting and cultural context, and the influence of a specific function, text format, size and genre (cf. Deignan, Littlemore and Semino 2013; Steen 2007: 352-353). It must therefore always be borne in mind that there are other discourse communities within these religions, and that the members of these various communities would produce language with very different patterns of emphasis. For example, I would fully expect mainstream Sunni Muslims to express their perceived experience of interacting with God in a very different way from a Sufi mystic, and I would expect a charismatic Christian who believes in all the gifts of the Spirit to express their perceived experience in a very different way from a reformed Baptist.

Having introduced the type of texts that I intend to focus on, I am now able to proceed to an introduction of the type of language that might help me to address my second research question. I have already made it clear that I wish to focus on the language of experience and not the language of theoretical doctrine, but these two categories are very broad and inevitably involve some degree of overlap. In order to avoid the obvious pitfalls of analysing a text by forcing all of its language into either an experiential or theoretical box, I will instead focus on types of language that often characterise aspects of the language of personal experience, while also exhibiting schematic presuppositions that are key to many religious worldviews. The types of language that I have chosen to focus on are metaphors relating to movement and proximity to a divine entity.

My observation that these types of metaphor are often at the heart of the experiential language of believers can be demonstrated by returning to the testimonial extract I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In that extract, the convert is often concerned with where she will go when she dies, “If I die tomorrow, where would I go? ... I was scared I might be on my way to hell, not heaven”. The reason she is afraid that she might be on her way to hell is because of the times “I had gone my own way and messed up” instead of following God. The key theme of movement here can be related back to my discussion of the source-path-goal schema in the section above. It appears to be crucial for many Christian and Muslim conservative religious believers to instantiate the abstract schematic notion that they must have come from somewhere and be going somewhere through the use of metaphor. In the two collections of testimonials that I will examine in this thesis, at least one movement metaphor was present in every testimonial, and often clusters of such metaphors were present. It therefore appears to be very difficult for many religious believers to talk about their experience of becoming and being a believer, as well as their perceived interaction with a particular divine entity, without drawing on movement metaphors. I justify this decision to focus on movement and proximity metaphors in even more detail in section 3.1.

Another important area of investigation relates to the exploration of different types of movement metaphors. In the above example, “I had gone my way”, the believer or non-believer is positioned as the agent in the process of their own movement, but in other examples someone or something other than the believer is the agent in the process of the believer’s (or non-believer’s) movement. The testimonial under consideration contains two examples of this type of movement: the call to the reader to allow Jesus to “lead you in life” and the statement encouraging the reader to trust in Jesus and wait and see “where he takes you”. Yet another type of movement metaphor occurs when she asks Jesus to “come into” her life. This type does not relate to the movement of the believer, but to the movement of a divine entity in relation to the believer. This last example also contains the preposition *into*, which denotes a particular type of proximity – in this case better characterised as a type of unity – between the believer and a divine entity.

It is clear from the above examples that movement and divine entity proximity metaphors can often be used to express certain aspects of a conservative religious believer’s perceived experience. They are also of interest to this thesis because of their possible relationship with a believer’s sense of certainty. In the extract under consideration, it is important to note that, according to her perceived experience, “everything else became clear” once Jesus had “come into” her life. Human beings do not always view themselves as agents of their own worldview shifts, and within religious discourse it is common for some type of spiritual force or divine entity to be perceived as the agent of persuasion and subsequent certainty. It is also often the case that the use of movement and divine entity proximity metaphors, and especially those that depict the believer as being acted upon, make no sense without the user’s assumption that a divine entity with very specific characteristics and capabilities exists.

When the believer in the testimonial extract I alluded to at the beginning of this introduction tells the reader “wait ... and see where he takes you”, she has moved far beyond any theoretical discussion about whether *he* exists, or what gender *he* is, or whether *he* is theoretically capable of moving

someone to another existential location. The metaphorical use of *take* here supersedes all of these theoretical issues and simply presents an acting, male divine agent as a seemingly concrete, self-evident reality. Placing the divine entity in the subject position achieves this by first of all identifying him as the primary topic or focus of the clause (cf. Goldberg 2006: 131, 138; Langacker 2008: 370). This also causes the divine entity to be perceived as “an implicit point of reference” (Langacker 2008: 78), or to put it another way, an assumed perspective or deictic centre through which the addressee is invited or even coerced, to some extent, to process the clause (cf. Gavins 2007: 46; Segal 1995: 15; Zubin 1995). Patterns of agency or transitivity, or, to put it in even simpler terms, a focus on patterns of who does what to whom (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), will therefore be a key part of my analysis of the target metaphors.

What I am outlining here is an almost contradictory tension that will persist throughout this thesis. On the one hand, I will argue that perceived experience rather than primarily theoretical doctrinal beliefs is what lies at the heart of a committed conservative religious believer’s sense of absolute certainty. On the other hand, I will also argue that an analysis of perceived experiences can be useful in demonstrating that it is difficult to talk in terms of clear, fixed differences between members of different belief communities. What this means is that it may be possible to draw on the variability and relativity of perceived experiences in order to critically engage with the absolute views of the world that are characteristic of conservative religious believers.

When it comes to analysing occurrences of metaphorical language related to movement and divine entity proximity in the texts, I will employ the Pragglejaz Group’s (2007) *Metaphor Identification Procedure* (MIP). This procedure works with a definition of metaphor as an instance of a lexical unit that has a more basic meaning (in the sense of being more “concrete”, “precise”, “historically older” and perhaps “related to bodily actions”) than the one encountered in the text (Pragglejaz 2007: 3). There are of course numerous technical challenges relating to the precise definition, identification and quantitative analysis of the types of metaphors under consideration, but any detailed

exploration of these challenges is beyond the scope of this initial introduction and will be dealt with in detail in chapter three below. However, there is one issue that should be discussed from the outset. It must be recognised from the beginning that metaphor identification involves a subjective dimension. What a metaphor researcher may identify as a metaphor is not necessarily what the user would identify as a metaphor. A case in point is the references to *going* to heaven in the above extract. On the one hand, it is possible to argue that the movement described here is not the more concrete physical movement from one geographical location to another that we could identify as the basic meaning associated with the notion of going somewhere. However, on the other hand, a committed Christian may argue that this physical realm will one day pass away, and that the spiritual realm that encompasses heaven and hell will endure for eternity. It would therefore be possible, according to one interpretation of the Christian worldview, to view movement towards heaven or hell as something that is even more basic than conventional physical movement. However, it is impossible to proceed with an analysis without precise definitions, so this thesis will produce and follow strict criteria for identifying and quantifying the target metaphors, while at the same time acknowledging the fact that worldviews will inevitably cause participants and researchers to classify language in different ways.

Another issue that also needs to be flagged from the beginning is my avoidance of capital letters that are often used by some more traditional Cognitive Linguists to denote *conceptual metaphors*. This term was first popularised by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) development of *conceptual metaphor theory*. As I mentioned above in section 1.2, they argued that metaphors were essentially used to say something about one domain, referred to as the *target domain*, by referring to an aspect from another domain, referred to as the *source domain*. So, for example, the phrase "go my own way" in the extract considered above makes use of a source domain that encapsulates the user choosing a specific direction and physically moving along a path in that direction. This source domain is then used to say something about the target domain of making your own choices and living life according to your own desires, as opposed to deferring to a particular community's understanding of God's will

and living life according to the stipulations of a specific interpretation of the Bible. Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 1999) would view this type of metaphor as an instantiation of a conceptual metaphor related to viewing life as a journey, which they represent in capital letters as LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The capital letters denote the proposed existence of a conceptual metaphor that underpins language and has been produced through the interaction between the mind, the body, the sensorimotor system and the external environment (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 45-59). Metaphors in speech, such as the example above, are therefore viewed as instantiations of conceptual metaphors in the mind.

However, more recently, there has been a trend within the study of metaphor towards a greater emphasis on the socio-cultural and discourse based dimensions of metaphor as opposed to the conceptual underpinnings. This has meant a shift away from Lakoff's emphasis on a primarily concept-based approach – referred to by some researchers as a “systems perspective” – towards an emphasis on metaphor and “language in use” (Cameron 1999: 4) – referred to by some as a “use perspective” (Müller 2008: 18,30-31) or an adoption of a “usage based” approach (Evans 2009). Researchers are now focusing their attention more on “discourse metaphors” (Zinken et al 2008; Musolff and Zinken 2009) and influence from complex systems theory (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008) has produced a move away from the emphasis on the conceptual and the static and fixed X is Y framework. Instead, the emphasis has shifted towards a fluctuating, variable and interconnected view of the appearances of metaphor in different types of discourse (Deignan, Littlemore and Semino 2013) and at different points in that discourse (Cameron et al 2009; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; Steen 1999: 94-95). Metaphor is now being seen as something more socially plastic, changeable and reliant on the specific content of what was said before during the constant flow of discourse rather than simply being the static, stable product of the unconscious embodied cognitive systems of a homogenous group of language users (Müller 2008: 13-14; Cameron et al 2009: 64-68; Cameron 2010c: 79). This means that the processing of individual metaphors is no longer viewed as a discrete process where, for example, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is activated by a relevant word or phrase and then immediately switched off again. Instead, the strength and type of

activation of a conceptual metaphor is influenced by the strength and type of conceptual metaphor activation that has occurred in the discourse leading up to that example, “Different metaphoric information may be salient given the immediate past history of discourse participants that interacts in complex, dynamic ways to create highly context-specific interpretations of metaphoric meaning” (Gibbs and Santa Cruz 2012: 309).

Throughout this thesis I will embrace a usage based perspective while remaining sympathetic to some of the key points relevant to a concept-based approach to metaphor analysis. I will therefore argue that it is reasonable to maintain that patterns of metaphor that are repeated over and over again by members of a particular belief community are probably very important to and deeply embedded within the conceptual frameworks of the users. However, I would also want to argue that the precise nature of these embedded concepts within a user’s cognitive framework may be very difficult to establish. In addition to this, I believe it is important to take seriously the key point of complex systems theory that concepts, as well as language, are in a constant state of flux. When conceptual metaphors such as viewing life as being on a journey are placed in capitals and represented as an interaction between two nouns, there appears to be a suggestion of rigidity and objectivity. This suggestion will often be the precise opposite of the point that a discourse-based approach would wish to make about the nature of metaphor. I will therefore avoid this X is Y construal of metaphors in my own analysis, despite the fact that I am in strong agreement with the notion of target and source domains and the argument that metaphor usage can provide key insights into the conceptual framework of conservative religious believers.

One final area that I will discuss in relation to both the second and third research question is the controversial area of intentional or deliberate metaphor usage. Any consideration of metaphor has to engage to some degree with this contemporary debate of whether certain metaphors are consciously processed by both the user and the addressee or whether they have become so conventionalised as to be used with very little or no activation of the source domain, or whether they

are used unconsciously but still with full source domain activation, or finally whether they are activated in some contexts but not in others (cf. Bowdle and Gentner 2005; Müller 2008; Steen 2007: 47-57; Cameron 1999: 114; Shen and Balaban 1999). For example it could be argued that when I say there is “no way” that I will do something, it is likely that this usage has become so conventionalised that the source domain of a material “way” is not at all activated. However, if I say, as in the above extract, “I had gone my own way”, does it become more possible that a path schema is being activated? It is also possible that such a phrase may generally not be processed as a metaphor by most, but maybe in certain contexts by certain individuals (cf. Müller 2008: 198). Steen refers to this situation as the “paradox of metaphor”, in that, despite the fact that we define metaphor as using one domain to say something about another domain, he argues that conventionalised metaphorical language does not involve cross-domain activation unless it is being used deliberately,

Conventional metaphors can be revitalized as metaphorical, and this is when they reveal their metaphorical potential in full force again. When they are revitalized, they are deliberately used as genuine and active cross-domain mappings again, and are also presumably processed by comparison again ... Yet, it is also the ground for saying that these deliberately revitalizing uses are exceptional in that they exploit resuscitated cross-domain mappings in thinking: They are not necessarily representative of how most metaphors may work in discourse processes, for these may still simply be processed by lexical disambiguation without further deep conceptual processing.

(Steen 2011: 588-589; cf. 2008)

Steen (2008: 15) closely relates his arguments to Glucksberg’s view that conventionalised metaphors such as saying that lawyers are sharks are processed by the brain as examples of class-inclusion and not cross-domain mappings, or, to put it another way, categorisation and not comparison. What Glucksberg (2008) means by this is that the idea that *lawyers are sharks* has been encountered enough times for the superordinate category of sharks (or something similar to this) to be expanded to include non-literal examples of sharks that share particular features with their literal counterparts. According to Glucksberg and Steen, this explains why conventionalised metaphors that are not consciously processed by the brain do not require any process of cross-domain mapping, in contrast to deliberate or novel usages that do.

This issue may at first appear to be relatively innocuous, but it is in fact creating a split in the field of metaphor study within Cognitive Linguistics. While researchers such as Steen are putting forward the argument that the rhetorical, persuasive and perspective changing power of metaphor lies in its deliberate or conscious use of cross-domain mappings, researchers such as Lakoff, Johnson and Gibbs have continued to maintain that the ideological power of metaphor resides precisely in its location beyond conscious awareness (Müller 2008: 14; Steen 2008: 231, Lakoff and Turner 1989: 129; Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 12-15; Gibbs 2005: 2). This opposing position is based on evidence drawn from numerous psycholinguistic experiments related to cross-domain mapping activation during the processing of conventional metaphors, as well as a fuller appreciation of “the complexity of people’s fast, unconscious actions when using and understanding metaphorical language” (Gibbs 2011b: 578). Another relevant issue relates to the problem of attaching too much significance to the notion of intentionality (cf. Deignan, Littlemore and Semino 2013). A great deal of recent research in the area of neuroscience has focused on the fact that even when we are convinced that we are consciously deciding to do something, our brain already appears to have been activated several seconds before (Gibbs 2005). This adds a whole new level of complexity to the notion of intentionality by suggesting that our minds are active at an unconscious level even when we think that all our actions are being consciously and deliberately controlled.

Throughout this thesis I will therefore work with the assumption that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to establish when metaphor usage is deliberate and conscious. I will also follow Gibbs’ view below that the notion of conscious processing is not necessary to account for metaphor usage,

... a dynamical view of metaphor suggests how the creation of metaphorical language need not be deliberate or conscious, yet, again, arise from the interaction of a system’s components. Speakers can just decide to communicate their recent thought processes, and the environmental constraints take care of the fine-grained details of how these intentions are manifested in real-world behavior (i.e., saying something that may be seen as metaphorical, literal, or ironic; or also making a relevant gesture, head nod, body posture, etc.).

(Gibbs 2011a: 554-555)

This position also includes the argument that even highly conventional, unconscious uses of metaphor can involve some level of cross-domain mapping. However, in agreement with Steen, I will accept that conservative religious believers do, at times, use metaphors to “persuade others to change their perspective” (Steen 2008: 222), although I would argue that linguistic data alone does not permit certainty as to whether the process is completely conscious or unconscious. In addition, even though I do not see the presence of clusters of metaphor as necessarily a marker of deliberate usage, I do agree that such clustering should highlight the increased importance of the cross-domain mapping for the individual user’s cognitive models.

Having introduced a number of issues relating to the text type of conservative Muslim and Christian testimonials and the nature and identification of movement and divine entity proximity metaphors, I will now turn my attention to the third research question. This will involve a change in focus from looking for levels of difference between two collections of texts from different belief communities. Instead, it will focus on levels of difference between the language of individuals from the same belief community and levels of similarity between the language of individuals from different belief communities.

1.5 An Introduction to the Issues Related to Analysing Videoed Discussions between Muslims and Christians

This section relates to the third research question: Is it possible to identify signs of convergence and empathy in the language of Muslim and Christian conservative believers when they are encouraged to discuss their experience of being a believer during structured videoed discussions? Are there similarities in the use of proximity and movement metaphors in the language of individual conservative Christian and Muslim religious believers, and differences in the use of this type of language among conservative religious believers from the same belief community during the course of those videoed discussions?

There are several key limitations to the analysis proposed in the previous section of movement and divine entity proximity metaphors in religious testimonials that make it unsuitable for addressing this third research question. This section will therefore introduce the need for a different kind of analysis by examining those key limitations and putting forward proposals relating to how they could be addressed. I will then move on to a brief discussion of the key issues related to the structuring of videoed discussions between Muslims and Christians.

The principal limitation of the analysis of testimonials is that it is primarily concerned with the level of difference between two collections of texts. This approach is naturally ideal for forming broad opinions about differences between two belief communities, but this must be achieved by backgrounding isolated occurrences of both atypical similarity and difference in individual texts. What is therefore required in order to address the third research question is an approach that views each text as initially an independent entity and not as something that is pre-defined as part of one collection of texts but not part of another collection. It is then possible to look for similarities and differences between that text and any other text without preconceived constraints imposed by membership of a particular collection. However, the analysis of testimonials will also still play a valuable role. It will be useful to compare individual texts to general patterns derived from those collections of texts in order to establish divergences from those general patterns, as well as individual similarities and differences. The proposed analysis of collections of testimonials will therefore act as a valuable precursor to the type of analysis that will be proposed in this section.

A second limitation is that an analysis of testimonials of course restricts itself to one very specific and very distinctive genre. Researchers in genre analysis maintain that people represent and construe their ideas about their environments in different ways depending on the genre they use (Deignan, Littlemore and Semino 2013). It is hardly controversial to observe that a conservative religious believer will use different language as well as a different perspective when preaching a sermon compared to engaging in a debate with someone from another belief community. Any attempt

therefore to say anything about the way that a conservative religious believer experiences his or her religion would have to at least engage with the dynamics and unique aspects of two very different genres in order to begin to form a rounded view. It is therefore important that the third research question is addressed by focusing on a genre that is different from the genre of testimonials, while retaining the focus on an individual's language of experience.

A final limitation is that an analysis of testimonials restricts itself to the usage of language within the context of a planned, written text. The extensive array of differences between the structure and type of language in planned, written texts compared to unplanned, spoken discourse has been researched in depth by a large number of applied linguistic researchers (for example, Cameron 2001; Drew and Curl 2008; Eggins and Slade 1997 and Levinson 1983). Therefore, as above, any attempt to say anything about the way a believer experiences his or her religion should engage with both unplanned, spoken interaction, as well as carefully planned, written texts. When we focus on unplanned, spoken interaction we are immediately faced with issues such as turn taking, preferred and dispreferred responses, maintaining face and politeness strategies, and the possibility of discourse convergence, language appropriation and unexpected emergent uses of words, phrases and metaphors (Cameron 2010a; Paltridge 2006; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008).

These issues also relate to the key notion of empathy. Cameron (2010a) defines empathy within the context of reconciliation discourse as a process of *rehumanization* that can take place after communities or individuals have *dehumanized* each other as a result of conflict. She also views it as a process of "sympathy or emotional attunement with others", as well as one which "requires that people seek to understand the other person's perspective on the world" (Cameron 2010a: 6). A crucial element to empathy is of course the language that discourse participants initially use, and, perhaps more importantly, how they respond to and make use of the language of the other. An example of how language can be used to dehumanize the other can be seen in the metonymic cognitive strategies I briefly introduced in the section above. One illustration of this is the reference

to people who are not born-again Christians as, for example, *souls in need of salvation*. This has the possible effect of reducing a person with a complex personality and a rich network of personal stories to an impersonal, sexless thing that either is or is not *saved*.

There is another key consideration here that is closely connected to both the second and third research question. It involves the connection between community sanctioned doctrine and personal experience in the construction of the conservative believer's perceived sense of the nature of a divine entity. The standard way of describing this connection is that there is a cyclical relationship between these three elements, so that doctrine informs perceived experience and vice versa, with both doctrine and experience informing how a believer perceives the divine entity their beliefs centre around (cf. Tremlin 2005). However, if there are a surprising number of individual differences in experience, but relatively few in terms of doctrine, it would follow that there is often some degree of disconnection between a conservative religious believer's acceptance of community sanctioned doctrines and their own perceived experience of being a Christian or Muslim. In addition, if it is found that there is in some cases a level of disconnection, what might the implications be for the area of inter-faith dialogue? One important point here is that conservative religious belief invariably precludes the possibility that people from other competing belief communities can have a true experience of God. However, it may be possible that there is sometimes a disconnection from this community sanctioned belief and the personal experience of individual believers. If this is indeed the case, when two conservative religious believers are encouraged to talk to each other about their own experiences and the experiences of the other, will we see signs of empathy or just systematic attempts to deny the validity of the other's experience? Is it also possible that we will see unexpected signs of similarity in their perceived experience, or just an attempt to express their own experiences in ways that construe them as absolutely unique? My insistence on focusing on each participant as an individual will be particularly suitable for addressing these key issues that relate to the third research question. These interactions between conservative religious believers that appear

to either cultivate or block empathy will also be important to this thesis in terms of identifying possible applications to inter-faith dialogue.

I will therefore address this third research question by focusing on the language of individuals rather than the language of a group of individuals that are viewed as a collective entity. I will also focus on a genre other than that of testimonials, while retaining my focus on the language of experience, and will also focus on unplanned, spoken interaction instead of carefully planned, written texts. With these three key points in mind, I will analyse three videoed discussions between conservative Muslims and Christians. These discussions will produce three pieces of discourse which I will analyse in two parts. The first part will focus on an analysis of the language of each participant, addressing the issue of similarities and differences in the way they use movement and divine entity proximity metaphors. The second part will address the issue of how similarity and difference may be increased or decreased during the process of discourse. It will therefore focus on instances of metaphor appropriation and the use of personal stories that are relevant to the other. These instances will be explored in terms of whether they could be viewed as helping to cultivate empathy and decrease distance and difference, or whether they could be viewed as blocking empathy and increasing distance and a sense of difference.

Having introduced many of the key issues that will be crucial in addressing the above three research questions, I am now able to move on to a brief outline of the proceeding chapters.

1.6 An Overview of the Thesis

My aim so far has been to briefly introduce the issues related to the research questions that this thesis will revolve around. This has included an introduction to the areas of cognitive models, the nature and identification of metaphor, as well as issues related to the nature of dynamically

unfolding discourse and the notion of empathy. These notions will be examined in far more detail in the following chapters.

In chapter two, I will provide a detailed overview of Lakoff's theory of *idealised cognitive models* or ICMs. This will include an exploration of how his ideas have recently been applied, not just to isolated subject areas like the seven-day week, but to entire theoretical frameworks. I will then explicitly apply elements of his ideas to the domain of conservative religious believers and the notion of absolute certainty. This will lead to a consideration of Evans' LCCM theory, which updates Lakoff's approach to cognitive models by incorporating a usage-based perspective, along with the incorporation of other contributions related to the field of Cognitive Linguistics that include the notions of episodic and semantic memory. After this exploration of cognitive models, I will conclude the chapter by grounding the Cognitive Linguistic approach to how conservative religious believers may categorise their environments within a wider philosophical context. I will therefore briefly explore the contributions of scholars such as Wittgenstein, Wisdom and Mehan to the area of how we organise our knowledge, and examine how these contributions share crucial points of agreement and some key points of disagreement with the Cognitive Linguistic approach. Throughout this chapter I will be concerned with how my investigation of cognitive models explains why conservative religious believers perceive aspects of their environment in simplified, rigid terms. At the same time, this chapter will also be concerned with the implications for conservative religious belief of the fact that our cognitive models are in a state constant flux.

In chapter three, I will begin with an introduction of the Muslim and Christian testimonials that will provide the focus of my analysis. This will involve an outline of their underpinning beliefs and functions. I will then proceed to an introduction of the target metaphors: metaphors related to movement and divine entity proximity. This will be followed with an exploration of my chosen methodology for identifying metaphor in text, along with a discussion of the presuppositions of those target metaphors with regard to a sense of certainty. I will then discuss the key differences between

the usage and frequency of those metaphors in the two collections of texts and relate the results to the possibility of varying patterns of perceptions about the reality of their beliefs. I will conclude by briefly exploring the implications of being unable to identify clear, fixed differences between the uses of movement and divine entity proximity metaphors in the two collections of texts. This will also involve a discussion of the advantages of being aware of the particular type of experiential language to focus on during attempts at meaningful engagement with committed conservative believers.

The focus of chapter four will be my analysis of videoed discussions between Muslims and Christians. I will begin by discussing the importance of focusing on differences and similarities between the language of individuals, rather than focusing on collective patterns of similarity and difference between two collections of texts. I will then proceed to an exploration of some of the key issues relating to conversation analysis and the study of empathy. This will be followed by an outline of the design of the discussions, including the pre-discussion activities that the participants were asked to complete, and the issues related to the metaphorical language they were asked to focus on. I will then move on to a two-part analysis of the discussions. The first part will focus on the similarities and differences in how each participant made use of particular movement and divine entity proximity metaphors. The second part of the analysis will focus on the interactive aspects of the discourse and how the participants appropriated the language of the other participants and made use of personal stories that were related to the addressee. The findings of this analysis will then be discussed within the context of the relatively new field of *cognitive anthropology*, as well as Evans' work on cognitive models and the role of episodic memory. I will conclude this chapter by briefly exploring the possible ramifications of identifying large differences in the experience of individual believers from the same belief community.

In chapter five I will draw together the various strands that have been explored in the above chapters. I will begin by providing a brief overview of how the three research questions have been addressed, followed by an outline of how each chapter has contributed to a synthetic view of how conservative

religious believers develop and maintain a sense of certainty. I will then move on to a final discussion of how my findings may be applied to the area of inter-faith dialogue. This thesis will be then be concluded by posing the question of whether my investigations into a sense of certainty may be applied to ways of experiencing the world outside of the domain of conservative religious belief.

Chapter Two: Cognitive and Epistemological Foundations: An Exploration of Idealised Cognitive Models

My intention throughout this chapter is to explore Cognitive Linguistic research into how people categorise their environments. This exploration will also lead to an examination of how such a process could lead to and even encourage the conservative religious believer's perception that key aspects of reality are clearly reducible to simplified dual categories. This will involve an exploration of the cognitive linguistic notion of cognitive models and how these models shape the way we view reality by drawing on propositional frames, abstract image schemas, metonymy and metaphor. This chapter will also engage with the ideas of scholars outside of Cognitive Linguistics who have made important observations that could be relevant to this investigation in terms of the way conservative religious believers perceive reality.

2.1 An Overview of Cognitive Models

My intention in this chapter is to explore one possible epistemological and cognitive framework for how people categorise reality. By epistemology, I mean the study of how we know the things we do, and the nature of that knowledge. One crucial area that this chapter will therefore be concerned with is the relationship between our knowledge of the world and the world itself. One of my key premises is that the best way to view the subjects of epistemology and language is through the perspective of cognitive models. I will therefore begin my exploration of the notion of these models through an examination of Lakoff's theory of *idealised cognitive models* (ICMs) first discussed in detail in his book *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (1987).

ICMs can be defined as all-encompassing mental or cognitive models within the human mind that act as "complex structured systems of knowledge" (Evans and Green 2006: 279), or procedurally as "a way in which we organise knowledge, not as a direct reflection of an objective state of affairs in the

world, but according to certain cognitive structuring principles” (Cienki 2007: 176). These quotes suggest that knowledge is not something that is primarily absorbed from our external environment and stored inside our brains as a one-to-one representation of its source. Knowledge depends on how objects and situations are understood and “there is no such thing as a neutral way to understand things” (Lakoff 1987: 300). The central premise is that knowledge and understanding depend and, up to a point, derive from the way our cognitive and conceptual frameworks are organised, and it is often very difficult or impossible to objectively establish whether those frameworks fit or do not fit the entity being represented in the external environment (cf. Lakoff 1987: 292-303; Al-Zahrani 2008). Another way of putting this is to say that the way we categorise and use language to describe the world around us depends on our particular perspective, which implies that “the world is not objectively reflected in the language: the categorization function of the language imposes a structure on the world rather than just mirroring objective reality” (Geeraerts and Cuyckens 2007: 5).

In *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (1987), Lakoff proposed his theory of ICMs with the intention of incorporating several major theories within Cognitive Linguistics. These theories led to his (1987:68) postulation that the human cognitive framework is composed of the following elements:

- A *propositional structure* derived from Fillmore’s (1982) theory of *frame semantics*. This involves the specification of specific elements that can often be represented in the form of a statement, such as the term *week* resting on the proposition, “the week is a whole with seven parts organised in a linear sequence; each part is called a day ...” (Lakoff 1987: 68).
- An *image schematic structure* derived from Langacker (1986). This posits the existence of underlying, highly abstract schemas such as Lakoff’s (1987: 275; 1999: 32-34) proposal of a *source-path-goal schema* that claims that humans are cognitively constrained to view many entities as in the process of moving along a trajectory (*the path*), from a particular point (*the source*) and towards another point (*the goal*). Notions such as the linear sequence involved

in the perception of the passing of time alluded to above are specific, detailed instantiations that are derived from this very abstract schema.

- Lakoff's own theory of *metaphoric mental mappings* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). A metaphoric mapping, according to Lakoff, is using one domain to say something about another domain. For example, in the example of *this week has gone by so quickly* we can see the domain of spatially tracking the movement of a physical object in relation to the speaker is being used to say something about the feeling of it being Friday. This metaphoric mapping of course relies on the propositional ICM of the notion of *week*, as well as again being an example of filling out the highly abstract, non-specific source-path-goal schema with specific elements (an entity is being construed as moving along a specific path that at some point passes the perceiver).
- Lakoff's theory of *metonymic mental mappings* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). A metonymic mapping, according to Lakoff, is using one thing to represent or stand for another thing, so for example when we talk about a *difficult week*, we are not usually referring to the whole week, but to particular periods of time within that week. In other words, we are using a reference to the whole week to represent or stand for particular parts of it, or, to put it another way, the phrase *difficult week* involves a whole-for-part metonym.

According to Lakoff, these aspects give rise to four types of ICMs: propositional ICMs, image schematic ICMs, metaphoric ICMs and metonymic ICMs.

Having provided a quick overview of the components of Lakoff's notion of ICMs, I am now able to proceed with a more detailed examination of these ideas. In the next section I will provide more examples of ICMs and why conservative religious believers would find this approach to epistemology threatening. This will introduce the key theme of the need for and perception of objective certainty in conservative religious belief that will be further developed in the later sections. Section 2.3 will move beyond the consideration of single entities like the terms *week* or *mother* towards an

application of the theory of ICMs to collections of ideas, such as Darwin's presentation of the principles of natural selection. This will lead to an exploration of how this theory could be applied to conservative religious belief systems in section 2.4, along with a particular focus on the importance of the source-path-goal schema. Section 2.5 will go on to examine an alternative theory of cognitive models to Lakoff's own theory that has grown out of the emphasis on usage-based approaches to the analysis of language and its underpinning conceptualisations. Once I have completed a survey of the idea of cognitive models, I will then provide a wider philosophical grounding for these ideas in section 2.6 by exploring some key ideas relevant to epistemology and certainty outside of Cognitive Linguistics. My justification for this departure from a pure concern with the Cognitive Linguistic approach is twofold: first, any serious Cognitive Linguistic application to the language of belief systems and religion must first interact with some of the ideas that appear to have helped shape aspects of the Cognitive Linguistic approach, such as Wittgenstein's work on language games. Second, I believe that some of the ideas that grew out of Wittgenstein's later work, such as Wisdom's notion of the arranging of connections in support of religious statements and Mehan's exploration of incorrigible propositions, can be viewed as broadly agreeing and even enriching the Cognitive Linguistic notion of ICMs. I will therefore complete this chapter by demonstrating how the various strands relating to the notion of cognitive models and the arguments of Wisdom and Mehan can be brought together to provide a full answer to my first research question.

2.2 Idealised Cognitive Models and the Desire for Objective Truth

In the introduction above I referred to Lakoff's famous example of the seven day week to illustrate propositional ICMs. He (1987: 68-69) refers to it as an "idealised" structuring of time on the grounds that it does not objectively exist in the external world, but is rather one somewhat arbitrary human idea imposed upon the world from among several possible alternatives. Many conservative religious believers would of course disagree. Evangelical Christians, for example, would argue that the

number *seven* is the perfect number and God's decision to rest on the seventh day was a symbol of the fact that a six day working week, with one day of rest consecrated to the worship of God, is objectively the optimum framework for any society and a "basic principle of life" (Eveson 2001: 54-56). We can see now why the notion of epistemologically relative ICMs is very threatening to conservative religious believers, as well as proponents of other related belief systems. One of the principal reasons for this appears to be that objective knowledge is often naturally seen as a vital prerequisite of certainty, and certainty appears to be often viewed as a vital characteristic of conservative religious worldviews. This line of reasoning can be clearly seen in a prominent Evangelical's summary of the argument underpinning postmodernism:

At root, however, it operates by denying that objective ground exists for believing that anything is true or right ... There is no hub to hold the spokes; or if there is, we are unable to get our cognitive sights on it.

(Wells 2007: 40)

Wells (ibid.) goes on to examine how postmodernism impacts on modern society by discussing the American TV show *Seinfeld* (1993-2007), which he views as encapsulating the postmodern worldview. He then frames his conclusions about the show with a metaphorical reference to a journey:

The journey into the postmodern world, from the writers of the literature of bewilderment into television shows like this, is one from darkness in the depths to mockery on the surface, from suicide to shallow snickers ... Such loss of any grounding for meaning also eats away at hope.

(Wells 2007: 41)

This worldview that denies the possibility of objective meaning is clearly laid out as the enemy. The Evangelical Christian Church should therefore confront this enemy with a worldview that must be packaged as clear, purposeful and grounded in absolute and objective truth. For Evangelical Christians, this takes the shape of "the triune God of whom Scripture speaks":

He it is who not only sustains all of life, directing it to its appointed end, but who also is the measure of what is enduringly true and right, and the fountain of all meaning, purpose, and hope.

(Wells 2007:49)

We can see the same insistence on the importance of a perception of the true knowledge of reality in conservative Muslim polemics about unbelievers. Note the use of metaphorical language related to the physical and concrete domains of movement and vision to express the perception of the concrete and objective fact of the truth of Islam in this extract below (in addition to the reference to “a man”, revealing the author’s ideological belief in the primacy of the male perspective):

A man observes the vast panorama of nature, the superb mechanism that is ceaselessly working, the grand design that is manifest in every aspect of creation – he observes this vast machine but he does not know anything of its maker and director ... How can a man, who has so blinded himself to reality approach true knowledge? How can one who has made the wrong beginning reach the right destination? He will fail to find the key to Reality. The Right Path will remain concealed for him and whatever his endeavours in science and arts, he will never be able to attain truth and wisdom. He will be groping in the darkness of ignorance.

(Mawdudi 1999:7-8)

It is interesting to note that, from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics, this intersection between a belief that objective truth is self-evidently obvious (unless we choose to blind ourselves) and the use of metaphorical language to express that perception of obvious certainty exhibits some of the key characteristics of a very sophisticated network of ICMs. However, before it is possible to apply the notion of ICMs to complex worldviews, it is first important to further justify the crucial underlying argument that objective knowledge about complex, abstract aspects of the Universe (such as the purpose and goal of life) is unattainable.

The argument of many key Cognitive Linguistic researchers is that the notion of ICMs can be applied to entities in the world that may appear indisputably objective to many people. Let us consider Lakoff’s oft-quoted examination of the term *mother* (Lakoff 1987: 74; see also Evans and Green 2006: 271-272; Taylor 2003: 89-91). At first glance, this term appears to be straightforward and one could imagine that a single, unproblematic definition would be possible. However, Lakoff (ibid.) postulates the existence of several cognitive models such as the “birth model”, the “genetic model” and the “nurturance model” that form “cluster models” inside our minds and must all be considered when we come to define what a mother is. As well as foregrounding different aspects of the notion of

being a mother, these different models also reflect distinctive arrangements of connotations (Littlemore 2009: 76).

This could be viewed as very similar to how people use the term *God* to stand for their own preferred choice of model from the wide range of possible models for what or who a personal divine entity is perceived to be. This can also be applied to central figures like Jesus where it is possible to identify several key models such as Jesus as the forerunner of Mohammad, Jesus as a carpenter, Jesus as Son of God and Jewish Messiah, or Jesus as God the Son and creator of the Universe. However, there appears to be one important difference between the example of Jesus and the notion of a mother. When, for example, a conservative Christian talks about Jesus as God the Son and an agnostic historian talks about Jesus as a carpenter who became a wandering rabbi, they are not just adopting different perspectives but crucially they are referring to radically different entities with very diverse spatial and temporal properties. The latter appears to be perceived as spatially bounded and limited to a specific point in time and completely excludes the parameters of the former, while the former is in many ways perceived as spatially and temporally unbounded and only includes the idea of the latter as an important but nonetheless peripheral aspect.

Within the context of testimonials, it also even becomes possible to view usages of abstract entities such as *reason* and *logic* as ICM frames and metonymic models. References to both these terms are used, particularly in Muslim discourse, as a device for supporting the perceived clear establishment of truth. Consider these examples, the first one being an extract from the Muslim testimonial data I will examine in the next chapter and the second an extract from another book published by the Birmingham based *Islamic Dawah Centre International*:

One day a friend asked me why I didn't convert to Islam if I liked it so much. "But I am already Muslim." My answer surprised me. But then, I realized that it was a simple matter of logic and common sense. Islam made sense.

(Muslim Text 9)

Rational Teaching: Since God bestowed reason and intellect on mankind, it is our duty to use it to distinguish truth from falsehood. True undistorted revelation from God must be rational and can be reasoned out by unbiased minds.

(Bucaille 2000: 16)

It appears to be reasonable to argue here that the propositional and schematic frameworks underpinning the above usages of the term *logic* would be very different from the frameworks employed by, for example, mathematicians when they explore the field of mathematical logic. The argument here is that just as there are varying models relating to the term *mother*, there are varying models relating even to the terms *logic* and *reason*. Each of these models differs in the epistemological presuppositions that it begins with, along with their varying connotations and their particular social and community contexts.

Yet another entity that is often assumed to be objectively definable and yet can be viewed as an example of the notion of models is the concept of self. Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 267-289) propose a wide range of metaphors that relate to how we talk about ourselves, including:

- THE ESSENTIAL SELF METAPHOR, e.g. "He is afraid to reveal his inner self"
- THE MULTIPLE SELVES METAPHOR, e.g. "I keep going back and forth between the scientist and the priest in me"
- THE SELF AS CONTAINER, e.g. "Are you out of your mind?"
- THE OBJECTIVE STANDPOINT METAPHOR, e.g. "You should take a good look at yourself"

They (1999: 288; see also Gibbs 2005: 20) conclude from their survey of metaphors about the self that there is "no one consistent structuring of our inner lives", and that the metaphors that we use to talk about the self can be contradictory. Recent attempts to apply Lakoff and Johnson's models of the concept of self to different languages (cf. Li 2010; Pritzker 2007; Robinson et al 2006) have further confirmed the variety of possible contradictory conceptions. For example, Li's (2011: 92) survey of metaphors used to describe the self in Chinese autobiographical writing reveals a wide range of spatial metaphors that are "far from fixed" in their negotiation "between the self, cognition and culture". In agreement with Lakoff and Johnson and Gibbs, Li (ibid.) argues that the writers

considered “draw from multiple and sometimes inconsistent models of the self and space in understanding and writing about themselves”. I would therefore argue that just as we have different models of a mother, we have just as many if not more competing models for our senses of self, mind and consciousness. It is therefore no surprise that there appears to be growing support in the neuroscience community for the argument of Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993: 105-130; cf. Mitchell 2009) that our minds are in fact “selfless” examples of complex systems with dynamic emergent properties – one of those properties being the “groundless” perception of a sense of consciousness as a central command centre in our minds.

Having examined some of the key examples of ICMs used by Lakoff and other Cognitive Linguistic researchers, I am now able to broaden my investigation by examining the relationship between ICMs and larger more complex networks of ideas and processes.

2.3 Applying Idealised Cognitive Models to Collections of Ideas

I have so far restricted my consideration of cognitive models to entities such as *mother*, *week*, and *self*, but if ICMs are to be seen as underpinning religious beliefs it must first be possible to point to some evidence that ICMs underpin entire systems of thought and not just individual entities within those systems. It is here where mainstream Cognitive Linguistics and the theory of *social constructionism* have some agreement. Social constructionists essentially argue that all knowledge and ways of viewing the world are the result of social context and conditioning – in other words, objective knowledge of the world is impossible (Gergen 2009; Gergen 2003). This logically leads to a questioning of the objective basis of all fields, including science. For example, Gergen (2009: 34), after briefly outlining and broadly agreeing with the central thesis of Lakoff and Johnson’s *conceptual metaphor theory*, argues that “metaphors dominate the scientific sphere”. He goes on to illustrate this with examples from Psychiatry and even Physics, “to use metaphors is also to take advantage of their capacity to organize elements in different ways. Different forms of research were put in motion

by viewing light in terms of waves as opposed to particles” (Gergen 2009: 35). As I shall discuss in the section below on *embodied realism*, there are important differences between the more extreme position of social constructionism and the position of Cognitive Linguistics within the *subjectivist – objectivist* debate, but both approaches argue against a simple objectivist view of the empirical sciences. Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 337-550) argue at length that the whole field of philosophy is based on various strands of subjective, metaphoric models, and also argue against a simple objectivist approach to scientific paradigm,

There are no pure observation sentences from which a scientific theory can be arrived at through induction. There can be no assumption-free scientific observations. And there is no correct logic of induction that will yield correct laws directly from observational data. Science, as Kuhn rightly observed, does not always proceed by the linear accretion of objective knowledge. Science is a social, cultural, and historical practice, knowledge is always situated, and what counts as knowledge may depend on matters of power and influence.

(Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 88-89)

One such scientific paradigm that has come under the scrutiny of cognitive linguists (Goatly 2007; Al-Zahrani 2008) is Darwin’s approach to the theory of evolution in his book *Origin of the Species*. I must be clear here that my intention in surveying these arguments is not at all to question the general theory of Evolution. Despite Cognitive Linguistic disagreements with objectivist approaches to science, it is still viewed as important to accept (in terms of being beyond reasonable doubt) numerous observations about the Universe. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 89) put it, “we are not likely to discover that there are no such things as cells or that DNA does not have a double-helix structure. Many scientific results are stable”. I must also be clear that my intention is not in any way to make a direct like-for-like comparison between Darwin’s interpretation of the theory of evolution and conservative religious systems. There are far reaching qualitative differences between these two frameworks that are widely recognised by most religious believers and non-believers. However, in line with main stream Cognitive Linguistics, the pervasiveness of ICMs in our systems of thought must be taken seriously and recent work on the theory of ICMs, especially involving converging research between two scholars, should be reviewed before I turn to my own approach to ICMs in religious

beliefs. One last point that makes a consideration of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* particularly pertinent to this thesis is the importance of the source-path-goal schema and the notion of progress towards a goal.

Al-Zahrani's article, *Darwin's Metaphors Revisited* (2008), is one of the few articles that apply the notion of ICMs to extended networks of ideas, although some of its key points were also made by Goatly in his book *Washing the Brain: Metaphor and Hidden Ideology* (2007: 341-344; 379-380). The article begins with the argument that Darwin's theory revolves around the key concepts of NATURE, LIFE and EVOLUTION and that in turn these concepts are presented through a network of metaphors that form "structured gestalts used to interpret and understand experience" (Al-Zahrani 2008: 52). This is followed by an outline of Darwin's explanation of the principles behind *natural selection* and the fact that he came under intense criticism for his choice of a term that appears to exhibit such a strong sense of personification in the form of "selecting", "perfecting" and "seeking the good of the species" (Al-Zahrani 2008:53-54).

He argues that Darwin was determined to retain the term despite the intense criticism on the grounds that it was intrinsically connected to the conceptual metaphor of NATURE IS A BREEDER. Al-Zahrani sees this conceptual metaphor, along with the related conceptual metaphor NATURE IS A MOTHER, as linguistically instantiated in a number of passages from Darwin's *Origins*, for example, "Nature may be said to have taken pains to reveal her scheme of modifications ... but we are too blind to understand her meaning" (Darwin 1872: 636, quoted in Al-Zahrani 2008: 59). Some of the main characteristics that therefore become associated with nature are that "she" becomes a personified agent with a particular purpose and goal (Al-Zahrani 2008: 61). Darwin's representation of that goal involves the mapping of the principles of selectivity and planning from a breeder to nature, which "ultimately allows us to comprehend nature in terms of human motivations, characteristics and activities" (ibid. 63).

According to Al-Zahrani (2008: 64), two more key conceptual metaphors in Darwin's work are LIFE IS A RACE and LIFE IS A WAR (subsumed under LIFE IS STRUGGLE), which he views as connected to NATURE IS A BREEDER through their shared requirement for a purposeful goal. These conceptual metaphors pave the way to Darwin's famous phrase: *the survival of the fittest*, which Al-Zahrani (2008: 65) views as an "inference or by-product of the ICM of struggle". He also sees this phrase as intimately connected to the metaphorical notion of *evolution* and the conceptual metaphor: EVOLUTION IS PROGRESS (ibid.). Goatly also picks up on this theme in Darwin's work and demonstrates how Darwin applied the ideas of progress and advancement through struggle and conflict to human societies and used it to rationalise colonialism:

The idea that societies competing against each other for supremacy was a realisation of the evolutionary struggle for survival clearly provided an apologia for imperialism:

The more civilised so-called Caucasian races have beaten the Turkish hollow in the struggle for existence. Looking to the world at no very distant date, what an endless number of lower races will have been eliminated by the higher, civilised races throughout the world. (Letter of Darwin July 3, 1881 quoted in Rodgers (1972:274))

(Goatly 2007: 379-380)

It is at this point that both Al-Zahrani's and Goatly's arguments become of particular interest to the central concern of this thesis in metaphors related to movement and the underpinning notion of a source-path-goal image schema. Not only does Darwin make use of language that personifies nature, but he also insists on construing nature's selections as purposefully progressing towards a goal:

[I]t may not be a logical deduction, but to my imagination, it is far more satisfactory to look at [different species of organic beings] as ... consequences of one general law leading to the *advancement* of all beings – namely multiply, vary, let the strongest live and the weakest die.

(Darwin 1993, p360, emphasis added)

[A]nd this [the amount of differentiation and specialization of the several organs] will include the *advancement* of the brain for intellectual purposes.

(Ibid. p161, emphasis added)

Al-Zahrani (2008: 65) explicitly connects this purposeful progression to the source-path-goal schema (discussed in more detail below), and argues that, for Darwin, the beginning of life on earth is mapped on to the starting point part of the schema, instantiated in clauses such as “one general law leading to the advancement of all beings” (Darwin 1993: 360) and biological “improvement” leading to the “gradual advancement of the greater number of living beings” (ibid. 160).

Al-Zahrani (2008: 70) goes on to argue that “human cultures elaborate and accentuate the struggle gestalt by inventing struggle events such as games and races”. The argument here appears to be that the creative construal of life as a path which “leads, in progressive waves of struggle, to more advanced and higher conditions” is an embedded ICM within the cognitive frameworks of humans across a range of different cultures (Al-Zahrani 2008: 70, 80). It is therefore no surprise that Darwin’s ideas are dependent on this ICM.

He (2008: 74-80) subsequently attempts to demonstrate that these three integrated components have the characteristics of ICMs by offering alternative reformulations. He argues, for example, that the metaphor of struggle for existence could validly be replaced with the metaphor of “symbiotic existence” (ibid. 76). His evidence for this is a survey of examples where Darwin proposed a model of subjugation, war and struggle whereas modern researchers have preferred to view the situation as one of symbiotic interdependence (ibid. 77-78). Al-Zahrani goes on to argue that the metaphor of natural *selection* does not fit the world as well as “natural elimination of the least fit” does (ibid. 74). He also demonstrates that it is not a matter of the survival of the fittest as much as it is the survival of everything *except* the weakest, “the survival of the weaker, the weak, the strong, the stronger and the strongest” (ibid. 75). Goatly (2007: 342) also emphasises this same point, “Darwin, while acknowledging the interdependence of species, nevertheless tends to emphasise the competition between members of the same species”. Goatly notes Darwin’s frequent use of military metaphors throughout the *Origin of the Species* and goes on to argue that this foregrounding of language

related to conflict and war over symbiotic existence can have a negative ideological impact if followed to its logical conclusion:

Despite some claims to the contrary, there is plenty of evidence that Darwin accepted progressivism, that the inferior forms or species were those that became extinct ... If we accept that our fundamental structural traits are determined by success in the war of competition for survival, and that the best win the war, the logical conclusion is that the best are the most warlike.

(Goatly 2007: 342-343)

I am not overly concerned at this point with whether Goatly's anxiety concerning ideological extrapolations from Darwin's choice of emphasis is valid or not, or whether all of Al-Zahrani's proposed conceptual metaphors were present in Darwin's mind. It may, for example, be possible to argue that Darwin may have juxtaposed the notions of nature being a mother and natural selection being a form of breeding without connecting them together in the form of conceptualising Mother Nature as a breeder. However, what I am interested in is the central point that both Al-Zahrani and Goatly have recognised the existence of image schematic, propositional and metaphoric models underneath Darwin's collection of ideas and the language he uses to express them. This examination of ICMs at a more complex level than the previous considerations of entities such as *week*, *mother* and *self* is therefore particularly relevant for paving the way for the investigation in the next section into how religious belief systems are underpinned by and subject to ICMs.

2.4 Applying Idealised Cognitive Models to Religious Belief Systems

In this section, I will draw on examples from Muslim testimonials posted on the *islamfortoday.com* website that will be analysed in terms of metaphor in greater detail in the next chapter. My intention here is to show that it may be possible to apply Lakoff's theory of ICMs to particular religious belief systems. In order to lay the necessary theoretical groundwork for the methodology and analysis in that chapter, I will, in terms of image schemas and metaphoric ICMs, limit my focus primarily to propositional ICMs and the source-path-goal image schema along with those metaphors related to it.

Stacked Propositions and the Importance of the Source-Path-Goal Schema in Religious Belief

Systems

As we have seen, Lakoff (1987: 68), in his explanation of the propositional ICM underpinning the notion of *week*, is able to specify the propositional content in the form of a statement, “the week is a whole with seven parts organised in a linear sequence; each part is called a day ...”. This propositional specification can then be connected to image schematic, metaphoric and metonymic models. Despite the complexity that underpins this notion of *week*, it is relatively simple compared to more complex ICMs that can contain considerably more elements. For example, when Lakoff (1987: 72) describes the reason why people generally think that what they believe is true he views it as necessary to make use of a sequence of propositions:

THE ICM OF ORDINARY COMMUNICATION

- a) If people say something, they’re intending to help if and only if they believe it.
- b) People intend to deceive if and only if they don’t intend to help.

THE ICM OF JUSTIFIED BELIEF

- c) People have adequate reasons for their belief.
- d) What people have adequate reason to believe is true

He makes use of a similar sequence of propositions in order to explain why people generally think that what they don’t believe is false:

... in the idealized world of these ICMs if X believes a proposition P, then P is true. Conversely, if P is false, then X doesn’t believe P. Thus falsity entails lack of belief.

(ibid.)

When Lakoff begins to use sequences of statements in order to describe propositional ICMs, the level of complexity and sequential organisation begins to resemble what we may expect the ICMs of religious belief systems to look like. Religious belief systems, I would argue, invariably rely upon

what I will refer to as *stacked propositions*, or layers of propositional ICMs where the higher layers depend on the acceptance of lower, more general layers, which in turn depend on an array of ICMs underpinning individual entities like *belief, truth, Christian, Muslim* and *God* (although in reality, as we shall see, this simple linearity should be viewed as artificially imposed and itself understood through an idealised schema of cause and effect).

Testimonials, or personal stories about a believer's conversion experience, are ideal places to look for more complete frameworks of stacked propositions, as well as the connections that believers wish to make between the layers. I will now therefore illustrate the application of ICMs to religious belief systems by selecting one such text, Nuh Ha Mim Keller's testimonial on the website *imamreza.net*, and considering it against the background of a possible underpinning source-path-goal schema.

Nuh Ha Mim Keller's testimonial is essentially a personal story that recounts his investigation into, and reflection upon, Western philosophy and Islam, his experiences working on fishing boats, and his encounters with Muslims in Cairo that led to him becoming a Muslim. The argument embedded in the text relies on certain key presuppositions, one of which is that humanity must have an ultimate purpose or goal. This presupposition becomes visible at several points in the text, particularly the two examples listed below. The first extract is a response to the author observing a man who appeared to have no other purpose than making as much money as he could, while the second extract details the author's first explorations into Islam (my emphasis):

Such people, good at making money but heedless of any *ultimate end or purpose*, made an impression on me, and I increasingly began to wonder if men didn't need *principles to guide* them and tell them why they were there. *Without such principles, nothing seemed to distinguish us above our prey* except being more thorough, and technologically capable of preying longer, on a vaster scale, and with greater devastation than the animals we hunted.

At this juncture, I read a number of works on Islam, among them the books of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who believed that many of the problems of western man, especially those of the environment, were from his having left the divine wisdom of revealed religion, which taught him his true place as a creature of God in the natural world and to understand and respect it. Without it, he burned up and consumed nature with ever more effective technological styles of commercial exploitation that ruined his world from without while leaving him increasingly empty within, *because he did not know why he existed or to what end he should act.*

(my emphasis, <http://www.imamreza.net/eng/imamreza.php?id=7058>)

The first extract appears to presuppose that certain principles that separate us from the rest of the animal kingdom *must* exist, while the second extract is not so much interested in debating *whether* mankind has an ultimate purpose or end, but highlighting the damage that is caused when mankind does not know what that pre-existing purpose is. This foundational, deeply embedded presupposition that there must be an ultimate purpose or end or goal fits very closely with Lakoff's argument that the cognitive framework of most if not all human beings is structured in the form of image schemas such as the source-path-goal schema.

It is necessary at this point to look into Lakoff's idea of image schemas, derived from the work of Langacker, in a little more detail. These schemas are viewed as making use of pre-conceptual representations drawn from "schematized patterns of activity abstracted from everyday bodily experience, especially pertaining to vision, space, motion and force" (Langacker 2008: 32). The source-path-goal image schema (Lakoff 1987: 283; Evans and Green 2006: 280) is of particular interest to this thesis, and I will therefore focus my attention on it.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 33) propose that this schema has the following elements:

A trajectory that moves

A source location (the starting point)

A goal, that is, an intended destination of the trajectory

A route from the source to the goal

The actual trajectory of motion

The position of the trajectory at a given time

The direction of the trajectory at that time

The actual final location of the trajectory, which may or may not be the intended destination

It is possible to define the above as an embedded sequence that provides one of the key parts of the foundation for viewing reality as spatial (Evans and Green 2006: 280), as Lakoff and Johnson argue:

Our most fundamental knowledge of motion is characterized by the source-path-goal schema, and this logic is implicit in its structure. Many spatial-relations concepts are defined using this schema and depend for their meaning on its inherent spatial logic, for example, *toward*, *away*, *through* and *along*.

(Lakoff and Johnson 1999:34)

It is also used to represent our construal of abstract notions as moving through space in a specific direction. This plays a part in a wide range of metaphorical language, including the widely discussed cluster of metaphors that view various abstract processes such as life, love, reconciliation and the consolidation or development of a belief as a journey (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Turner 1996: 18; Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 34; Ritchie 2008; Semino 2008: 7; Cameron 2010b: 14; Cameron, Low and Maslen 2010: 123; Cameron 2010a). The link between this image schema and propositional ICMs is that humans tend to use propositions to fill out this highly abstract propensity to organise events into sequences. They formulate networks of inferences and evaluations with regard to the objects, participants and occurrences that make up those events (Turner 1996: 19-21). This is the beginning of what Turner refers to as the universal human habit of formulating sequences into “small spatial stories” and his argument that “all these sequences are structured by the image schema of a point moving along a directed path from a source to a goal” (Turner 1996: 19). This explains why personal stories always “re-present features of the world” while also envisaging “an end” (Cobley 2001: 228), and why religion is able to offer “particularly powerful stories” that are able to so effectively convey “a picture of security, stability and simple answers” (Kinvall 2004: 742).

The importance for this thesis of the source-path-goal schema and the range of metaphors it generates should now be clear. Not only does it provide a basis for viewing life as a journey, but, I would argue, it also provides one of the crucial foundations for viewing life as a story. It also lies at the heart of our propensity to structure our life as consisting of purposes and goals, and to metaphorically view those purposes as locations that need to be reached,

... the source–path–goal schema develops as we move from one place to another in the world and as we track the movement of objects. From such experiences, a recurring pattern becomes manifest, which can be projected onto more abstract domains of understanding, including those having to do with any intentional action. Thus, the

source–path–goal image schema gives rise to conceptual metaphors, such as “Purposes are destinations” (e.g., “I got sidetracked on my way to getting a PhD”).

(Gibbs 2011: 536)

We can now see how the source-path-goal schema underpins those foundational existential questions that occur so often in religious language, such as “why am I here?”, “where is my life going?”, “who or what should I follow?”, and “where will I go when I die?”. What this means for religious belief is that the idea that there must be an ultimate goal or purpose, or what William James (the principal forefather of the field of the *Psychology of Religion*) famously referred to as “our true end” (James 1985: 485), *is not primarily derived from the objective nature of our environment but primarily from the structure of our brains*. This is not to say that this particular structuring of our minds around the notions of origins and destinations has not been formed in the course of interacting with our environments. Undoubtedly, it has (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Gibbs 2011). However, what this means is that the source-path-goal image schema has come to have *functional value in helping many humans to survive and flourish within their environments*. It does not mean that this image schema is some kind of epistemological mirror of the objective nature of our environments.

Returning to our consideration of Nuh Ha Mim Keller’s testimonial, it is interesting to see how he metaphorically fills out the source-path-goal schema by using a reference to road signs to talk about the clarity with which he felt his personal searching and consideration of Islam were pointing him towards absolute truth. The author systematically outlines a line of reasoning that leads him to an unequivocal solution to the problem that “all moral and religious systems, were on the same plane, unless one could gain *certainty* that one of them was from a higher source, the sole guarantee of the *objectivity*, the whole force, of moral law” (my emphasis). He views the achievement of the perception of objective certainty that Islam was that religious system from a higher source as the result of following “*clear signs*” (my emphasis).

We are immediately faced here with some of the key defining factors of conservative religious belief systems. These include the level of absolute certainty they often appear to embody, as well as the way in which this sense of certainty is often expressed through the use of movement metaphors. This interaction between self-evident certainty and language related to existential movement from and to particular locations is one of the key concerns of this thesis simply because it features so heavily in conservative religious texts such as the one above. In the collections of Christian and Muslim testimonials I will analyse in the next chapter, I found that every testimonial contained at least one movement metaphor, with the vast majority containing clusters of such metaphors.

It is also one of the key aims of this thesis to discuss this certainty at the level of the underpinning cognitive framework of believers. I will now therefore turn to a consideration of certainty in relation to cognitive model selection and the impact on certainty of shifts in patterns of agency.

The “Strong Pull” towards Choosing “True” Models and the Perception of Unambiguity in Reversed Agency Patterns in ICMs Related to Religious Belief

In Lakoff’s discussion of the mother model, he makes one observation that is particularly relevant to my focus on cognitive models and certainty: “many people feel the pressure to pick one model as being the right one, the one that “really” defines what a mother is” (Lakoff 1987: 75; cf. Goldberg 1995: 27). It is not difficult to apply this “pressure” to the cognitive models related to belief systems, especially in discourse communities where membership depends on a precise doctrinal agreement about which model should truly define an object of belief. Lakoff (ibid.) goes on to characterise this need to choose one model over the others as a “strong pull”. The term “real mother” has become common in modern Western culture (cf. Goldberg 1995:27), occurring, for example, 123 times in the Bank of English. Regardless of the chosen model, the existence of this term suggests that many people *assume* that it is both possible and necessary to talk about an objectively real mother model. This situation is reflected in the domain of religious language with the large number of hits and

references that result from a Google search for the phrase “true God” related to Jewish, Christian and Muslim websites. As Kinvall (2004: 742) argues from the perspective of social psychology, religious believers rely on the need to portray their beliefs as “resting on solid ground, as being *true*, thus creating the sense that the world really is what it appears to be”.

For Nuh Ha Mim Keller, this process of assuming the self-evident truth of models or propositions appears to progress from more general, schematic propositions to more specific propositions. For example, propositions relating to the existence of a God and the need for guiding principles appear to progress to the necessity of divine revelation, and then to the perceived characteristics of the Qur’an that make it the only possible candidate for such revelation. Each ensuing proposition logically relies on the absolute acceptance of the preceding proposition and, despite the fact that each proposition would be passionately contested by numerous competing belief communities, the author still perceives them as self-evidently, logically and obviously correct. This systematic stacking of increasingly detailed and specific propositions can be seen in the extract below:

I read other books on Islam ... by the theologian and mystic Ghazali, who ... realized that beyond the light of prophetic revelation there is no other light on the face of the earth from which illumination may be received, the very point to which my philosophical inquiries had led. Here was, in Hegel's terms, the Wise Man, in the person of a divinely inspired messenger who alone had the authority to answer questions of good and evil. I also read A.J. Arberry's translation "The Qur'an Interpreted", and I recalled my early wish for a sacred book. Even in translation, the superiority of the Muslim scripture over the Bible was evident in every line, as if the reality of divine revelation, dimly heard of all my life, had now been placed before my eyes. In its exalted style, its power, its inexorable finality, its uncanny way of anticipating the arguments of the atheistic heart in advance and answering them; it was a clear exposition of God as God and man as man, the revelation of the awe-inspiring Divine Unity being the identical revelation of social and economic justice among men.

(<http://www.imamreza.net/eng/imamreza.php?id=7058>)

What is even more interesting is that this arrangement of propositions could be repeated for an Evangelical Christian worldview with very few changes beyond switching around the names of the religions and their sacred texts. For one example of this, consider the almost identical use of metaphorical illumination in the extract below from a prominent US Evangelical's assessment of the Bible,

Scripture's purity and clarity produces the benefit of "enlightening the eyes." It provides illumination in the midst of moral, ethical, and spiritual darkness. It reveals the knowledge of everything not otherwise readily seen (cf. Prov 6:23). One of the main reasons the Word of God is sufficient for all of humanity's spiritual needs is because it leaves no doubt regarding essential truth. Life itself is confusing and chaotic. Seeking truth apart from Scripture only adds to the confusion. Scripture, by contrast, is remarkably clear.

(MacArthur 2003: 31)

Nuh Ha Mim Keller's testimonial closes with a final proposition that is particularly important to any consideration of certainty in religious belief systems, and is therefore worth examining in some detail.

It rests on a metaphor of the believer being purposefully moved:

I found that God had created within me a desire to belong to this religion, which so enriches its followers, from the simplest hearts to the most magisterial intellects. It is not through an act of the mind or will that anyone becomes a Muslim, but rather through the mercy of God, and this, in the final analysis, was what brought me to Islam in Cairo in 1977.

The idea here is that the ultimate source of belief is not a person's line of reasoning but God's action (in creating the desire to believe and bringing or moving the believer to the state of belief). Here, the human being is construed as being removed from the role of agent in the process of arriving at belief. This has the effect of allowing the believer to perceive those who would disagree with that believer's line of reasoning as irrelevant, along with the arguments that they would use. The reason for this is that the process of belief from this particular perspective is not perceived to rely on the words or perspective of man, but on the perspective and actions of the object (viewed as subject) of belief, which is in this case Allah, or the Muslim understanding of a divine entity. However, conservative religious texts are rarely restricted to a single perspective or a single agent but inevitably shift between perspectives and agents. For example, just before Nuh Ha Mim Keller talks about being moved by God to believe in Islam, he discusses the process of coming to belief as something that he realized for himself from reflecting upon his environment, "When I reflected on those around me, I realized that Islam seemed to furnish the most comprehensive and understandable way to practice this on a daily basis". One key concern of this thesis will therefore be tracking these shifts in *construal*, which I will define as the idea that something is viewed from a particular perspective and,

in terms of backgrounding and foregrounding, with a specific degree of prominence (cf. Langacker 2007: 434-438; Langacker 2008: 55-78).

This move away from static representations of an individual's view of the world towards a dynamic focus on *language in use* (cf. Cameron 1999: 4-5; Müller 2008: 15) can be further illustrated by considering the extract below from a videoed discussion that took place at the *University of Birmingham* between a Protestant Evangelical Christian (turns B1 and B2) and a non-believer (turns A1 and A2). This extract also further reinforces the importance of a focus on patterns of agency in any exploration of a conservative religious believer's worldview.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Non-believer: A1 | The Bible has a great deal to say about things we must and must not do and it appears to me that certain – I don't know about you – but certain Christian groups don't follow all of the teachings of the Bible as to what you should and shouldn't do. |
| Christian: B1 | OK, I understand that ... the answer to that is that God decides, God says what is sin and what isn't sin and that he summarised that in his ten commandments. Now, again, an atheist or an unbeliever might come along and say well that's unfair, why can't God go along with the way that I want to behave, but the Bible summarises all sin, no matter what it is – lying, stealing, whatever, we're all sinners – summarises all of it as being a form of rebellion against God, so whatever form we find sin is all of it is us rebelling against our creator. But yes if there has to be an absolute standard then that standard must come from God and we believe, I believe, that standard comes in the ten commandments. |
| Non-believer: A2 | OK, but what about the specific rules – I think it would be fair to say – that are set down in say parts of Leviticus about how humanity needs to behave. |
| Christian: B2 | OK, thank you for asking me that – I was hoping you would. The question might go on should we for example stone to death adulterers today because in the Bible because in the Old Testament the Bible says that adulterers should be stoned to death, and of course there are examples of people who have been put to death in the Old Testament. It's not unfair to put a Christian on the spot and say what would you do in that situation if you were Prime Minister and you had absolute power, |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>what would you do? I thought about this at length and I don't know what I would do. I think first of all we need to establish what is right and what's wrong from the scriptures, and secondly how would those laws in the Old Testament apply to our society today.</p> |
|--|---|

In A1, the non-believer is clearly wishing to question the Christian about the well-known difficulties (in terms of Christians who embrace the infallibility of the Bible) related to the interpretation of the rules and laws in the Old Testament and how the decision is made concerning what to keep and what to discard. The problem is that the Christian is locked into a pattern of language that foregrounds the perception of pure unambiguity instantiated through the use of divine agency (“... *God* decides, *God* says ... an absolute standard”). He is therefore unable or unwilling in B1 to process and respond to a question that is asking him to consider the decision making process from the far more ambiguous and opinion-like perspective of the believer as subject. The non-believer responds in A2 by revealing the fact that he is intending to question the believer about the notoriously difficult area of the Levitical law. This appears to force the believer to make a shift in agency in order to pre-empt the argument that he knows is coming. In B2, this process of pre-emption results in phrases like “should *we*”, “what would *you* do?”, “I don’t know what *I* would do” and “*we* need to establish”. What we have here are two very different, and in some sense diametrically opposed, ways of talking about religious belief originating from the same person over just two turns of discourse. However we choose to approach an analysis of this extract and its surrounding context, it would be difficult to deny that something very important is happening here in terms of construal as the discourse dynamically unfolds.

Nuh Ha Mim Keller’s testimonial and the dialogue considered above highlight two inter-related components involved in this notion of conservative religious believers construing themselves as passive participants in the belief process. The first is the desire in certain situations to view the world from the perceived perspective of a particular divine entity, while the second is the desire for the

believer in certain situations to view him or herself as being acted on by that divine entity. The process of forming a belief about something can often be viewed as a process of weighing arguments and experiences about something until a relatively stable opinion begins to form. However, this first component views the process from the opposite direction, so that it is the object of belief that acts as the subject considering the potential believer. Examples of this can be found in the titles of two books by well-known Evangelicals: Blanchard's (2000) "Does God Believe in Atheists?" and Comfort's (1993) "God Doesn't Believe in Atheists: Proof That the Atheist Doesn't Exist". In these examples, there is an unusual shift in perspective – in our modern society we are accustomed to hearing about how atheists view the idea of belief in a God, but we are not so accustomed to this *perceptual deictic shift* to how a perceived God views the idea of atheism (cf. Zubin and Hewitt 1995: 134; Stockwell 2002: 43-45). It appears that at the root of this desire to move the divine entity into the deictic centre – or the object of belief into the subject position – is a determination to view what humans think is true or how they think they should behave as essentially unimportant or irrelevant. It could therefore be argued that the key motivation for this move is the need to absolutely eradicate the perception of having a subjective opinion, or, in other words, to eradicate the possibility of uncertainty. Kinnvall and Linden (2010: 599) view this as a move towards "securitizing subjectivity", which tends to manifest itself in "forms of totalistic modes of reasoning, black-and-white thinking, religious or secular fundamentalism, and ... intolerance of ambiguity". This is achieved by conservative believers perceiving themselves as turning away from what they think in order to completely accept what a particular divine entity thinks. This attempt to (at certain moments during discourse) cultivate the perception that human opinion can be removed from the belief process is summed up in the extract below from another prominent Evangelical Christian,

In the 1970s one occasionally saw a bumper sticker on cars driven by Christians. The bumper sticker stated: *God said it. I believe it. That settles it.* The implication of such logic was supposed to be a declaration of the authority of Scripture. The fact that some harmony between God's and the car owner's view of Scripture somehow settled the issue of the authority of Scripture is not merely flawed – it is blatantly wrong. The ratification by people has nothing to do with truth. The bumper sticker should have been worded: *God said it. That settles it. (And it just so happens that) I believe it.* It is the fact that God said it that confirms it.

This need to cultivate the perception that the believer is at times viewing reality from the divine entity's perspective is further consolidated by the second component – the need for the believer to view him or herself as being acted on by that divine entity. We have already looked at examples of this in the form of the Muslim author considered above perceiving himself as being “brought to Islam by the mercy of God”. This type of language often draws on metaphor, such as the above use of *brought*, and construes the believer as the object or the receiver of a divine entity's action. In the next chapter I will refer to these examples as *believer-as-patient* metaphors, and will examine in greater detail the powerful epistemological presuppositions they employ.

Researchers working within the fields of sociology and psychology often pass over the importance of these two components and the way they make use of particular patterns of agency. Rambo (1993) and Rambo and Farhadian (1999) provide a good example of this in their proposal of seven psychological/sociological stages (*context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, consequences*). Even the *encounter* stage is primarily focused on the social interaction between believer and *advocate* (the person/community spreading the belief system) and makes very little mention of the believer's perception of encountering a divine entity. In many ways it is understandable that researchers wish to focus on the social dimensions of the conversion process rather than analyse the theological expressions in the language of the person converting. However, from both an applied linguistic and cognitive perspective, it is impossible to analyse the way that a religious believer constructs the world around them without listening to and factoring in all their primary patterns of perception instantiated in the language they use. The fact that, for example, conservative Christians or Muslims may view themselves at various points during a discourse (and with varying levels of frequency) as being brought to their belief by the object of their belief, and at other points as choosing it, must be integrated into our hypotheses concerning the cognitive models that believers' perceptions draw on.

Another important point to make is that it is not just agency that is subject to shifting patterns of construal. Other arrangements, such as spatial configurations, also exhibit such shifting patterns. One example of this which will be a key focus in the next chapter involves believers referring to the notion of proximity during perceived interactions with a divine entity. At one point in a text or during a dynamically unfolding conversation, the believer may refer to the perceived experience of being near or with the divine entity, or a sense of the divine entity moving towards them or vice versa. However, at another point this may shift to a description of the perceived experience of the divine entity being in some sense inside the believer. The key point here is that again there is no single, static description, only shifting configurations that can be detected when we analyse authentic language in use. What this means is that when we come to compare collections of texts from two different belief communities, it should be impossible to identify clear fixed differences in the way they talk about their perceived experience of being a believer. Instead, we should only be able to identify particular patterns of construal that tend to be emphasised more in one collection of texts than they are in another collection. By choosing to focus on these constant shifts in construal, I aim to take seriously the application of complex systems theory to the description of the cognitive models of conservative religious believers. According to this view, frameworks of belief should no longer be viewed as static, fixed “things”, but as constantly shifting processes where the structure of propositions may shift and warp as a result of self-organisation within particular streams of discourse, particular moments in discourse or at various points in a text (cf. Cameron 2010c; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; Miller and Page 2007; Mitchell 2009). However, it should also be remembered that complex systems theory also embraces the idea that a certain level of temporary stabilisation is also possible in the form of a repeated pattern of movement between two attractor states or movement within a single attractor state, although it is important to stress that any analysis that observes such temporary stability must always allow for future fluctuations and changes (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008).

In this section I have demonstrated that Lakoff's multi-faceted notion of ICMs can be applied to religious belief, and that it is possible to see all integrated aspects, such as image schemas and propositions, as well as metaphoric and metonymic models, at work underneath the language produced by religious believers. It is necessary also to note the limited focus of my investigation. It is limited in that it has restricted itself to the consideration of texts and discourse, but it must be stressed that cognitive linguists are also gradually extending their interest to visual areas such as conceptual explorations of gesture and pictures (e.g. Müller 2008; Cienki 2010). Forceville (2005) explicitly applies this interest in multi-modal expressions to the notion of ICMs in his analysis of the visual representation of the ICM of anger in Asterix comics. He (2005: 83) argues that a number of visual effects such as "bulging eyes" and "red face" can be related to specific instantiations of an anger ICM that includes conceptual metaphors such as ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER (cf. Kövecses 2006: 167-169; Lakoff 1987: 383). This present piece of research is focused on the analysis of language in testimonials, but it is important to keep in mind the argument that ICMs and the conceptual metaphors that are related to them are not just expressed through language, but also through pictures and gesture.

I have now examined the relatively traditional idea of ICMs as it was first suggested by Lakoff in 1987. Lakoff's theory has proven to be both comprehensive and robust and, as we have seen, continues to be drawn on in many books and journal articles. However, the new emphasis on language in use that I have started to explore in this section has caused Evans (2006; 2009) to propose a significantly nuanced version of the original theory involving a reappraisal of the notion of cognitive models and their relationship to lexical concepts and meaning construction. I will therefore move on to an outline of Evans' new theory, exploring it through an application of its arguments to an example of religious language taken from my research data.

2.5 LCCM Theory and its Application to Religious Language

In the previous section I integrated a more fluid perspective and an approach that was more discourse based than Lakoff's theory of Idealised Cognitive Models. Evans' (2006, 2009) more comprehensive attempts to do much the same thing have resulted in his proposal of a revised approach to the notion of cognitive models. I will therefore now move on to an examination of Evans' *Lexical Concept Cognitive Model* (LCCM) theory.

Evans' theory updates the work of researchers like Lakoff and Johnson in order to bring the notion of cognitive models in line with a new focus on a "usage based" approach to language that stresses its unique "situated communicative intention" (Evans 2009: 22). LCCM theory is based on the argument that "words don't have meanings in and of themselves. Rather meaning is a function of the utterance in which a word is embedded, and the complex process of lexical concept integration" (Evans 2006: 492; 2009: 4). The theory distinguishes between lexical concepts (as linguistic entities) and cognitive models (as non-linguistic entities), arguing that meaning is achieved through these highly schematic and impoverished lexical concepts providing access to the semantically richer domains of cognitive models (Evans 2009: 105; 2006: 496-497, 500). In order to demonstrate how meaning is achieved according to LCCM theory it is useful to apply it to an example of religious language. I will therefore draw on the following sentence from a Muslim testimonial (Muslim Text 1 in the collection of Muslim Testimonials from *islamfortoday.com* analysed in the next chapter): "Islam is the way to salvation".

LCCM theory embraces many of the key ideas of Goldberg's construction grammar, arguing that constructions contribute their own meanings to sentences (Evans 2009: 92; 2006: 503; cf. Goldberg 1995: 28; 2006: 20). In the example under consideration, the predicative nominative construction *X is (the) Y* is regarded as a semantic "vehicle" in itself, telling us that thing Y is predicated about thing X (Evans 2009: 289). The subject slot must therefore be filled with a nominal entity (a noun), which in LCCM theory is regarded as an "open-class lexical concept" that can provide access to a range of cognitive models (Evans 2009: 205). The noun phrase "the way to salvation" consists of a determiner,

noun, preposition and noun that must all be integrated before undergoing more complex integration with “Islam” within the semantic confines established by the predicative nominative construction (cf. Evans 2009: 246-247). The phrase “way to salvation” provides a context for giving the definite article the meaning of there being only one possible thing (in this case a “way to salvation”) and not others. Prepositions in LCCM theory are regarded as “closed-class vehicles” and therefore not able to provide access to cognitive models in and of themselves (Evans 2009: 110). However, they are able to indicate relationships between lexical concepts and provide schematic information as well as provide meaning once associated with an open-class lexical unit (Evans 2009: 110). In this case, the preposition “to” relates “way” with “salvation” by setting up a path schema with a designated entity as an end point (“salvation”). Semantically, this is as far as the lexical concepts can take us according to LCCM theory. They allow the establishment of an entity X which possesses the attribute of being a Y which has Z as an end point. As can be seen, this information is highly schematic, and while it is able to mark out relations between the various vehicles, it is not able to provide detailed information. This information is supplied by the open-class lexical concepts “Islam”, “way” and “salvation”, providing us with access to our cognitive models for those concepts.

LCCM theory argues that lexical concepts first access “primary cognitive models” associated with them (Evans 2009: 263; 2006: 513). For example “way” may have a primary cognitive model associated with a physical path (i.e. “this way leads back to the house”). A “clash” occurs when this primary cognitive model cannot be appropriately matched to the activated primary cognitive model associated with the abstract state “salvation” (a state of being saved from a negative situation) (cf. Evans 2009: 263). “Clash resolution” occurs through accessing secondary cognitive models, which in this case may include a means of achieving an abstract goal (i.e. “I need to find a way to solve this problem”) (Evans 2009: 264). In LCCM theory, a meaning construction process that involves a rejection of primary cognitive models that receive secondary activation and the acceptance of secondary cognitive models that receive primary activation is one “defining feature of a figurative conception” (Evans 2009: 289). However, if a term is used in a figurative manner frequently enough,

its figurative meaning may become a “pre-assembled conception” referred to as a “concept collocation” that may, through this process of conventionalisation, become even more salient than literal primary cognitive models (Evans 2009: 299). It could be argued that the metaphorical “way” has gone through such a “career” of conventionalisation (cf. Gentner and Bowdle 2001). Once the cognitive models of “way” and “salvation” have been matched, it is then possible to complete the establishing of meaning by attributing “way to salvation” to “Islam”.

LCCM theory stresses the vast amount of rich conceptual information that lexical concepts provide access to. Terms like “Islam”, “salvation” and complete integrated sentences such as “Islam is the way to salvation” open up huge networks of extra-linguistic simulations and encyclopaedic knowledge that will significantly vary from individual to individual, as well as from one situated point in a single individual’s life to another point. The theory proposes that the range of primary and secondary cognitive models that can be related to any open-class lexical concept each consist of their own frames comprised of “individuals” and “types” (relating to things) and “situations “ and “events” (Evans 2009: 195-197). This is based on the extensive amount of research that has been conducted into the notions of *semantic* and *episodic* memory (Tulving 1985). The principal distinction between these two types of information processing is that that episodic memory focuses on “unique spatial-temporal contexts”, while semantic memory focuses on “facts and concepts” (Ryan, Hoscheidt and Nadel 2008: 5). More recent research has also proposed that episodic memory “allows the rememberer to have the conscious experience, or autonoesis, of being mentally present once again within the spatial-temporal context of the original experience – the phenomenal experience of remembering” (ibid.). It has also highlighted the intimate relationship between emotion and episodic memory, both in the form of emotion influencing the formation and processing of episodic memory and emotion acting as a contextual marker of episodic memory (Allen, Kaut and Lord 2008). I will be particularly interested in these notions of semantic and episodic memory throughout this thesis due to their close respective alignment with the notions of knowledge about a thing and the autobiographical experience of things within an unfolding situation. In the next chapter, I will

introduce the term *action and relationship language*, which I see as closely aligned with the expression through language of perceived episodic memories, and in chapter four I will return to a detailed exploration of the nature of episodic memory and its relationship to the language of conservative religious believers.

It is possible to illustrate what Evans means by individuals, types, situations and events by returning to a consideration of the term *Islam*. It may be possible to identify related primary cognitive models relating to Islam as a cultural entity and Islam as a theological belief system. The former cognitive model would consist of individual frames that would relate to Mosques I have visited, particular styles of *hijabs*, *burqas*, and *niqabs* I have noticed, food I have seen in Muslim countries, particular descriptions or definitions of specific doctrines, or any entity that I associate with the cultural aspect of Islam. When I abstract across all those individual frames I arrive at type frames such as “the mosque” or “the hijab”. Following the argument of LCCM theory, it is possible to point at a particular individual frame, such as the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, or a particular definition or description of a doctrine, but it is not possible to point at a type frame, such as the notion of “the mosque” or the Muslim doctrine of the unity of God that I carry in my mind, because it only exists as an abstraction across all the mosques or all the descriptions and definitions that I have seen and read about (cf. Evans 2009: 196).

In contrast, according to Evans (2009: 198), situation frames consist of “a series of images” relating to particular individuals “viewed from a particular perspective”. Events are defined as “a series of two or more situations” that are “related in a coherent manner” and “lead to a significant outcome” (Evans 2009: 198). Just as there are individuals and type frames to encapsulate entities, there are also two types of situations: “episodic” and “generic” (Evans 2009: 198-199). Generic situations relate to type frames in that they are abstractions across a range of encountered episodic situations (Evans 2009: 199). To return to my consideration of the term *Islam*, a good example of episodic situation frames taken from the primary cognitive model of Islam as a monotheistic theological belief

system would be my memories of specific discussions with Muslim PhD students about Islam at the University of Birmingham during my time there. My memories related to one of those discussions - including my evaluative judgements, point of view and perceptions regarding the content of the discussion and its outcome - could be regarded as one event frame for my cognitive model of Islam as a belief system. LCCM theory also argues that this cognitive model would also include a range of situations that I believe are not or will never be associated with Islam as a belief system ("counterfactual situations") as well as situations that I believe will be associated with Islam as a belief system in the future ("prospective situations") (Evans 2009: 198-199). Continuing with this example, I also have a stored generic situation inside my mind of a perceived common structure that discussions about Islam with Muslims usually have. Needless to say, my cognitive models for the lexical concept *Islam* will be very different from the cognitive models of Islam possessed by a committed Muslim, as well as being different from my cognitive models of Islam from a few years ago.

According to LCCM theory, another layer of conceptual meaning relates to "attributes" and "values" that are assigned to the various frames: "Frames consist of sets of attributes and values. An attribute concerns some aspect of a given frame, while a value is a specification of that aspect" (Evans 2009: 200). To return to my example, the abstracted type frames that I associate with the primary cognitive model of Islam as a theological belief system would include belief in Allah, belief in Mohammad, belief in the Qur'an, belief that humanity is in need of salvation, etc. The attributes that I would associate, for example, with the type frame belief in Mohammad would include: the belief he is the messenger of Allah, the belief that he wrote the Qur'an, the belief that he is to be highly respected, etc. The values I would associate, for example, with the attribute of the belief that Mohammad wrote the Qur'an would include the specification that he wrote it through divine inspiration which would link to the attribute of Mohammad as the messenger of Allah, while also leading in my mind to the further specification of the belief that the angel Gabriel relayed verses of the Qur'an to Mohammad.

In addition to this vast array of information that can be accessed when I use or hear the term Islam, LCCM theory also argues that the location of the term in a particular sentence at a particular point in a text or discourse for a particular purpose also impacts on the meaning of the term. For example, the integrated sentence “Islam is the way of salvation” would cause “primary activation” of my primary cognitive model for Islam as a monotheistic theological belief system but only “secondary activation” of the primary cognitive model for Islam as a cultural entity (cf. Evans 2009: 269). It would also cause me to “highlight” specific frames and attributes in that primary cognitive model over other frames and attributes. For example the type frame relating to the belief that humans are in need of salvation would certainly be highlighted while the beliefs relating to the role of women in an Islamic society may not be (cf. Evans 2009: 270). Another key element to this is LCCM’s notion of the “discourse model” – “a dynamic mental model constructed during ongoing discourse, to which information is continually added” (Evans 2009: 276, 71). It is because of this ever expanding, updating and evolving network of individual, type, situation and event frames combined with the shifting intentions and context of an addresser and the dynamic flow of discourse, that LCCM theory argues that no utterance can ever have the exact same meaning as another utterance (Evans 2009: 71).

LCCM theory should not be viewed as an attack on Lakoff’s theory of ICMs, but rather as a significantly nuanced update of it that integrates a number of key Cognitive Linguistic strands (Evans 2009: 60, 193-196, 299, 335-336). The biggest difference between Lakoff’s view of ICMs and the view proposed by LCCM theory is that Lakoff is attempting to recover relatively fixed and stable cognitive models from a range of different lexical concepts, while Evans is attempting to map how a range of different usages and combinations of lexical concepts provide shifting levels of access to an even larger range of dynamically developing cognitive models.

As we have seen, Lakoff’s theory of ICMs is invaluable in foregrounding the pressure that conservative believers feel under to foreground particular models and perspectives and to *perceive*

them as rigid and fixed. Lakoff's theory is also ideal in aiding any investigation into how the worldview of conservative religious believers can be further barricaded through the structuring influence of the various elements of ICMs. These include particular image schemas like the source-path-goal schema, the stacking of propositions, the use of metaphor to portray abstract perceptions as concrete, basic entities and the use of metonymy to represent highly complex situations as very simple, binary entities.

In contrast, Evans' usage based approach to cognitive models is invaluable in foregrounding the fact that conservative religious believers' experience of the world is far from fixed and rigid. What Evans' theory emphasises is that the variables become infinite when we view belief through the prism of experience and the expression of that experience at a particular point in a text or during an unfolding discourse. The inevitable consequence of this is that our cognitive model selection and expression must always be to some degree shifting and unique:

... the range of linguistic units available to the language user massively underdetermine the range of situations, events, states, relationships and other interpersonal functions that the language user may potentially seek to use language to express and fulfil. One reason for this is that language users live in a socio-physical 'matrix' that is continually shifting and evolving. No two situations, feelings or relationships, at any given point in time, are exactly alike. We are continually using language to express unique meanings, about unique states of affairs and relationships, in unique ways.

(Evans 2006: 497)

Evans' LCCM theory therefore provides a foundation for a critical engagement with the conservative religious believer's worldview that I will develop in the next chapter. However, I am concerned at this point that my investigation into how and why conservative religious believers perceive reality in absolute terms has so far remained restricted to cognitive linguistic research into cognitive models. My intention now is therefore to further ground this investigation into how absolute views of reality can *appear* to be self-evidently obvious by critically comparing this cognitive linguistic approach with a wider philosophical context.

2.6 Relating ICMs to the Ideas of Wittgenstein, Wisdom and Mehan

This section examines two core ideas within the fields of epistemology and the philosophy of religion and one study which demonstrates those core ideas. The conclusions which can be drawn from these ideas will then be compared and contrasted with the Cognitive Linguistic notion of ICMs. The first of these ideas relate to logical positivism and the early work of Wittgenstein. They relate to the insistence that statements about reality are only meaningful when it is possible to empirically verify their veracity. The second idea, relating to the later work of Wittgenstein and Wisdom, stands in marked contrast to this insistence. It proposes that humans carry “pictures” of reality in their minds and use those pictures to see reality as one thing rather than another. This idea relates to the argument that humans do not tend to use evidence to *arrive at* a conclusion, but rather use evidence to support, consolidate or clarify an existing conclusion or picture of reality or at least a feeling or instinct that leans in a particular direction. The study by Mehan consolidates these ideas through a study that demonstrates how a group of psychiatrists and the patient they examine both appear to interpret data in a way that supports their respective worldviews – even though the data appears to contradict those worldviews. I argue that when it comes to a consideration of very abstract belief systems that rely on indirect evidence to form conclusions, then this second idea can be viewed as compatible with many elements relating to the notion of ICMs.

Before I proceed, it is necessary to offer some justification for my focus on Wittgenstein, Wisdom and Mehan. The later work of Wittgenstein can be viewed as one of the starting points for a sustained challenge of the objectivist perspective, and therefore one of the crucial foundations for Lakoff’s work on cognitive models (for example, see Taylor’s references to Wittgenstein when discussing categorisation and cognitive linguistics in Taylor 2003). It is therefore important to explore the influence of Wittgenstein during any exploration encompassing the notions of objectivity and subjectivity. My decision to focus on Wisdom’s article relates to the fact that he is interested in extending the ideas of Wittgenstein while explicitly applying them to the notion of objectivity and

subjectivity in religious believers. His parable of the garden (discussed below) is also the most lucid attempt that I am aware of to illustrate the element of subjectivity in issues relating to the origins of the Universe and the acceptance or rejection of religious belief. My choice to focus on Mehan's study and the conclusions he draws from that study is based on three reasons: the first is that Mehan's work returns the focus to an empirical analysis of discourse, the second is that his study has been recognised as influential within the field of discourse analysis (for example, Jaworski and Coupland (2006: xii and 477) refer to it as a "key article" in discourse studies, in addition to being a "poignant and powerful demonstration of the power/knowledge interface in discourse") and the third is that his conclusions consolidate the theoretical ideas of Wittgenstein and Wisdom despite the fact that they do not come from within the field of philosophy.

Objectivism, Subjectivism and Embodied Realism

Any discussion of Wittgenstein's contributions to the analysis of the relationship between language and reality must first begin with his first major work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, first published in 1921 and first translated into English in 1922. This earlier treatise subsequently became the inspiration for the *logical positivists*, a group of philosophers who insisted that language could only be meaningful when it was used to refer to things that could in some way be empirically verified (Stiver 1996: 42, 59). The arguments of Wittgenstein's work that attracted the logical positivists included the claim that any proposition must have the characteristic of clarity, and if that necessity for clarity cannot be met, then what the proposition refers to should be deemed as beyond the limits of language, and therefore "we must pass over [it] in silence" (Wittgenstein 1922/2001: 7). Logical positivists developed this argument further with their insistence that propositions must be empirically verifiable, or be regarded as nonsense and not worthy of discussion (Hick 2004: 177; Cheetham 2003: 21). This of course had serious implications for religious language because logical positivists were insisting that any proposition originating from faith in a divine being was impossible

to empirically verify. However, the movement of logical positivism soon collapsed in on itself due to the self-defeating nature of its own argument – the central point that the argument that meaningful language must be empirically verifiable was itself an abstract principle which could not be subject to empirical verification (Stiver 1996: 45-46). However, despite the disintegration of the movement, many scholars related to the philosophy of religion argue that the underpinning ideas have been quietly absorbed into the worldviews of certain scientists and thinkers in the modern world (Stiver 1996: 47; Hick 2004: 177; Cheetham 2003: 22; McFague 1982: 5).

The logical positivist viewpoint has some key disagreements with the epistemological theory known as *objectivism*, but one similarity is that both positions maintain that it is possible to arrive at objective knowledge of the world around us. This similarity is important because, as I have argued in this chapter, the cognitive linguistic theory of cognitive models is based around the fundamental argument that *pure*, objective knowledge of the world, whether achieved through experimentation, logic or mathematics, is not possible. However, my examination of Wittgenstein's contribution to the philosophy of knowledge is not yet complete. Despite the fact that the cognitive linguistic approach can be seen as diametrically opposed to many of the central tenants of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922/2001), Wittgenstein went on to develop his views about the nature of knowledge in a radically different direction. This brings me to a consideration of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953/2009).

In *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*, Lakoff acknowledges that his ideas on categorisation and Idealised Cognitive Models emerged from a line of reasoning that began in the later work of Wittgenstein (Lakoff 1987: 11; see also the frequent engagement with the later Wittgenstein in Taylor 2003). In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein distanced himself from the idea that some language is clearly meaningful and some is clearly meaningless, and moved toward describing language through the metaphor of a game (Wittgenstein 1953/2009: 8). What he meant by this was that how humans define language or categorise meaning depends upon the specific context of how

that language is to be used, or, to pursue the metaphor, what the rules of a particular game are (Wittgenstein 1953/2009: 238; Gergen 2009: 8; Taylor 2003: 42-43). Wittgenstein gives the example of a builder teaching his assistant about building. The word “block” is learned in relation to how a block will be used within that context of building (Wittgenstein 1953/2009: 6). If the context and use is changed, if a different type of “game” is played, then the word “block” could well take on a different meaning. Wittgenstein concludes that words are classified depending on the contingent aim or inclination of the classifier and are not dependent on some *a priori* criterion (Wittgenstein in Gergen 2003: 19), or to put it another way “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Wittgenstein 1953/2009: 25, 238). Wittgenstein (1953/2009: 238) relates this to the seemingly objective world of mathematics where he argues that mathematics may be a “body of knowledge”, but that it is also an “activity” with its own agreed upon rules. This means that if, for whatever reason, everybody was to be taught that two and two comes to five and that was to become the agreed upon rule, then the “game” where two and two being five is regarded as false “would have been abrogated” (ibid.). It is often difficult to interpret Wittgenstein, but here he does not appear to be saying that two and two cannot be said to objectively equal four. Instead, his argument appears to be that the meaning of words is determined by the game they are played within, and that it is often impossible to lay aside function and context in an effort to establish which game best matches the objective entity or situation in the environment (cf. Stiver 1996: 67-68).

This notion of language games also relates to his discussion of the duck-rabbit picture. This is a picture that can look like a rabbit to some and a duck to others. Wittgenstein poses a list of questions related to the act of seeing what is in the duck-rabbit picture and other similar drawings. One of these questions relates to the basis upon which we are able to give a “perfectly specific description” of a picture: “was it *seeing*, or was it a thought?” (Wittgenstein 1953/2009: 215). The implication appears to be that the two cannot be divorced:

“Is it a genuine visual experience?” The question is: in what way is it one? Here it is *difficult* to see that what is at issue is determination of concepts. What forces itself on one is a concept (you must not forget that).

(ibid.)

The conclusion appears to be that we do not just *see* things, but that we see things *as something* even when we do not realise that this is the case. When we keep staring at the rabbit and it suddenly appears to switch to a duck, we are not seeing something new, just conceptualising the data in a different way. It could be argued that one of the key points of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is that these different ways of conceptualising words, propositions and things are determined by the different socio-cultural language games we construct and the uses we put those games to. In his *Lectures and Conversations*, Wittgenstein went on to postulate that we all live our lives according to differing "pictures" embedded in our minds, "I think differently, in a different way. I say different things to myself. I have different pictures" (Wittgenstein 1978: 62).

Returning now to the primary topic of Cognitive Linguistics and ICMs, I would now like to address the question of how well Wittgenstein's view of language fits in with the cognitive linguistic approach to categorisation. This is an important question because Wittgenstein can be seen as one of the most important philosophers in terms of the epistemological move away from an objectivist paradigm. It is therefore very important to trace the connections between one of the most important trends in the philosophy of knowledge and the cognitive linguistic approach. In addition to this, as I pointed out above, cognitive linguist researchers such as Lakoff and Johnson and Taylor have linked some of the aspects of their examination of categorisation with an explicit engagement with Wittgenstein's ideas. I would argue that Lakoff, Johnson, Evans and Taylor are the cognitive linguistic researchers that have devoted the most time to researching cognitive models. This thesis has so far examined in some detail the ideas of Lakoff and Johnson and Evans, but has yet to examine the arguments of Taylor. I will therefore now turn briefly to a consideration of his 2003 monograph on categorisation, and how he locates his views on cognitive models in relation to Wittgenstein's later work.

Taylor (2003) essentially agrees with Wittgenstein's notion of language games and applies it to the human propensity to form conceptual and linguistic categories of meaning through which we interact

with the world. However, in line with Lakoff's notion of prototypicality effects in ICMs, Taylor (2003) also pushes the idea further and argues that these different games are not viewed equally by everybody. Certain *uses* of words will be prototypical for certain individuals within particular socio-cultural contexts at particular times, but not for others. Taylor (2003: 91-93) also applies this notion of prototypicality to the notion of propositional frames that I examined above (section 2.2), focusing on Lakoff's examples of the term *mother* and the days of the week (Taylor focuses on the term *Monday*).

Despite this agreement between the notion of language games and the idea of categories of meaning and prototypicality effects within ICMs, there is an important difference between the subjectivism of the later Wittgenstein and the cognitive linguistic argument for *embodied realism*. I will now turn to a brief exploration of this important epistemological difference.

Embodied realism argues that our bodies and the "wetware" of our brains should be seen as "coupled to our environment" and not rigidly distinct from it (ibid. 91), so that the use of our physical bodies in the navigation and understanding of our environments should be viewed as a fusion between aspects of those environments with our cognitive frameworks (Evans 2009: 29-30; Gibbs 2005). Taylor (2003: 1-17) provides a good example of this when he considers the language of colour. He goes some way in arguing that colour is not something that exists as a pre-given in the external world and crucially depends on how a particular brain interprets incoming data and chooses to demarcate "discrete colour categories" (Taylor 2003: 3). However, he stops short of a full subjectivist view of the language of colour by noting the evidence for the notion that certain colour ranges have focal prominence in all humans (ibid. 8-11). He concludes, in line with the cognitive linguistic trend toward a middle road between subjectivism and objectivism, that culture clearly influences the categorisation of colour, but that this categorisation is possibly constrained to a degree by external environmental factors (ibid. 14).

This leads to the possibility that, in some domains of knowledge, high or even near-absolute levels of certainty in our knowledge of the world are possible. As we have seen, the argument of embodied realism is that our knowledge of the world encapsulated within our cognitive models has been formed through our interaction with it, and the reason that humans have survived and multiplied is that, in relation to the “external” world, we have developed a vast body of knowledge that can be trusted. The point here is that successful physical navigation and survival within a given environment depends on extensive networks of knowledge about the objective world that *must* be consistently reliable and unambiguous. The cognitive linguistic approach also rejects any philosophical approach that views the mind as disembodied in the sense of being separate from the physical body and the world around it. This notion of embodied realism therefore rejects the *pure* subjectivism of *social constructionist* scholars like Gergen (cf. Gergen 2009) on the grounds that our minds and bodies do not just interface with the world around them, but are also an integral part of that world (Lakoff 1999: 91). What this amounts to in philosophical terms is a rejection of the strict “subject-object dichotomy” that underpins pure subjectivism, along with an equally strong rejection of objectivist views of human knowledge (Lakoff 1999: 93). This means that the usage based Cognitive Linguistic approach still recognises that the meaning of any word is dependent on a specific context, perspective and usage, and underpinned by a concept that is subject to shifting prototypicality effects at its core, as well as a level of “fuzziness” often encountered along its boundaries (Evans and Green 2006: 253-254; Evans 2009: 41; Kövecses 2006: 77; Littlemore 2009: 88). There is therefore no conflict between embodied realism and Evans’ (2009: 76) argument that his approach “assumes the semantic contribution associated with a word will vary slightly every time it is used”.

Having argued for an epistemological position between objectivism and pure subjectivism, it is now necessary to re-focus our attention on worldviews related to highly abstract notions such as the ultimate purpose of human life and the Universe. This is important because the further we move from concrete, basic categories relating to our physical bodies and environment, the more metaphorical and metonymic our knowledge tends to become, and the more it appears to rely on

abstract image schemas and increasingly higher stacks of propositions. What this inevitably means is that there is even more room for construal, along with the ideological ramifications associated with any process of construal. It is when we come to deal with such highly abstract views relating to the nature of life that the ideas of Wittgenstein become more applicable. It is for this reason that I will now turn to a philosopher of religion who explicitly applied Wittgenstein's ideas to religious belief systems.

Wisdom's Connections and Mehan's Incorrigible Propositions

In my discussion of cognitive models, I examined Lakoff's observation that human beings often feel a pull to choose particular cognitive models over others and to view them as more correct. The ideas of Wisdom and Mehan that I will explore in this section move beyond this observation by exploring why it is that we are more likely to interpret relevant data as supporting our worldviews than we are to interpret it as undermining them.

John Wisdom (1904-1993) was well known in philosophy of religion circles for his development of the work of the later Wittgenstein and his contributions to the field of philosophy of religion. This development was principally focused on the issue of why people were often able to examine the same data and yet arrive at mutually opposing conclusions, while at the same time appearing to be absolutely convinced of the validity of their respective conclusion. His most well-known contribution to these epistemological issues came in the form of the parable of the invisible gardener which I will briefly examine below. The parable became a central focus point in the philosophy of religion and has been subsequently adopted and revised by the former atheist apologist Antony Flew (see Flew 1968). It is widely seen as one of the greatest summaries of the subjectivist position in the philosophy of religion and it is therefore important to consider it here.

The parable first appeared in his influential article *Gods* (Wisdom 2000). It begins with two men who return to an area of land “and find among the weeds a few old plants surprisingly vigorous” (Wisdom 2000: 282). One of the men (I shall refer to him as the “believer”) concludes that a gardener must have come in their absence and cultivated those plants, while the other man (I shall refer to him as the “non-believer”) is not persuaded (ibid.). Wisdom interprets the basis of their disagreement on the factors of care, purpose and beauty:

- **Care:** The believer maintains that the plants appear to have been cared for while the non-believer disagrees (“Anybody who cared about these plants would have kept down these weeds” (ibid.)).
- **Purpose:** The believer maintains that the plants have been arranged in a particular order for a particular reason (“Look at the way these are arranged. There is purpose and a feeling of beauty here” (ibid.)). The non-believer may see some natural order emerging from chaos, but feels no necessity to infer intelligent purpose from that order.
- **Beauty:** The believer maintains that the plants have been arranged in an order that demonstrates a sense of aesthetics, suggesting the work of a personal being who has a sense of beauty (ibid.). The non-believer sees no reason to infer that the concept of beauty is anywhere else except in the eye of the beholder.

The parable continues with the two men examining the plants and investigating the surrounding area in every possible way, but still coming to different conclusions. Wisdom argues that “at this stage, in this context, the gardener hypothesis has ceased to be experimental” in that any possible data that could be generated would always be interpreted in different ways by the two men (ibid.). The point is that to apply data to the question in hand requires the making of connections and the arranging of those connections into a particular argument (Stiver 1996: 73-74), and therein lies the problem for an objectivist view: “The paths we need to trace from other cases to the case in question are often numerous and difficult to detect and the person with whom we are discussing the matter may well

draw attention to connections which, while not incompatible with those we have tried to emphasize, are of an opposite inclination” (Wisdom 2000: 286). This seems in line with the arguments of Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 88-89) that have already been examined above, “There can be no assumption-free scientific observations. And there is no correct logic of induction that will yield correct laws directly from observational data”.

Having explored Wisdom’s ideas on how individuals can arrive at certain but mutually opposing conclusions from examining the same data, I am now able to complete this chapter by following those ideas to their logical conclusion. Mehan (2006: 533) has argued that many people view reality through the lens or interpretative framework of an *incorrigible proposition* which he defines as a “proposition that one never admits to be false whatever happens; one that is compatible with any and every conceivable state of affairs”. Mehan’s thesis is that such fundamental propositions do not just underpin the worldviews of primitive or very religious people, but in fact suffuse modern society to the point where he sees evidence of it in the discourse of psychiatrists evaluating a patient diagnosed with schizophrenia and, perhaps not so surprisingly, vice versa. He views these propositions as part of a process which adheres to the following pattern:

A basic premise or a fundamental proposition is presented which forms the basis of an argument.

When confronted with evidence which is potentially contradictory to a basic position, the evidence is ignored, repelled, or denied.

The presence of evidence which opposes a basic position is used reflexively as further support of the efficacy of the basic position.

(Mehan 2006: 537)

These processes appear to be an even more extreme restatement of Wisdom’s arrangement of connections. Not only is the data being arranged to support core beliefs, as Wisdom argued, but data that appears to contradict those core beliefs are somehow construed as supporting it. It is worth looking at an extract from Mehan’s data before venturing into a critical evaluation of this notion. During an interview between a panel of psychiatrists and a patient, the patient makes it clear

that he does not want to continue taking medicine because he does not need it and it is harming him (Mehan 2006: 539). After the patient has gone, the psychiatrists conclude that the patient's concern about the medicine and his desire not to take it clearly demonstrate the need to increase his dosage of tranquilizers (Mehan 2006: 540). For the patient, his anxiety over taking medicine is evidence of its harm to him and the need to stop taking it, but for the psychiatrists the same anxiety is evidence of paranoia and the need to increase what he is being given. The same data is evaluated to support two diametrically opposing conclusions, and what is most interesting about this is that the two conclusions appeared self-evident and obvious to the two parties. One of the psychiatrists also adds, "He argues in a perfectly paranoid pattern. If you accept his basic premise the rest of it is logical. But, the basic premise is not true" (Mehan 2006: 541). The psychiatrist sees no problem with the patient's ability to reason in a logical manner – the problem is with the patient's starting point, or, to refer back to the later Wittgenstein, the patient's underlying "picture" of reality.

I have already outlined Lakoff's (1987: 75) argument that "many people feel the pressure to pick one model as being the right one". If this is accepted, it provides the starting point for people's propensity to view their worldview choices as correct, while Mehan's incorrigible propositions demonstrates how such choices are maintained or validated. The arguments of Wisdom and Mehan are aimed at establishing the "widespread appearance of belief-validating practices" as a "more extensive feature of reasoning" in humans in general than was previously thought (Mehan 2006: 544). There are many cases where Wisdom's and Mehan's ideas appear to fit perfectly, but there are of course also cases where people often exhibit a kind of "swing-voter" mentality where they oscillate indecisively between multiple perspectives, or an agnostic response where they maintain that they just do not know. However, this thesis is not concerned with people in general. Its scope at this point is restricted to conservative religious believers, and with respect to that group of people, Wisdom's and Mehan's ideas appear to be particularly relevant.

It is therefore now possible to combine these ideas with the notion of cognitive models and conclude this chapter by proposing a set of *presuppositions* that will frame my investigation in chapters three and four of the two research questions discussed in the introduction.

The first presupposition is that language is underpinned by various abstract image schemas, as well as organised and expressed through the use of stacked propositions, metaphoric cross domain mappings and metonymic domain internal mappings. The second presupposition is that it is useful to apply this idea that language is underpinned by schemas, stacked propositions, metaphor and metonymy specifically to the language of conservative religious believers. For example, it is useful to place questions such as, “Why am I here?”, “Where am I going?”, “What is the purpose or goal of my existence?” within the framework of the source-path-goal schema. It is also useful, for example, to consider religious metaphorical language from the perspective of the desire to construe something abstract as something concrete and tangible, and conservative religious metonymic language as the desire to represent an idea or a person with many complex characteristics as something very simple and reductive. These presuppositions could then be extended to suggest the additional premise that conservative religious believers feel compelled to look for a clear, specific, overarching existential purpose for human life involving an active divine entity, resulting in a strong pull to accept one abstract worldview that answers the need for an existential purpose as obviously true and certain and others as clearly false. Such believers would then use stacked propositions, metaphor and metonymy as key tools in the maintenance of that choice.

All of these points offer one possible perspective for viewing how conservative religious believers have developed and are able to continue to maintain oversimplified worldviews. These presuppositions have been developed by first examining research relating to theories about how people in general process and categorise their environments, and then applying those theories to a set of presuppositions about how conservative religious believers may process and categorise their environments. However, it must be remembered that the above points can only address the issue of

how conservative religious believers *perceive* reality. As I discussed above in the section on Evans' usage based theory of cognitive models, I have yet to investigate in detail whether the language of specific communities of conservative religious believers are in fact as rigid and static as the perceptions that those models produce. To put it another way: despite the fact that such believers appears to often perceive the world in rigid, binary, oversimplified terms, do the expressions of their experience match this perception of static, either-or simplicity? These are questions that I will address in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: An Analysis of Metaphors Related to Movement and Proximity in Evangelical Testimonials

I concluded the last chapter with a set of presuppositions with which to approach the study of conservative religious language. These included the perspective that conservative religious believers derive the sense that their worldviews are obviously correct through the interaction of powerful cognitive elements such as the source-path-goal image schema, stacked propositional frameworks, metonymy and metaphor. When all these elements are combined, the result is a view of the world that is perceived as clear, certain and fixed. However, the question that I began to raise in the previous chapter is whether there is a disconnection between how conservative religious believers perceive reality in terms of their all-encompassing statements of belief and how they express their personal, individual experience of that reality. This question of whether it is possible to talk about clear, fixed differences in the language that conservative believers from different religions use to express their experience will be the focus of this chapter. Please note that this chapter is a slightly expanded version of the *Metaphor and the Social World* article *A closer walk: A study of the interaction between metaphors related to movement and proximity and presuppositions about the reality of belief in Christian and Muslim testimonials* (Richardson 2012).

Conservative religious believers are very good at summarising the differences between themselves and other belief communities in rigid, binary terms. One example of this can be seen in a 2001 *Evangelical Times* article by Alan Clifford where he quotes from a 1645 document outlining the questions that needed to be answered in the affirmative before a person could be baptised. He praises the questions as valuable in helping modern Evangelical Christians to “assess correctly the religious dimension of the current world crisis”. The questions include the following:

Q5: Do you ... believe that Muhammad was [a false prophet,] and that his Qur'an is ... broached on design to set up a false and abominable religion?

A: Yes.

(<http://www.evangelical-times.org/archive/item/1040/Cults-and-other-religions/Islam--a-Reformed-response/>)

The portrayal of Islam as an entity that is qualitatively different from Christianity is clear here.

However, the question that I shall address in this chapter is whether it is possible to view in the same clear, fixed terms the differences in the way particular groups of conservative Christian and Muslim believers use certain types of metaphors. To put it in more precise terms, I will be investigating the following research question: *Are there clear, fixed differences between Evangelical Times Christian testimonial authors and islamfortoday.com Muslim testimonial authors in terms of their use of movement and proximity metaphors to express their way of believing?* I will begin by introducing the background to this question and how it relates to the set of presuppositions discussed in the previous chapter. I will then discuss my restricted focus on the communities represented by islamfortoday.com and the Evangelical Times, as well as my focus on movement and proximity metaphors.

3.1 Introduction

I ended the previous chapter with a set of *presuppositions* as opposed to *conclusions*. The reason why I refer to those concluding points as presuppositions is because they will act as a frame for the analyses that I will conduct in this chapter and the next. They also contain a perspective that cannot be empirically demonstrated because they make tentative claims about conservative religious language *in general*. However, this chapter will focus in on an analysis of certain types of language in two particular groups of conservative religious believers. This will allow me to explore the validity of the specific premise that conservative religious believers use metaphor and schemas in order to reinforce their view of the world as clear, certain and fixed. However, it is important to emphasise

that it will only be possible to apply the conclusions to the particular groups, genre of text and type of metaphor that this study focuses on.

My intention in this chapter is also to find out whether it is necessary for researchers to analyse the differences in the use of this language between two groups as variable, situated patterns of emphasis as opposed to rigid, binary differences. As I emphasised in the previous chapter, investigating this contrast between certain types of metaphor and schema being at the heart of a clear and fixed view of the world *for the believer*, and yet being a marker of the relativity of belief *for the researcher* is central to this thesis.

This chapter will therefore be interested in both the use of movement and proximity metaphors by both groups to express their sense of certainty, as well as a comparison of the patterns of emphasis that form around their use of language. I will also argue that it is useful to analyse such patterns of emphasis because they could provide valuable insights into where the sense of certainty of specific groups of Christians and Muslims is located. These types of insights could then have useful implications for the area of inter-faith dialogue.

Throughout this chapter, I will refer to movement and proximity metaphors as examples of language that expresses a conservative believer's experience. These types of metaphors will also be referred to as examples *action and relationship language*. I will define this phrase as language relating to the religious domain that involves an individual doing something or having something done to him or her, or saying something about a relationship that forms a central part of their way of believing. I will argue that such language is important for two reasons. The first reason is that it lies at the heart of the believer's certainty and sense of reality concerning his or her beliefs. A statement such as "*Oh for a closer walk with Christ*" (extract from a Christian testimonial, Christian Text 9, discussed in section 3.3 below) only makes sense if the believer first feels absolutely certain that there is a divine entity which can be existentially approached. The second reason is that this language is inherently

more fluid, shared and personal than language purely focused on the theoretical discussion of doctrine.

Given the focus of this thesis on the language of experience, it appeared to be a natural choice to restrict this first study to the specific genre of the religious testimonial on the grounds that it tends to emphasise such language. Conservative religious testimonials often take the form within Islam and Christianity of a personal narrative where the author explains how he or she successfully engaged in a journey, quest or struggle (cf. Rambo 1993) to advance towards a state of resolution (cf. Labov and Waletzky 2003) in the form of finding truth and ultimate purpose. These personal stories also tend to juxtapose the language of being on a journey with the language characteristic of religious and particularly monotheistic religious belief that reflect reversed participant roles, such as being led, brought, taken or guided towards the truth (cf. Coleman 1980). As we have already seen in the extract included at the beginning of chapter one and the Muslim testimonial discussed in chapter two, a key characteristic of these testimonials is their fusion of personal stories with metaphorical language that expresses a process of the believer both moving and *being* moved towards a specific goal such as heaven. Examples of other related metaphors also include cases of the believer or a divine entity being the goal of movement, resulting in both movement and divine entity proximity metaphors that indicate a believer or a divine entity moving closer or being with or even inside the other.

I have also chosen to focus on testimonials that have already been produced and disseminated, rather than choosing to interview Christians and Muslims in order to elicit their personal experiences. One of my motivations for choosing to work with texts that have already been produced in a natural environment and for a natural purpose is based on my experience during pilot studies where I interviewed Christians and Muslims and asked a Christian and atheist to discuss their beliefs. I discovered that the language of participants in the contexts of interviews contained far less occurrences of metaphor than the occurrences in naturally produced testimonials. It was as if the

participants in the interviews and discussions were choosing their words far more carefully because they were aware that their language would be analysed. I therefore chose to focus on texts that had been produced outside of the context of arranged interviews and discussions for this first study.

This chapter will compare and contrast a range of such metaphors occurring in testimonials contained within the 2010 and 2011 Christmas editions of the *Evangelical Times* with Muslim testimonials on the website *islamfortoday.com*. My decision to select these two sources of data was based on my need to focus on relatively prominent, homogenous communities rather than individual testimonials scattered over a number of Christian and Muslim groups. The *Evangelical Times* offered the largest single collection of Christian testimonials that I could find, while representing an important section of the Evangelical Christian community. *Islamfortoday.com* also contained the largest single collection of Muslim testimonials in English that I could find, while representing a large community of English speaking Muslims. However, the decision to work with a UK Christian community and a US Muslim community is of course problematic in terms of their very different social contexts. Throughout my analysis I have remained sensitive to the fact that the cultural backgrounds to these two collections of texts are very different and that any possible explanations for differences in the language must consider socio-cultural as well as theological differences.

I now wish to turn my attention to my reasons for restricting this analysis to movement and proximity metaphors. Although at least one example of a movement or proximity metaphor was present in every testimonial I examined, and often the testimonials contained clusters of such metaphors, my decision to focus on movement and proximity metaphors was not primarily based on frequency. The limited focus of this chapter on movement and proximity metaphors relating to a divine entity has grown out of the observation that such metaphors appear to play such a key role in large areas of religious language and epistemology (the study of the nature of knowing and knowledge discussed in more detail in chapter two above) that they deserve a specialised study. Chapter two highlighted the importance of image schemas and the metaphorical language that

relates to them. I argued in chapter two that the most important of these schemas for religious belief is the source-path-goal schema. The reason for this is that all religious thought is underpinned by a sense of a very specific purpose and direction or goal for human existence. This purposeful movement towards a goal is also shaped by that goal sometimes being the divine entity, and at other times the divine entity being construed as being with and helping the believer to reach a specific goal. This often means that it is impossible to divorce movement from proximity to a divine entity, or at least the two can often cluster together. It is also relevant to my aims that movement metaphors can also play a key role in reconciliation discourse and processes of rehumanisation (cf. Cameron 2010a: 58-73). However, the key test in whether this decision to restrict the focus of this thesis to these particular types of metaphor is justifiable or not is whether the analysis in section 3.5 below can produce valuable insights into the research questions that this thesis revolves around.

Having made these arguments for my focus on movement and proximity metaphors, it is important also to recognise that it is not just these metaphors that deserve special attention – studies that specialise in the significance of religious language drawing on other domains such as growth, conflict and struggle, human relationships, and light and clarity could also be very valuable.

I will now move on to an introduction to the underpinning beliefs and functions of these testimonials, before exploring a methodology for identifying metaphor in text and discussing the presuppositions of those target metaphors. I will then discuss the key differences between the usage and frequency of those metaphors in the two collections of texts and relate the results to the possibility of varying perceptions about the reality of their beliefs. I will conclude by briefly exploring the advantages of being aware of the particular type of action and relationship language to focus on during attempts at meaningful engagement with committed conservative believers.

3.2 The Underpinning Beliefs and Functions of the Target Testimonials

Before I focus in on the language related to the process of belief, it is first important to outline a definition and function of the situated beliefs represented in the target testimonials. The testimonials represent the beliefs of one *Evangelical Christian* community, which is taken as one example of committed, conservative Christian belief. In terms of defining the beliefs of Evangelical Christianity, Flinn (1999: 63) identifies two key ideas: firstly, Evangelicals believe that salvation is completely dependent on the work of Christ (his death on the cross and resurrection) as opposed to the “works” of the believer (and the various nuanced positions of the Roman Catholic viewpoint), and secondly, they believe that every part of the Bible is both the divinely inspired *word of God* and absolutely error-free or *infallible*. This definition would be in line with the doctrinal standpoint of the UK based *Evangelical Times*.

In terms of the publication’s function, the annual Christmas edition appears to be primarily focused on evangelisation, or the attempt to convert others. Evidence for this can be found in the fact that bulk orders can be made at a “greatly reduced cost” in order to encourage distribution to the local community (http://www.evangelical-times.org/Website_Pages/About.php), and the two editions examined contained a sizeable number of personal testimonials (ten in the 2010 edition, eleven in the 2011 edition). Many of these testimonials contain explicit language aimed at converting a reader, for example, “Come to God in prayer; ask for forgiveness” (Christian Testimonial 1, subsequently referred to as CT1). It may also be possible to argue for a second key function based on the premise that persuading others can further consolidate and add meaning to existing beliefs. This can be linked to the notion that language and the conceptualisations beneath it are used to shape our experience as well as express it (Goatly 2007; Gumperz and Levinson 1996; Lakoff 1987).

It is possible to follow a similar type of description in defining the type of Islam represented by the American based website *Islamfortoday.com*. A complete dependence on the “work” of Christ can be replaced by adherence to the five pillars of Islam: the profession of faith, praying at specified times,

the giving of alms, pilgrimage and fasting. The belief that the Bible is the word of God can be replaced with the belief that the Qur'an is the revealed word of Allah recorded by the Prophet Mohammad. The huge impact of the post-9/11 situation in America and the suspicion with which some US Muslims perceive themselves to be viewed by non-Muslims (expressed and popularised in well-known books such as Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007)) can also be seen as a key factor influencing the way that some Muslims believe and how they express that belief.

In addition to the above two core aspects of Islamic belief and engagement with the post-9/11 US context, the website also emphasises an inclusive approach to the two major Islamic sects: *Sunni* and *Shia*, while distancing itself from extremism and controversial Islamic sects such as *the Nation of Islam*. However, it is important to emphasise that this inclusiveness is not indicative of a liberal approach to the Qur'an and Islamic belief in general. Particular articles on the website still argue for interpretations of the Qur'an that would be considered very traditional and conservative by many non-Muslim Western communities, such as interpreting Sura 4:34 as an instruction to a husband to "lightly" hit his wife in circumstances related to "extreme cases of disobedience" such as "refusing intercourse without cause frequently" or "refusing to tell him where she had been" (http://www.islamfortoday.com/how_to_make_your_wife_happy.htm).

In terms of role and function, the main page of the website states that it has been designed for "Westerners seeking a knowledge and understanding of Islam", while the main testimonial page opens with the following quote from the Qu'ran, "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching" (16: 125). This, in addition to the polemical and clarifying scope and tone of many of the articles and the high number of personal testimonials (forty seven on the main page and links to many more), suggests the functions of consolidating the existing belief of new, English speaking converts, carving out an identity separate from extremist groups, as well as attempting to convert others.

Both the *Evangelical Times* and *islamfortoday.com* attest to the existence of specific discourse communities *within* the larger discourse communities of Christianity and Islam respectively. In terms of drawing conclusions on any analysis of their language, it must be borne in mind that there are other discourse communities within these religions that would produce language with very different patterns of emphasis. It must also be stressed that it is impossible to disentangle the expression of a process of belief from a very specific time, setting and cultural context, and the influence of a specific function, text format, size and genre (cf. Deignan, Littlemore and Semino 2013; Steen 2007: 352-353).

Having briefly defined Evangelical Christianity and the Sunni and Shia inclusive Islam represented by *Islamfortoday.com*, I will now move on to an examination of how I selected the target texts and the methodology chosen for the identification of metaphorical language in those texts.

3.3 Text Selection and Metaphor Identification

In terms of the number of testimonials selected for the analysis, all twenty testimonials from the *Evangelical Times* 2010 and 2011 issues were included, and have been reproduced in appendix 1.1 on the CD. The Muslim testimonials were generally longer than their Christian counterparts, prompting the decision to include the first five testimonials along with a further ten testimonials based on their smaller size. These have been reproduced in appendix 1.2 on the CD. The number and total size of the Muslim and Christian testimonials are listed below in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Number and Size of Muslim and Christian Texts.

| | No. of testimonials | Total size (words) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Muslim Testimonials | 15 | 29067 |
| Christian Testimonials | 20 | 15225 |

When it came to analysing occurrences of metaphorical language related to movement and divine entity proximity in those texts, I chose to work with the Pragglejaz Group's (2007) *Metaphor Identification Procedure* (MIP). This procedure works with a definition of metaphor as an instance of a lexical unit that has a more basic meaning (in the sense of being more "concrete", "precise", "related to bodily actions" and perhaps "historically older") than the one encountered in the text (Pragglejaz 2007: 3). MIP was subsequently used to identify lexical units in the texts that could be considered to be metaphorical. For example, the occurrence of *follower* in "follower of Jesus Christ" (CT10) was marked as an example of metaphorical language on the basis that a more basic and concrete usage would be to purposefully walk behind someone in the same direction. Also in line with the MIP approach, a dictionary (in this case the online 2009-2012 version of the *MacMillan Dictionary* ([macmillandictionary.com](http://www.macmillandictionary.com))) was also consulted as an aid in identifying modern, basic meanings, and instances of metaphor were identified at the level of the lexical unit (cf. Pragglejaz 2007: 5, 16). Language relevant to the notion of metaphorical movement therefore included *any lexical unit that referred to a past, present, future or hypothetical metaphorical change in location*, while language relevant to the notion of metaphorical proximity relating to a divine entity included *any lexical unit that referred to a past, present, future or hypothetical proximity between two or more entities, where at least one was perceived as non-physical and divine*. Issues related to collocation and immediate context were also considered during the identification process. It was therefore recognised that some situated usages of lexical units are not related to movement or proximity while other meanings may be. For example, *with* in "God was with me" (CT3) or "enjoying eternity with him [God] in heaven"(CT11) was marked as an example related to divine entity proximity on the grounds that a more basic, physical meaning could also be identified (such as one person being together with another person (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/with>)). However, the instance of *with* in "he [Jesus] ... persevered with me" (CT10) was not marked as an

example related to divine entity proximity in that the meaning here appears to be focused primarily on simply marking a target for the notion of perseverance.

The term *lexical unit* was applied to any unit of meaning that could not be further broken down into other discrete units of meaning (cf. Pragglejaz 2007: 25-26) that could be of interest to the notion of metaphorical movement or proximity. This meant that, for example, *go* and *to* in “go to heaven” (CT12) were marked as two lexical units relating to metaphors of movement because both *go* (indicating the existence of abstract, non-physical movement) and *to* (indicating that the specified movement is goal orientated) were considered as usefully contributing some meaning. Another example was *go* and *through* in “God will help me to go through it [a challenging life experience]” (Muslim Text 3, subsequently referred to as MT3). In this example *go* again was viewed as indicating the action of movement while *through* provided crucial schematic information about the type of movement taking place (“from one end or side of something to the other” (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/through>)). Again, in the case of “he will lead them from darkness into light” (MT11), *lead* indicates the existence of abstract, existential movement that has a more basic meaning (“to walk ... in front of a group of people” (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/lead>)) while *from* and *into* provide further crucial information by explicitly specifying that the movement is both source and goal orientated, with the goal taking the form of “entering a container or a space” (Pragglejaz 2007: 11). This example was therefore counted as possessing three lexical units relevant to the notion of metaphorical movement.

This decision to break phrases up into individual lexical units such as *lead*, *from* and *into* in “lead them from darkness into light” is not simply an arbitrary methodological decision. One of the reasons why I am attracted to the use of the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) is that it highlights the argument that the more metaphorical material that goes into the production of a particular metaphor, the more important that metaphor *may* be for both the author and the reader. I

would argue that the isolated use of *lead* could lack the level of emphasis, as well as the detail of description, that the use of *lead*, *from* and *into* provide when occurring together. This is my principal reason for choosing MIP rather than other possible metaphor identification frameworks.

In some cases it was not useful to further semantically decompose a group of words, especially in examples where the words in the group could not be viewed as the “semantic sum of their parts” (Pragglejaz 2007: 26). One example from the data is the phrase *in the presence of* in examples like “in the presence of God” (CT12). The phrase as a whole suggests a formal description of divine entity proximity, and nothing can usefully be gleaned in terms of this notion of proximity from semantically decomposing it further by, for example, analysing the use of *in* separately from *presence*. This phrase was therefore marked as a single lexical unit *for the purposes of examining metaphorical language related to proximity*.

One implication of stressing the importance of collocation and immediate context was that in some cases lexical units that were not considered to have a more basic meaning related to movement or proximity according to the MacMillan dictionary entries were still marked as such *if* they were qualified by a lexical unit that did have such a more basic, explicitly relevant entry. It is important to point out that this particular methodological decision does mark a departure from the Pragglejaz method. To give some examples, the verbs *saved* and *rescued* were not normally classed as metaphors related to a change in location, but whenever they occurred with *from* in, for instance, “saved from the Hell fire” (MT10) or “rescued from the depths of ignorance” (MT4), they were considered to be describing an action that did involve a change in location (“starting at a particular point and moving away” (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/from>)). The verbs in these instances were therefore marked as lexical units related to metaphorical movement because they provided crucial information about a type of movement taking place – namely a situation where the believer was relatively passive and in some way unable to change its location without some dependency on *being moved* by an outside agency. The lexical unit *from* was then also marked as

related to metaphorical movement, not just because it fleshed out the movement related meaning of the verb, but also because it added crucial information about that movement being structured around movement from a source.

One serious problem in metaphor identification that is relatively unique to the domain of religious discourse is the fact that more conservative religious believers will view some examples of religious language as being more basic, concrete and literal, while metaphor researchers who are not conservative religious believers would view them as more abstract and therefore metaphorical. It must be remembered that many conservative Christian believers, for example, hold the view that the spiritual dimension is eternal and enduring, while the concrete, physical dimension is transient and passing (cf. Biblical references such as 1 John 2: 17; 1 Corinthians 7: 31). This may unavoidably and understandably cause some committed believers to view some of the presuppositions of the Pragglejaz approach (in terms of what is viewed as truly concrete and basic, and what is viewed as only metaphorical) with extreme suspicion. This suspicion can be compounded in the case of language relating to locations such as heaven and hell. In the analysis in this chapter I have consistently marked verbs such as *go* and *to* in “*go to heaven*” as metaphorical on the basis that heaven is not generally regarded as a *physical location that can be pointed to* and therefore movement towards it can be contrasted with a more basic meaning of movement towards a specifiable, physical location. However, I recognise that many committed believers perceive heaven to be a very *real* location. The main point is that it is crucial that a standard procedure of metaphor identification is established, but, at the same time, it is also crucial that disagreements between how a researcher categorises a lexical unit and how a believer may do so are taken seriously. These disagreements are invaluable at highlighting the presuppositions of both the researcher and the believer and should certainly be a focus in further research in the form of follow-up interviews with believers.

One of the natural results of focusing purely on metaphors related to movement and proximity is a tendency to foreground those elements when analysing a text. This results in the categorisation of words as metaphors of movement that would otherwise perhaps be categorised in a different manner if other categories were vying for consideration. For example, in Cameron, Low and Maslen's (2010: 126) grouping of metaphors in their study of a speech by Tony Blair they have placed *taken* in "taken me far from home" in the category of GIVE/TAKE. This contrasts with my own decision to categorise *taken* in "I began to think how life was so precious and so fragile that it could be taken in a moment" (CT6) as a metaphor of movement. This relates to a number of verbs that would generally involve a change in location when applied to the author, such as the author being brought or sent to a location or taken or delivered from something or somewhere. I do not view this possible variation in classification as a flaw, but as the natural consequence of researchers working with different numbers and types of categories for different purposes.

Having discussed the complex issues relating the identification and classification of the target metaphors, I am now able to move on to an explanation of how relative frequencies were calculated, as well as provide an outline of some of the key results that will be discussed in detail in the section 3.5 below. Relative frequencies were calculated by dividing the number of occurrences by the total word count of the texts (Muslim texts: 29067; Christian texts: 15225 words) and multiplying it by one thousand. This formula will subsequently be used throughout the discussion of the results when calculating relative frequencies. For example, occurrences in the Muslim testimonials relating to divine proximity metaphors had a relative frequency of 0.31, while occurrences in the Christian testimonials had a relative frequency of 1.78. In addition to these results, occurrences in the Muslim testimonials relating to movement metaphors where the author was construed as passive had a relative frequency of 0.24 compared to 0.79 in the Christian testimonials. In contrast, occurrences in the Muslim testimonials relating to movement metaphors where there is only an influence on the direction of the author had a relative frequency of 0.72 compared to the 0.33 in the Christian testimonials. I will discuss possible explanations for these differences and their implications in detail

in the discussion of the results in section 3.5 below. However, before I move on to a consideration of the results, it is first important to further explore some of the issues relating to cognitive models that were discussed in the previous chapter.

3.4 The Presuppositions of Movement and Divine Entity Proximity Metaphors in Religious

Testimonials

In the previous chapter I briefly analysed a Muslim testimonial that made use of movement metaphors. I then went on to connect the use of such metaphors in religious discourse to the source-path-goal image schema, arguing that this schema could be viewed as one of the fundamental and pervasive pre-requisites for the concept of religion. I also argued that it is one of the key notions for understanding the need for conservative religious believers to perceive existence as having a purpose that is perceived as clear and concrete. It provides the schematic foundation for viewing life and the process of belief as a journey, while also appearing to combine with the foundational need for the conservative religious believer to view him or herself as a passive entity in the process of belief. The result of this combination is a wide range of metaphors that construe the believer as being moved by a divine entity.

One of the key themes of this thesis is that the use of metaphor involves both a process of selection and construal that tends to foreground and background particular aspects of the target domain through strategic selections from the source domain (Deignan 2005: 23-24; Lakoff 1980: 10). This can be summarised in the statement that “metaphors are seldom neutral” (Semino 2008: 32). This characteristic of metaphor makes it particularly suited for the conscious or subconscious expression of ideology or the consolidation of certain perspectives over others (Goatly 2007; Semino 2008: 32-34). Related to this is the subtle persuasive pull of metaphor in that it requires “receivers of metaphor to enter the perspective of the producer in order to understand it”, while also being able to act as a membership marker of a particular belief community (Cameron 2003: 111). I would argue

that all of these characteristics are particularly present in the agency choices that accompany the use of specific types of movement and divine entity proximity metaphors in religious testimonials. I examine some of these possible presuppositions below:

Believer-as-agent movement metaphors: This type covers those metaphors that fit the definition of movement metaphors listed above in addition to explicitly or implicitly construing the agent in the movement process as the believer. Examples include “I came to Christ” (CT7) or “I wanted to ... follow him [God]” (CT11). These metaphors rely for their meaning on the fundamental presupposition of the user that the divine entity referred to self-evidently exists, in addition to being construed as a basic and tangible thing occupying or moving through a specific space. This function of talking about something abstract by drawing on a more basic and concrete domain is a well-recognised characteristic of metaphor (Charteris-Black 2004: 21; Gibbs 2005: 99). The repeated combination of these two factors provide the foundation for a sense of assumed certainty with respect to an individual’s belief in that divine entity’s reality, nature and relationship to the believer. *Believer-as-agent* movement metaphors can also have the effect of emphasising the responsibility, accountability and implicit value of the believer. I will argue below for the importance for the believer of language that construes the believer as a passive entity, but this type of believer-as-patient language loses its power unless it is juxtaposed with believer-as-agent language. It appears to be crucial for many conservative religious believers to perceive themselves as both valued as a subject and viewed as an object at different moments in their experience. Particular belief communities and individual believers may want to emphasise one pattern over another, and the emphasis of a particular pattern may vary according to different situations and genres, but it appears to be highly unusual for a believer to eliminate one pattern altogether.

External Movement and Divine Entity Proximity: This grouping of metaphors covers examples where an external entity is viewed as an agent moving towards the believer (e.g. “the Good Shepherd came looking for me” (CT6)) or being in proximity to or within the believer (e.g. “the Holy Spirit who lives

within me” (CT10)). In addition to the presuppositions outlined above, these metaphors appear to operate with the implicit understanding that the entity referred to does not only exist, but is also able to enter into some form of a powerful, intimate relationship with the believer.

Believer-as-patient movement metaphors: This type covers those metaphors that fit the definition of movement metaphors listed above in addition to explicitly or implicitly construing the believer as in some way the patient in the movement process. This includes the believer being moved (e.g. “and this [the mercy of God] ... brought me to Islam” (MT2)), helped to move (e.g. “he [God] ... has led me from strength to strength” (CT5)), or in some way having his or her direction influenced by a divine entity (e.g. “God directs us to investigate” (MT4)). These examples can be viewed as operating with the same presuppositions outlined above, in addition to the assumption that the entity is also able to powerfully influence the existential movement, location and direction of that believer.

My point in all of the above cases is that certainty of belief primarily resides in the implicit presuppositions behind the language of doing and being acted upon. A committed believer who, for example, perceives him or herself to be guided by God is not making an *explicit* argument for the existence of God. However, the language of divine guidance makes no sense at all unless that believer already *unquestionably presupposes* that there is a God who is capable of and wishes to guide believers. It is these powerful underspecified (cf. Radden et al 2007) presuppositions *implicit* in the process language of acting and being acted upon (rather than *explicit* statements of certainty) that are of particular interest to this chapter. However, what I would like to do in this study is move beyond the unsurprising statement that committed believers must already be certain about their assumptions concerning a divine entity in order to coherently use the language that they do. What I would like to explore is precisely in which strands of the process of believing those assumptions of the reality of their belief are primarily located, in addition to addressing the question of whether there are overlaps or clear, fixed differences between the strands used in the Muslim testimonials from *islamfortoday.com* and the strands used in the Christian testimonials in the *Evangelical Times*.

Having introduced a methodology for identifying metaphors and highlighted my interest in metaphors related to movement and their epistemological assumptions, I will now move on to a description and discussion of the occurrences of those movement and proximity metaphors in the target testimonials.

3.5. The Analysis of the Results

The analysis of the texts revealed a wide range of metaphors related to movement and divine entity proximity in both collections of texts. The collection of twenty Christian testimonials was found to contain 336 occurrences of metaphorical language (relative frequency: 22) related to movement and proximity, while the fifteen Muslim testimonials were found to contain 480 occurrences (relative frequency: 17).

It is important to point out from the outset that the above totals reveal nothing about how these types of metaphor can relate to certainty. Many of the instances were also of course not explicitly related to the perception of the reality of belief. For example, the usage of *fell*, *into*, and *followed in*, “ ... I fell into a relapse of my thyroid illness, and medical depression soon followed” (CT4) and the usage of *brought* and *up* in “Although brought up in a non-Christian home ...” (CT5) were counted as interesting examples of both metaphors of movement and agency patterns, but they are only indirectly related to experiencing the perceived reality of a particular belief. The above results (listed in full in appendix 2.1 and 2.2 on the CD) were therefore used as an initial jumping-off point for the analysis below. It is also important to note that it is possible to view the above language in terms of vehicles and topics, rather than metaphorical source and target domains.

In this section, I categorise some of the usages of the movement and proximity metaphors that I encountered, as well as comparing the frequency of their usage in the Muslim and Christian collections of texts. My central aim is to focus on similarities and differences in the way that different kinds of movement and proximity metaphors were used in relation to a divine entity. I

begin by focusing on movement metaphors that construe the believer as the agent in the movement process.

Believer-as-Agent Movement Metaphors

Metaphorical language related to the construal of the believer as the agent of his or her own movement is perhaps the most expected pattern of movement metaphors, and often takes the well-documented form of viewing life as a journey (cf. Cameron 2010a; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999; Semino 2008). It is common to construe belief as a believer's conscious choice or decision to *follow* a set of ideas. As I argued in the previous section, if religious language were only to emphasise movement metaphors that construed the believer as acted upon, then the believer would be construed as a puppet or machine. This would negatively impact on the perception that the self has real and eternal value (a notion crucial to some key aspects of Christian and Muslim religious belief). What we would therefore expect to see is some level of dual emphasis in both patterns of agency, as we saw in the dialogue between the Christian and the atheist in section 2.4. This may appear to involve a logical contradiction or tension where the believer oscillates between agent and patient in the process of belief, but it is nonetheless a clearly present phenomenon in both collections of texts and one that is not viewed as problematic by believers.

Attempts can be made to integrate these two agency patterns, for example, "If we sincerely seek the truth of this life, which is Islam (peaceful submission to the Will of God), God will guide us there, God Willing" (MT4). In this example, the believer can only become an object in a process of movement (being guided) on the condition that he or she first initiates the process as the subject (by actively seeking). However, it is more common for opposing agency patterns to appear in the same text without any gloss or integration. In the Muslim testimonial I examined in the previous chapter, I observed how the author made use of several believer-as-agent journey metaphors throughout his testimonial, for example, "I then embarked on a search that is perhaps not unfamiliar to many young

people in the West, a quest for meaning in a meaningless world". However, he sums up his conversion experience at the end of the testimonial as a process of being brought to Islam by God, "It is not through an act of the mind or will that anyone becomes a Muslim, but rather through the mercy of God, and this, in the final analysis, was what brought me to Islam". A more extreme example of this can be found in one of the Christian testimonials (CT10) where the notion of being a "willing servant" in conjunction with having "placed my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ" (not an act that can normally be forced upon someone) is juxtaposed with explicit and extreme military and movement metaphors. These metaphors relate to having engaged in "rebellion against God" and "stubbornly resisted him" although in the end "even ... the most stubborn will is not too difficult for him to crack ... In spite of my resistance, he brought me to repentance and faith". The juxtaposition of movement and proximity metaphors with metaphors from other source domains was relatively common in the data I examined, as well as in unrelated discourse data examined by other researchers (cf. Kimmel 2010). Sometimes these metaphors also overlapped with the notion of movement, as they did in the occurrences of *find* examined below. However, the primary concerns of this thesis are the occurrences of movement and proximity metaphors.

In terms of shared language between the two collections of testimonials, they both make use of the verb *follow* or the related noun *follower* to describe being a Muslim or Christian (e.g. "Islam ... its [Islam's] followers" (MT2), "follow him [God]" (MT4), "follower of Jesus Christ" (CT10), "follow him [God]" (CT11)). They also both make use of the noun *way* (e.g. "way to salvation" and "way to heaven" (MT1)); "the Lord opened the way for me" (CT4) and "the only way of escape was to submit to Jesus" (CT10)) and verbs such as *come* and *go*.

One interesting difference in terms of the use of *come* is that the Islamic texts frequently use the verb in conjunction with a second verb and an impersonal object, for example, "the story of how my husband and I came to embrace Islam" (MT1), but not so frequently in the simpler *come* + PREPOSITION + [personal divine entity] pattern. There are therefore no examples in the

islamfortoday.com testimonials of *coming to Allah* or *coming to God*, despite the fact that *come to* and *came to* is used a combined total of 21 times (relative frequency: 0.72). In contrast, the notion of *coming to Jesus* or *coming to God* occurs four times in the *Evangelical Times* texts: “come to God in prayer” (CT1); “He [Jesus Christ] says, ‘Come to me’” (CT4); “I came to Christ” (CT7); and “I had to come to God in repentance” (CT14) out of 15 total occurrences (relative frequency: 0.99) of *come to* and *came to*.

We see the same pattern with the use of *follow* and *follower*. The Muslim testimonials used *follow*, *followed*, *following* and *follower* a total of 27 times (relative frequency: 0.93), with occurrences that cover, for example, following a verse from the Quran, the prophet, and the religion of Islam, but never involving the use of God or Allah as the explicit object. The closest the language of the Muslim testimonials comes to this type of reference is in the example of, “I saw Jesus (peace be upon him) as my example on how to be a good follower of and submitter to God's will, but not as God himself” (MT8). But even here what is being followed is not God, but a key aspect of God. Again, in contrast, the Christian testimonials contained 17 occurrences (relative frequency: 1.12) of *follow*, *followed*, *following* and *follower*, with 8 of those references using Jesus or God as the explicit object, “Will you follow him [the Lord]?” (CT7); “I was absolutely determined that I would never become a follower of Jesus Christ ... I am now 24 years old. I love God and am a follower of Jesus Christ” (CT10) and “God made it clear to me there are only two kinds of people – those who rebel against God and those who follow him [God] completely ... Those who follow God get to enjoy a living relationship with him ... I wasn't following God completely ... one night I quietly asked God to forgive my sin and help me to follow him [God] ... I wanted to be obedient to God and follow him [God]” (CT11).

These explicit references to God and the suggestion of proximity that is activated by the use of *follow* provides some evidence that the Christian texts use more language that depicts the divine entity as less distant and more active in the daily life of the believer as compared to the language used in the *islamfortoday.com* testimonials. As we shall see below, this initial tentative conclusion can be

further reinforced and expanded by a consideration of external movement and divine entity proximity metaphors.

External Movement and Divine Entity Proximity Metaphors

Far fewer occurrences were found of language referring to the proximity of a divine entity in the Muslim texts (relative frequency: 0.31) in contrast to the Christian texts (relative frequency: 1.78). The references can be broadly divided into two groupings: the first drawing on language related to being physically near or nearer to someone, such as *close*, *with*, *stand by* (me), *being there*, *companion*, *closer* and the use of the preposition *to* in the sense of towards, and the second making use of prepositions such as *in*, *into* and *within* where the believer or the believer's life is construed as entering, being entered by or becoming part of a divine entity. All the examples in the Muslim texts can be placed in the first group, with no references relating to the second group. The examples in the Muslim texts relating to language such as *closer* are also restricted to movement by the believer towards the divine entity, while the Christian texts exhibit examples of movement in both directions. The occurrences are listed below in table 3.2 (only metaphorical language related to proximity has been underlined):

Table 3.2 Occurrences in the Testimonials Related to Divine Proximity.

| | Muslim Testimonials | Christian Testimonials |
|---|---|--|
| Relative frequency | 0.31 | 1.78 |
| Occurrences related to being physically near a divine entity | <p>[1] ... gain the pleasure of God and be <u>closer</u> to Him amid the endless delights of Paradise. (MT4)</p> <p>[2] and [3] Did I really think that God would be upset at me for wanting to</p> | <p>[1] Come <u>to</u> God in prayer and ask for forgiveness. (CT1)</p> <p>[2] God was <u>with</u> me ... (CT3)</p> <p>[3] He [Jesus Christ] says, 'Come <u>to</u> me, all you who labour and are heavy</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>get <u>closer</u> to Him ... Jesus would be upset with me for trying to get <u>closer</u> to God? (MT5)</p> <p>[4] I have never been so <u>close</u> to God as I have been since becoming Muslim. (MT5)</p> <p>[5] I just knew that I wanted to <u>connect</u> with God. (MT5)</p> <p>[6] and [7] Each time I went, I felt ... <u>closer</u> and <u>closer</u> to the Prophet Jesus and God. (MT7)</p> <p>[8] God is <u>with</u> me every moment ... (MT8)</p> <p>[9] ... I felt a <u>closeness</u> to God that penetrated my heart and soul. (MT14)</p> | <p>laden, and I will give you rest'. (CT4)</p> <p>[4] I came <u>to</u> Christ, confessing my sin and proud unbelief. I was humbled before him. (CT7)</p> <p>[5] and [6] Oh for a <u>closer</u> walk <u>with</u> Christ, where the relationship ... is so intimate and direct ... (CT9)</p> <p>[7] The Lord Jesus Christ is my friend, <u>companion</u>, rescuer, helper, shepherd and king. (CT10)</p> <p>[8] and [9] I've learned that he [Jesus] is always <u>with</u> me ... stands <u>by</u> me in difficult times ... (CT11)</p> <p>[10] I wanted to go to heaven – to be in the <u>presence</u> of God ... (CT12)</p> <p>[11] I can clearly remember ... realising the Holy Spirit was indeed <u>with</u> me ... (CT13)</p> <p>[12] In reality, he [God] had always <u>been there</u> ... (CT13)</p> <p>[13] ... I had to come <u>to</u> God in repentance. (CT14)</p> <p>[14] I felt safe, knowing he was <u>with</u> me. (CT15)</p> <p>[15] and [16] And God raised us up <u>with</u> Christ and seated us <u>with</u> him ...</p> |
|--|---|--|

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | | <p>(CT18)</p> <p>[17] So what started out as a journey running away from something (a lost eternity) has become a journey running <u>to</u> someone [God]. (CT18)</p> <p>[18] and [19] I [Christ] shall come in and dine <u>with</u> him [the believer], and he <u>with</u> me. (CT19)</p> <p>[20] ... things became better and I grew <u>closer</u> to Jesus Christ ... (CT20)</p> |
| Occurrences related to union with a divine entity | | <p>[21] I asked Jesus to come <u>into</u> my life as Saviour ... (CT1)</p> <p>[22] ... through faith in him I could be <u>united</u> with his father in heaven. (CT5)</p> <p>[23] Jesus came <u>into</u> my life ... (CT6)</p> <p>[24] ... through the Holy Spirit, who lives <u>within</u> me. (CT10)</p> <p>[25] ... seated us with [see [11]] him in the heavenly realms <u>in</u> Christ Jesus ... (CT18)</p> <p>[26] I [Christ] shall come <u>in</u> and dine with him [the believer] ... (CT19)</p> <p>[27] I wanted to know him better and let him <u>into</u> my life, heart and soul. (CT20)</p> |

This relatively low frequency in the Muslim texts in comparison with the Christian texts may have two possible causes. The first is that the kind of Islam represented by the website depicts Allah as a more distant and less intimate entity in the sense of having the characteristic of absolute otherness. In contrast, the kind of deity represented by the *Evangelical Times* testimonials is an entity that lends itself to descriptions that readily draw on the language of human relationships and intimacy. The second possible cause is that the genre of the testimonials is approached in different ways in terms of rhetorical devices by the two communities, with the *islamfortoday.com* texts preferring more detached language in order to perhaps convey an appearance of academic objectivity. A certain amount of overlap can be seen in these experiential and rhetorical explanations and it is therefore probable that the explanation lies in some combination of the two. In addition, a valuable avenue of further research here would be to compare these occurrences to the proximity language used in the Qur'an and the Bible.

Further evidence for a marked difference in language related to the perception of objectivity that could support both possibilities can be derived from the higher frequency of language relating to science and logic in the Islamic texts as compared to the Christian texts. The number of occurrences and their relative frequencies are listed below in table 3.3:

Table 3.3 Occurrences of words related to science and logic.

| | Occurrences in the Muslim testimonials | Relative frequency of occurrences in the Muslim testimonials | Occurrences in the Christian testimonials | Relative frequency of occurrences in the Christian testimonials |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| Scientific, science and scientifically | 16 | 0.55 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|--|---|------|---|------|
| Logic, logical, illogical and logically | 6 | 0.21 | 1 | 0.07 |
|--|---|------|---|------|

It must be stressed that the references to science were not always an interpretation of scientific data to support belief in Islam, and were sometimes an attack on atheist and materialist interpretations of science. However, the point is that there is a greater concern with engaging in subjects related to the domain of science in the Muslim texts. This may also be seen to be in line with an emphasis in the Muslim texts on the perception of reaching truth through regular thought processes and research rather than explicit dependence on divine agency. This emphasis will be explored below in an examination of *through*.

The Use of 'Through' in the Texts

The preposition *through* is of particular interest to the argument of this chapter because of its close relationship to the notion of movement and the additional level of complexity that it can contribute to agency. The MacMillan Online dictionary lists the most basic, concrete meaning of *through* as “from one end or side of something to another” (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/through>). Some of the more metaphorical meanings include “happening because of something”, “by means of something” or “to the end of a bad or difficult experience”. The usage of *through* in terms of the *happening because of someone or something/by means of something* definition can be viewed as complicating the agency patterns in that the agency is qualified with the implication that the subject can only do something by means of or because of something else. Consider the example “I have the power to live a changed life through the Holy Spirit, who lives within me” (CT10). The question in a sentence like this of who really is perceived to have the power – the believer or the Holy Spirit, or some combination of the two – is a valid one because the prepositional phrase introduces a notion of dependency. This subsequently

makes the question of who is transferring energy to bring about this perceived effect of a “changed life” a difficult one to answer.

The list of occurrences is provided below in table 3.4. The first two of the above definitions of *through* have been placed together because of a certain degree of similarity and interdependence in their meaning.

Table 3.4 Occurrences of *through* with the meaning *happening because of someone or something or by means of something*.

| | Muslim testimonials | Christian testimonials |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Relative frequency | 0.79 | 0.72 |
| Occurrences | <p>[1] ... get answers that I confirmed <u>through</u> further research. (MT1)</p> <p>[2] ... I became aware <u>through</u> studies ... that philosophy had not been successful ... (MT2)</p> <p>[3] ... applying to them a thoroughgoing scientific atheism, a sort of salvation <u>through</u> pure science. (MT2)</p> <p>[4] and [5] It is not <u>through</u> an act of the mind or will that anyone becomes a Muslim, but rather <u>through</u> the mercy of God ... (MT2)</p> <p>[6] This realization was the impetus that led me to search for the truth <u>through</u> diverse avenues. (MT4)</p> <p>[7] I was able to find inner peace</p> | <p>[1] ... God's Son ... could give lasting peace <u>through</u> his death, resurrection and life-giving Spirit. (CT2)</p> <p>[2] The Lord graciously brought me to know him <u>through</u> thyrotoxicosis ... (CT4)</p> <p>[3] <u>Through</u> ... fears ... about my father's spiritual well-being, I fell into a relapse ... illness ... depression ... (CT4)</p> <p>[4] ... his death [Jesus'] paid for my sins and <u>through</u> faith in him I could be united with his Father in heaven. (CT5)</p> <p>[5] I began to seek God and sensed God speaking to me <u>through</u> Galatians 4:13 ... (CT6)</p> <p>[6] I wondered if God was redirecting me <u>through</u> circumstances to preach in</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <p><u>through</u> meditation techniques. (MT4)</p> <p>[8] ... TV commercials, 'Be all you can be', <u>through</u> endeavors in fire-walking, skydiving and martial arts. (MT4)</p> <p>[9] ... I chose to continue my search for the truth <u>through</u> Christianity and Islam. (MT4)</p> <p>[10] <u>Through</u> booklets, cassettes and videotapes ... I ... found out ... a lack of harmony in Christian beliefs. (MT4)</p> <p>[11]... area of controversy I read about was 'original sin' and salvation <u>through</u> 'the crucifixion' of Jesus (pbuh). (MT4)</p> <p>[12] and [13] ... after Jesus (pbuh), salvation was achieved <u>through</u> his crucifixion so they said ... salvation <u>through</u> the crucifixion of Jesus (pbuh). (MT4)</p> <p>[14], [15] and [16] ... man is saved <u>through</u> obedience and submission to God ... they changed this doctrine ... making salvation <u>through</u> the crucifixion ... The theory of salvation <u>through</u> crucifixion ... (MT4)</p> <p>[17] ... seduced by the capitalist system that tends to work <u>through</u> the invention of false needs ... (MT4)</p> <p>[18] ... American Catholic teacher</p> | <p>England. (CT6)</p> <p>[7] I have the power to live a changed life <u>through</u> the Holy Spirit, who lives within me. (CT10)</p> <p>[8] <u>Through</u> a sermon I heard one Sunday, God made it clear to me ... (CT11)</p> <p>[9] ... the happiness others sought in the wrong places had already been given to me <u>through</u> Christ. (CT11)</p> <p>[10] This strengthened my faith <u>through</u> the good teaching that I gained. (CT15)</p> <p>[11] '... by grace you have been saved <u>through</u> faith ... not from yourselves ... the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:4-8). (CT18)</p> |
|--|--|--|

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p><i>found fulfilment and direction <u>through</u> her new job at a Muslim school. (MT5)</i></p> <p><i>[19] ... I've learned to pray (something I had tried to teach myself <u>through</u> the Web and videos for years!). (MT7)</i></p> <p><i>[20] <u>Through</u> my interrogation of Islam I gained God's most precious gift - Islam, or surrender to the peace. (MT8)</i></p> <p><i>[21] ... and <u>through</u> his own transformation he had shown that change ... was possible. (MT12)</i></p> <p><i>[22] <u>Through</u> research, I found that up to 35 per cent of enslaved blacks ... were Muslim. (MT12)</i></p> <p><i>[23] Islam has <u>through</u> its truth taught me humility and the true worship of Allah (God). (MT14)</i></p> | |
|--|---|--|

One important difference is the frequency of references to one's arrival at a belief by means of divine agency in the Christian texts compared to one's arrival at a belief by means of regular thought processes in the Muslim texts. In the Muslim texts, only [5] provides an example of special divine interference (in the form of being "brought" to Islam by means of the "mercy of God"). Extract [14] refers to attaining salvation through submission and obedience, but this only relates to language *about* Allah rather than any indication that Allah interferes in that process of attainment. Extracts [11], [12], [13], [15] and [16] all refer to the attainment of salvation through such special divine

interference (salvation through the crucifixion of Jesus), but are all references to the author's disagreement with Christian belief. Many of the references in the Muslim texts pick up on the theme of research established in example [1]: extract [2] refers to investigating religion, [6] refers to searching for truth, [9] refers to continuing a search for truth through an investigation of Christianity and Islam, [10] refers to a process of study leading to the discovery of problems with the Christian Bible, [20] describes the author's research of his religion as an "interrogation", and [22] explicitly refers to the notion of research. What appears to be present here is a pattern of metaphorical language that emphasises the presupposition that belief can be experienced as a process of unbiased research and reflection moving from ignorance to absolute clarity.

In contrast, the majority of the Christian extracts above attest to a systematic divine intervention in terms of their arrival at belief. Extract [1] refers to the attainment of lasting peace "through his [Jesus'] death, resurrection and life-giving Spirit", [2] refers to God using a disease to bring the author to Christianity, [4] refers to the attainment of salvation through faith in Jesus' death, [5] refers to God speaking to the author through a Bible text, [6] refers to the author's life being changed "through the Holy Spirit" [8] refers to God communicating the importance of following him to the author "through a sermon", [9] refers to the author receiving happiness "through Christ" and [11] draws on a quote from Ephesians stating that salvation is attained by the grace of God and believed "through faith". We can therefore see two very different patterns of presuppositions in terms of the perceptions of the reality of belief in the metaphorical language of the two collections of testimonials.

How can we explain these different patterns? A number of factors could be involved. US based Muslims may wish to emphasise research and reflection because they perceive the need to justify themselves to an audience (the American public) that generally evaluates them in a more negative manner than the British public evaluates Christians. The belief that the Qur'an was delivered through a single author may also be a factor in that any process of research focused on the sacred text is less likely to uncover what could be viewed by some as possible contradictions and variations in agenda.

Regardless of the motivation, one key observation is that this emphasis on research and reflection appears to be in line with an emphasis on human responsibility in the *islamfortoday.com* testimonial language.

Through with the meaning *to the end of a bad or difficult experience* also attests to another difference in emphasis. The Christian texts use *through* with this meaning (9 occurrences, relative frequency: 0.58) to produce relatively more references to a feeling of struggle and being helped through difficult life experiences than the Muslim texts (11 occurrences, relative frequency: 0.38). This stronger emphasis in the Christian texts on feelings related to life experience will be further developed in the discussion of *find* below.

Occurrences of 'Finding' in the Texts

Metaphorical occurrences of *finding* were not marked as metaphors of movement in my quantitative analysis unless they co-occurred with language that explicitly indicated movement, such as “finding my way” (MT5). However, even when an explicit marker of movement was not included, these notions often *implied* a key sense of purposeful, goal-orientated movement and a sense of a journey or quest. In addition to this, they also appeared to reinforce the differences explored above, particularly in relation to the occurrences of *through*. These points justify a brief exploration of these notions, despite the fact that the majority of the occurrences examined were not counted as movement metaphors in my quantitative analysis. The occurrences are listed below in table 3.5:

Table 3.5 Occurrences of metaphorical usages of *find* and *finding* + OBJECT.

| | Muslim testimonials | Christian testimonials |
|---------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Relative frequency | 0.65 | 0.53 |
| Occurrences | [1] <i>find</i> proof of God's existence (MT1) | [1] <i>find</i> love (CT1) |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | <p>[2] <u>find</u> God (MT1)</p> <p>[3] <u>find</u> it [the historical Jesus] (MT2)</p> <p>[4] <u>find</u> the divine (MT2)</p> <p>[5] most cogent arguments for atheism that I could <u>find</u> (MT2)</p> <p>[6] <u>find</u> a way out of them [arguments for atheism] (MT2)</p> <p>[7] <u>find</u> inner peace through meditation (MT4)</p> <p>[8] <u>find</u> the truth (MT4)</p> <p>[9] <u>find</u> the truth (MT4)</p> <p>[10] <u>finding</u> my way (MT5)</p> <p>[11] <u>find</u> the truth (MT5)</p> <p>[12] I wanted to beat myself to death for not <u>finding</u> it [the true Islam] earlier (MT6)</p> <p>[13] can't <u>find</u> the words to say what it's like (MT8)</p> <p>[14] Did he [Allah] not <u>find</u> you orphaned (MT8)</p> <p>[15] he [Allah] ... <u>find</u> you lost and guide you (MT8)</p> <p>[16] he [Allah] ... <u>find</u> you in hunger and provide (MT8)</p> | <p>[2] <u>find</u> happiness (CT2)</p> <p>[3] <u>finding</u> rescue from my troubles (CT2)</p> <p>[4] <u>find</u> happiness (CT2)</p> <p>[5] <u>find</u> rest for your souls (CT4)</p> <p>[6] "<u>find</u> in him no fault at all" (John 18:35-38). (CT7)</p> <p>[7] <u>find</u> some sort of community in a church (CT14)</p> <p>[8] the best way I could <u>find</u> to get through life (CT16)</p> |
|--|---|---|

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <p>[17] I left the church and set out on a quest to <u>find</u> the correct way, belief and religion. (MT11)</p> <p>[18] most people may <u>find</u> this crazy (MT11)</p> <p>[19] hard to <u>find</u> anything [in Islam] I could disagree with. (MT13)</p> | |
|--|--|--|

In the Christian texts, the use of *find* in [7] and [8] must be handled with care because in both cases it refers to the pre-conversion stage of the testimonials, but it is still interesting that the concern is with personal circumstances. The most consistent pattern can be seen in the first five examples, where the objects that are found all relate to feelings of happiness, love, and peace (or rest) and feelings of relief and security connected to the perception of being personally rescued from one's troubles.

In terms of the Muslim texts, [10] relates explicitly to individual life experience with the reference to "my way". A single quote from the Qur'an (Sura 93) in Muslim Text 8 accounts for the usages of *find* in [14], [15] and [16], which also all have some relation to individual life experience. It is interesting that [7] appears to be alluding to an introspective feeling, but is in fact the explanation of the author concerning his view of the positive but transitory and ultimately valueless emotions experienced while experimenting with meditation. In addition to these references, there is an extensive pattern of usage that relates to finding evidence or arguments for or against belief in God and Islam ([1], [5], [6], [19]), finding God ([2], [4]), finding Islam ([12], [17]) and finding truth ([8], [9], [11]). The primary focus here does not appear to be on how the process of attaining truth, meaning and God make the

Muslim believers feel (as it is in the Christian texts), but on the perceived objective reality of the process itself and its goals. However, it is also crucial at this point to consider cultural as well as theological factors. It is clear that some of the testimonial authors of the *islamfortoday.com* texts were not native speakers of English, and therefore may have come from communities where emotions were not so publicly expressed or discussed. However, any cultural background that discourages a focus on discussing emotions may itself have been indirectly influenced by a community's religion (which in turn has been influenced by culture), so it becomes very difficult if not impossible to clearly attribute factors to cultural context *or* theological perspective.

I will now go on to discuss patterns of emphasis in those metaphors that construed the believer as in some way the patient in the movement process.

Believer-as-Patient Movement Metaphors

Both the Christian and Muslim testimonials contain frequent references to language related to a divine entity or a sacred text or religion based around that entity exerting some kind of influence on the movement or direction of the believer. This shared frequency, along with some key differences in the spread and type of language used, will be examined below, concluding with the observation that the Christian testimonials often favour language that portrays the believer as more passive.

It has long been recognised that words and phrases trigger connections and implicit meanings in the minds of addressers and addressees (Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Radden et al 2007), or, to put it another way, the use of words and phrases activate our store of encyclopaedic knowledge related to them (Evans 2009: 195-197). I would therefore argue that the range of movement metaphors I have focused on also trigger certain implied meanings when they relate to the believer being viewed as the patient. When words such as *bring*, *put*, *send*, *take*, *save (from)*, *pluck (from)* or *deliver (from)* are used with the author as object, the implication appears to be that the author is being construed

as having little or no part to play in the process of movement or the direction of that movement. The Muslim testimonials contain several examples of this type of language, but, relative to the size of the texts, the Christian testimonials contain over three times as many occurrences. The occurrences in both collections of texts have been listed below in table 3.6 (only the lexical units related to believer-as-patient movement metaphors have been underlined):

Table 3.6 Occurrences of movement metaphors where the author is construed as passive.

| | Muslim testimonials | Christian testimonials |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Relative frequency | 0.24 | 0.79 |
| Occurrences | <p>[1] He [God] would judge man ... and <u>send</u> him to eternal reward or punishment. (MT2)</p> <p>[2] ... the mercy of God ... was what <u>brought</u> me to Islam ... (MT2)</p> <p>[3] ... by the Mercy of God, I have been <u>rescued</u> from the depths of ignorance. (MT4)</p> <p>[4] Islam <u>took</u> me on an enlightening tour of me, everyone else, and God. (MT8)</p> <p>[5] Allah <u>picked</u> me for this religion. (MT10)</p> <p>[6] I feel like I have been <u>saved</u> from the Hell fire ... (MT10)</p> <p>[7] ... and <u>plucked</u> [me] from the ashes. (MT10)</p> | <p>[1] If we believe in him, then we are forgiven and <u>saved</u> from hell. (CT1)</p> <p>[2] ... wait in faith and excitement to see where he <u>takes</u> you. (CT1)</p> <p>[3] The Lord graciously <u>brought</u> me to know him ... (CT4)</p> <p>[4] ... the Lord <u>sent</u> a Pastor to visit ... (CT4)</p> <p>[5] ... he could forgive my sin and <u>save</u> me from hell. (CT10)</p> <p>[6] In spite of my resistance, he [God] <u>brought</u> me to repentance and faith. (CT10)</p> <p>[7] I know that I am privileged to be part of his [God's] plan to <u>bring</u> others into his family. (CT11)</p> <p>[8] A wise Christian once told me that I</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | | <p><i>should never forget that God has <u>put</u> me in a great position ... (CT12)</i></p> <p><i>[9] ... he [Jesus] came into the world to <u>save</u> us from sin. (CT13)</i></p> <p><i>[10] ... if you [God] <u>deliver</u> me from this mess, I will serve you for the rest of my life!' (CT16)</i></p> <p><i>[11] His hand was upon my life, <u>delivering</u> me from sin, death and hell. (CT16)</i></p> <p><i>[12] I have been <u>brought</u> to the most important relationship in the universe ... (CT17)</i></p> |
|--|--|---|

A reoccurring theme shared by both collections of texts is the idea of being rescued, saved or delivered from punishment, judgement or hell. This moves the construal of conservative religion away from the perception of it being a subjective, theoretical opinion about the existence of a static divine entity and towards the view of it being a life journey culminating in concrete destinations relating to eternal destruction or bliss. However, despite the similarities between the Muslim and Christian texts in this respect, there appears to be a greater tendency in the Christian texts to use language that construes the believer as more passive.

In contrast to the type of occurrences above, verbs such as *lead* may not imply such a high degree of passivity on the part of the object. This is in line with Talmy's (2000: 425-426) description of agents sometimes acting as a "weaker antagonist". He uses the example of *help* in the sentence, "Smoothing the earth helped the logs roll down the slope" to illustrate such a situation. If we return to the testimonial data, we can see that in the example, "I believe he will lead me all the way" (CT9),

the implication may be that the author is not completely passive and that there is a shared agency in the act of movement that may sometimes be typified by actions such as leading someone by the hand or leading a group on a tour through a particular area. Shared movement may not be implied in verbs such as *attract* or *draw*, but a sense of agency being shared through an added attracting force does appear to be implied, although not to the degree of being forced or carried as in the first type discussed above. This second type follows a similar pattern of frequency in the Muslim and Christian texts as we saw in the first type, as can be seen in table 3.7 below:

Table 3.7 Occurrences of movement metaphors where there is a sense of shared agency in the act of movement.

| | Muslim testimonials | Christian testimonials |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Relative frequency | 0.14 | 0.33 |
| Occurrences | <p>[1] ... asking Him that if He did exist to <u>lead</u> me to someone who could help me to believe. (MT1)</p> <p>[2] But God will <u>help</u> me to go through it. (MT3)</p> <p>[3] What could have <u>led</u> me to this ... what happened to me was from Allah ... (MT10)</p> <p>[4] He will <u>lead</u> them from darkness into light. (MT11)</p> | <p>[1] ... he [God] ... <u>led</u> me from strength to strength. (CT5)</p> <p>[2] ... God has <u>helped</u> me through it. (CT6)</p> <p>[3] the Lord always <u>draws</u> me back to himself ... (CT9)</p> <p>[4] I believe he will <u>lead</u> me all the way. (CT9)</p> <p>[5] ... and pray God will <u>see</u> me through to the end of my psychology course. (CT19)</p> |

There are two possibilities that could account for the sizeable differences in the frequencies. The first possibility relates to the Evangelical Christian belief in the humanity (as well as divinity) of Jesus Christ as Son of God/God the Son. The doctrine of God coming to earth in human form can be viewed as symbolising the desire of the New Testament to close the distance in every sense between God and humanity, resulting in an emphasis on the use of the language of close human relationships and intimacy. It could therefore be expected that this increased desire for divine entity proximity and intimacy (as compared to the absolute otherness of Allah expressed in aspects of belief such as the command to never attempt to visually represent him) would produce more language that relates to the domain of physical contact and interaction.

The second possibility, that could be viewed as complementary to the first, is the significance of the death of Christ in the procurement of salvation. Evangelical Christians *primarily* attribute their salvation to being saved by faith in the atoning death of Christ. Any suggestion of attaining or even maintaining one's salvation through works is often avoided. On the other hand, many Muslims *primarily* attribute their salvation to the believer's commitment to follow the path of Islam, and secondarily attribute it to the "behind-the-scenes" will or grace of Allah. These two well-known differences appear to provide some explanation for the above differences in frequency. However, a more nuanced explanation may be required to explain why the Muslim texts exhibit a higher frequency of a third type of movement metaphor that construes the believer as the patient.

This third type, involving verbs such as *guide* and *direct*, can be viewed as primarily implying an influence on a person's direction rather than shared agency in the movement process. Another important feature of these verbs is that it is not necessary for the guiding or directing entity to be in proximity to their object. There are many examples within the domain of navigation, such as in the case of lighthouses, stars or the position of the Sun, where the entity is visible but static and is able to "point" towards the correct direction from a distance. In the case of this third type, the trend established above is reversed in that the use of *guide* is far more common in the Muslim texts. One

explanation for this is the funnelling effect produced by the Muslim emphasis on human autonomy and responsibility and God's absolute otherness on one side, and the perceived power and importance of being acted on by a divine power on the other. As I argued above in section 4.3, this perception of being acted upon can be viewed as containing more presuppositions concerning the perceived reality of a divine entity. It is this perception of being tangibly acted on that, in the mind of the believer, lifts belief out of the domain of subjective opinion. We should therefore expect to find a strong emphasis on such language in any religion that wishes to emphasise the importance of experiencing absolute truth through divine revelation. If we take all of these points together, we would expect the Muslim texts to exhibit a high frequency of movement metaphors construing the believer as patient while avoiding any systematic pattern suggestive of high levels of passivity and divine entity proximity, and this, as can be seen from tables 3.6 and 3.7 above and table 3.8 below, is what we see:

Table 3.8 Occurrences of movement metaphors where there is only an influence on the direction of the author.

| | Muslim testimonials | Christian testimonials |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Relative frequency | 0.72 | 0.33 |
| Occurrences | <p>[1] ... sacred scripture ... that could furnish <u>guidance</u>. (MT 2)</p> <p>[2] ... men ... need principles to <u>guide</u> them ... (MT2)</p> <p>[3] ... the Qur'an <u>directs</u> us to believe in God ... (MT4)</p> <p>[4] Islam ... code of life which <u>guides</u> man. (MT4)</p> <p>[5] God will <u>guide</u> us there ... (MT4)</p> <p>[6] He [God] <u>directs</u> us to examine ...</p> | <p>[1] As I continued to pray for <u>guidance</u> ... (CT1)</p> <p>[2] ... the Lord <u>opened</u> the way for me to ... (CT4)</p> <p>[3] ... God was <u>redirecting</u> me ... (CT6)</p> <p>[4] ... a door <u>opened up</u> for me to ... (CT6)</p> <p>[5] God has <u>guided</u> my steps ... (CT12)</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p><i>the Sunnah ... (MT4)</i></p> <p><i>[7] God <u>directs</u> us to investigate ... the Qur'an. (MT4)</i></p> <p><i>[8] God is with me every moment, <u>guiding</u> me ... (MT8)</i></p> <p><i>[9] ... from ... trial-and-error ... to embracing <u>guidance</u>. (MT8)</i></p> <p><i>[10] From ... a life in confusion, I am being <u>guided</u>. (MT8)</i></p> <p><i>[11] Did he (God) not find ... you lost and <u>guide</u> you. (MT8)</i></p> <p><i>[12] ... blessed by the way Allah <u>guided</u> me to Islam. (MT10)</i></p> <p><i>[13] ... feel a bit awed that I was <u>guided</u> ... (MT10)</i></p> <p><i>[14] ... Allah picked me to be <u>guided</u> ... (MT10)</i></p> <p><i>[15] ... what was it that <u>guided</u> me ... I realized ... from Allah ... (MT10)</i></p> <p><i>[16] He [Allah] alone has <u>guided</u> me. (MT10)</i></p> <p><i>[17] Allah picked me for this religion of <u>guidance</u>. (MT10)</i></p> <p><i>[18] ... my being <u>guided</u> to Islam by Allah ... (MT10)</i></p> | |
|--|---|--|

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>[19] Allah says for all who truly want <u>guidance</u> ... (MT11)</p> <p>[20] ... the practical <u>guidance</u> Islam provides ... (MT13)</p> <p>[21] ... with Islam I'm sort of more <u>guided</u> ... (MT13)</p> | |
|--|---|--|

It is important to note that many of the Muslim examples of believer-as-patient movement metaphors in the above three tables do not relate directly to a divine entity, but indirectly through references to Islam or the Qur'an (e.g. [1], [3], [4], [17], [20] and [21] in table 8). In contrast to this, all the examples from the Christian texts in tables 6, 7 and 8 relate directly to a divine entity acting on the believer. This is further evidence for the point I made in section 3.4.2 above that the kind of Islam represented by the website *islamfortoday.com* depicts the divine entity as more distant and less directly active in the daily life of the believer compared to the divine entity in the Christian texts.

Having noted the higher frequency of believer-as-patient metaphorical language in the Christian texts, it is interesting to note that the reverse is the case when the focus is not on the domain of divine entity language. If we consider the domain of arguments, observations and realisations, we discover that there are considerably more references to the second type of movement metaphor discussed above in the Muslim texts. The occurrences are listed in table 3.9 below:

Table 3.9 Occurrences of movement metaphors where an argument or realisation is the agent.

| | Muslim testimonials | Christian testimonials |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Relative frequency | 0.31 | 0.07 |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Occurrences</p> | <p>[1] ... her ... investigations of Islam <u>led</u> first herself then her husband to their final spiritual home. (MT1)</p> <p>[2] For Hegel, the movement of philosophical investigation always <u>led</u> from the abstract to the concrete ... (MT2)</p> <p>[3] ... philosophy necessarily <u>led</u> to theology ... (MT2)</p> <p>[4] This realization was the impetus that <u>led</u> me to search for the truth through diverse avenues. (MT4)</p> <p>[5] ... her ... dissatisfaction with the doctrine of Jesus as God and her discovery of the rights given to women in Islam <u>led</u> her to become a Muslim. (MT7)</p> <p>[6] ... the Qur'an gives women more rights than the Bible ... That was one of the things that first <u>drew</u> me ... (MT7)</p> <p>[7] ... difficulties with church teaching about Jesus as God <u>led</u> him from Catholicism to Islam. (MT7)</p> <p>[8] ... autobiography of Malcolm X <u>guided</u> a white, middle-class, American teenager from "cow country" to Islam. [MT10]</p> <p>[9] I thought it was very peaceful, and</p> | <p>[1] '... doesn't religion cause wars and separate people?' That <u>led</u> me to question what was unique about 'my' faith ... (CT3)</p> |
|---------------------------|--|---|

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p><i>they seemed to have so much faith while doing it. This is the first thing that <u>attracted</u> me to Islam. [MT13]</i></p> | |
|--|---|--|

There appears to be more of an interest in the language of the Muslim texts with construing arguments, lines of reasoning and observations as moving objects that act on the believer. This reinforces the idea that one of the principal areas for the Muslim testimonials in terms of the presupposed reality of belief is the sense of a quest involving objective research and reflection leading to unambiguous truth.

3.6. Conclusion

Bearing in mind the limited scope of this study in terms of two particular communities and their specific social contexts, I will now draw together the strands outlined above as well as point to some possible practical applications.

In the Muslim texts from *islamfortoday.com*, the metaphorical language of movement suggests that the believers presuppose that their beliefs are real and basic primarily because of: (1) a perceived process of finding/being led to truth through unbiased research and critical reflection experienced as existentially moving out of an environment of incorrect thinking (sometimes expressed as darkness) towards an environment of truth and clear thinking (sometimes expressed as the light), and (2) a perceived experience of constant divine guidance towards truth.

In the Christian texts from the *Evangelical Times*, the metaphorical language of movement suggests that the believers presuppose that their beliefs are real and basic primarily because of: (1) a perceived experience of an intimate, close and personal relationship with a divine entity that carries

or helps the believer get through struggles and difficult times and enables him or her to experience spiritual peace and happiness during and after these difficult times, and (2) a perceived experience of being brought/led to believe by the work of a divine entity.

My argument throughout has been that certainty is not based primarily on the *things* believed, but on the *presuppositions underpinning action and relationship language*. This language and the underlying processes beneath it are at the heart of what it is to be a committed religious believer.

These personal stories and experiences of being lost and then found, feeling that something is missing and going on a quest or journey to find it, being guided or led are crucial to the believer's sense of being certain and right. However, these are also fluid, shifting processes that can be shared to some degree across a whole range of belief systems, and can also be employed to express a mutual conciliation between two competing experiences and views of the world (cf. Cameron 2010a: 58-80). This chapter has focused on differences between one specific situated community within Islam and one in Christianity, but the data also reveals important differences in patterns of emphasis between individuals within the same community. For example, a cursory glance at tables 6, 7 and 8 reveals that the author of MT10 makes use of several believer-as-patient metaphors while the author of MT5 avoids them altogether. This phenomenon of individual experiential variation within a community that holds to the same doctrines is an important area of research and will provide the basis for my analysis of videoed discussions between Muslims and Christians in the next chapter.

The reason for its importance is that it opens up the possibility that the perception of differences in patterns of emphasis within members of the same group may contribute to the relativizing of differences in patterns of emphasis between members of opposing groups. This emphasis on action and relationship language can also be practically applied to an *experiential model* of conflict resolution that aims to produce empathy through encouraging participants to do something together, such as telling and listening to personal experiences and stories, rather than academically airing doctrinal differences (cf. Cameron 2010a; Holden 2009).

However, it is also important to be realistic about the practical applications of the emphasis discussed above. A primary focus on the language of doing rather than differences in the things believed will not magically lead to a *co-operative process* (cf. Deutsch 1973, Pearson d'Estrée 2003) replacing a competitive process of engagement. It is also important to recognise that certain types of action language, such as those expressed through metaphors drawn from the domain of war and fighting, may even encourage competitive reactions. In addition, committed, conservative believers will often attempt to shift conversations on, for example, metaphors of movement to a focus on movement to some *thing*. However, a general re-orientation towards action and relationship language may help to reduce the degree of competition and dogmatic thinking, while increasing opportunities for empathy.

I would also argue that it is very important to be able to first identify the type of action and relationship language that tends to be emphasised by a particular belief community or individual. This may include patterns that focus on a quest of research or reflection, experiences of being helped through or comforted during difficult situations, a series of doors being opened to new opportunities and ways of thinking, etc. It is also important to look for an individual's deviation from the expected pattern of emphasis of his or her community and its theoretical doctrinal beliefs. This allows the non-believer to more effectively look for points of interest, as well as points of connection between his or her own personal journey and those processes that are perceived as personally important and real to the committed, conservative believer.

Having completed my analysis of the two collections of testimonials, it is now possible to return to a consideration of the research question that this chapter set out to explore: *are there clear, fixed differences between Evangelical Times Christian testimonial authors and islamfortoday.com Muslim testimonial authors in terms of their use of movement and proximity metaphors to express their way of believing?* This chapter has provided evidence for the existence of key differences between the experiences of members of different belief communities, but it has been impossible to state such

differences in clear, fixed terms. Instead, the evidence has compelled me to describe these differences in terms of varying patterns of emphasis dependent upon a particular community's use of a specific genre (the religious testimonial), at a particular time and place (post-911 America and the UK). The use of divine entity proximity metaphors, believer-as-agent and believer-as-patient movement metaphors provide clear examples of these different patterns of emphasis. Both the Muslim and Christian testimonial authors made use of these types of language, but they emphasised different aspects in different ways and with differing levels of frequency. This is a key point in terms of applying these results to the area of inter-faith dialogue because it demonstrates that there are important shared processes across the cognitive models of different conservative religious believers. What this means is that, while members of conservative belief communities may use the language of experience to mark out absolute differences, researchers will view this type of language as evidence for elements of overlapping similarity, as well as difference.

This conclusion also provides evidence for the argument that, in terms of the Evangelical Times testimonials and the islamfortoday.com testimonials, it may be possible to view doctrine and experience as the expressions of different processes. It should of course be accepted that doctrine has a very strong *influence* in terms of shaping perceived experiences, but this does not mean that doctrine *determines* experience. As I briefly discussed in chapter two, there are two possible reasons why it might be useful to consider doctrine and experience as two quite different aspects of religious belief. The first is that doctrine can be viewed as primarily a product of a belief community, while experience is often primarily the product of an individual. The second possible reason is that doctrinal statements may often be processed and encoded using semantic memory, or, to put it another way, they may often be encoded and remembered as static *things*. In contrast, it is possible to argue that experiences are often processed and encoded using episodic memory, or as connected chains of dynamically unfolding, autobiographical events involving multiple things viewed from a constantly evolving perspective.

In terms of inter-faith dialogue, it should therefore now be clear why any attempt to engage with the conservative religious believers' perception of absolute rigidity should always begin with a comparative exploration of their individual experiences. My argument here is that a dialogue that revolves around a discussion of theoretical doctrine will tend to emphasise clear differences at the level of the *community*. In contrast, a dialogue that revolves around whether, for example, God is experienced as being close to the believer on a daily basis may well result in a "messy" conversation that may highlight *individual* similarities between some Muslim and Christian believers and some differences between believers from the same religion. However, this point highlights an important limitation of the above study. I may have demonstrated that it is impossible to describe the differences between the two collections of texts in absolute, rigid terms, but, by searching for general patterns of emphasis in each collection, I have inevitably passed over individual differences between each text. The question that the above study therefore cannot address is whether it is also impossible to describe the *similarities* between the experiences expressed in the texts belonging to the *same* belief community in absolute, rigid terms. In the next chapter, I will therefore move on to report a study that has been designed to investigate *individual* similarities and differences rather than similarities and differences between *groups* of texts.

Chapter Four: A Follow-up Study involving Three Videoed Discussions between Conservative Muslims and Evangelical Christians

The previous chapter compared a collection of Muslim testimonials and a collection of Christian testimonials in order to address the question of whether there were clear, fixed differences in how conservative religious believers from different communities experienced their way of believing. I concluded with the argument that there were important differences, but that these differences could only be described as varying patterns of emphasis rather than clear, fixed differences. In this chapter, I intend to shift my focus towards a consideration of individual texts. The questions I would like to investigate are firstly, is it possible to identify signs of convergence and empathy in the language of Muslim and Christian conservative believers when they are encouraged to discuss their experience of being a believer during structured videoed discussions? Secondly, are there any similarities in the use of proximity and movement metaphors in the language of individual conservative Christian and Muslim religious believers, and differences in the use of this type of language among conservative religious believers from the same belief community during the course of those videoed discussions? This chapter will therefore report on a study conducted with three pairs of conservative Muslim and Christian believers. Each pair was asked to perform two sets of tasks that focused them on some of the movement and proximity metaphors discussed in the previous chapter, as well as encouraging them to focus on and engage with the beliefs of the other participant. These tasks were then followed by a period of discussion, which further encouraged the participants to interact with the beliefs of the other within the frame of some of the target language discussed in the previous chapter.

4.1 Introduction

In terms of addressing this question, the approach to analysis in the previous chapter is unsuitable because it was primarily concerned with the level of difference between two collections of texts. Focusing on collections of texts is ideal for forming broad opinions about differences between two belief communities, but this must be achieved by backgrounding isolated occurrences of both atypical similarity and difference in individual texts. One example of this can be seen in an extract from one of the Muslim testimonials examined in the previous chapter:

I've heard Christians say that with Christianity you "know God on a personal level." In Islam, your relationship with God is so much deeper than that. God is with me every moment, guiding me, teaching me, loving me, protecting me, liberating me, enlightening me, comforting me...

(Muslim Text 8)

In my conclusion to the analysis of the testimonials I argued that one of the presuppositions of the authors of the *Evangelical Times* testimonials appeared to be that their beliefs were real and basic because of a perceived experience of an intimate, close and personal relationship with God. In contrast, I made no mention of the importance of a personal relationship with God in my conclusions relating to the *islamfortoday.com* testimonials. The evidence for these conclusions was derived from the fact that there were a number of references to the notion of a personal relationship with a divine entity across several of the *Evangelical Times* testimonials, but only isolated references (such as the extract above) in the *islamfortoday.com* testimonials. Such isolated references were not included in my conclusions concerning general patterns of emphasis precisely because of their isolation. This provides us with an example where an individual believer wishes to foreground an aspect of their experience that doesn't tend to be foregrounded by other individuals in their community, but is foregrounded by members of other belief communities. If we focus our attention purely on differences and similarities between *collections* of texts, these *individual* irregularities will often be rendered invisible. This is the reason why this chapter will move away from a focus on collections of texts and towards a focus on the language of specific individuals. However, the analysis of collections

of testimonials will still play a valuable role. It will be useful to compare the language of individuals to the general patterns which were derived from those collections of texts in order to establish similarities to and divergences from those general patterns, as well as the language of other individuals. The analysis of collections of testimonials in the previous chapter will therefore act as a valuable reference tool for the type of analysis that is proposed in this chapter.

A second limitation of the analysis in the previous chapter was that it restricted itself to the very specific and very distinctive genre of testimonials. Researchers in genre analysis maintain that “the forms and functions of figurative language can differ significantly from genre to genre and across registers, and that this reflects the goals, conventions, expertise and ideologies of the members of the discourse communities associated with different genres” (Deignan, Littlemore and Semino 2013: 1). Any attempt therefore to begin to form a rounded view of how a conservative religious believer uses metaphorical language to express his or her experience would have to at least engage with the dynamic and unique aspects of two very different genres. It is therefore important that the third research question is addressed by focusing on a genre that is different from the genre of testimonials, while retaining the focus on an individual’s language of experience. The previous study was also limited to mostly UK participants in terms of the *Evangelical Times* and US participants in terms of the *islamfortoday.com* website. It would therefore be useful, in the interest of seeking to form a more rounded view of how conservative Christians and Muslims express their experience, to widen the focus in terms of the nationality of participants.

A final limitation of the previous analysis of testimonials is that it restricted itself to the usage of language within the context of a planned, written text. I’ve already argued above that my research should not limit itself purely to one genre. In the same way, any attempt to say anything about the way a believer experiences his or her religion should also engage with both unplanned, spoken interaction, as well as carefully planned, written texts. When we focus on unplanned, spoken interaction we are immediately faced with other issues such as the impact of turn taking, discourse

convergence, politeness, and increased opportunities for empathy. These issues will be introduced and discussed in the section below.

It is also important to highlight the fact that this interest in the language of the individual rather than the language of the collective also relates to exploring the connection between community-sanctioned doctrine and personal experience. The standard way of describing this connection is that there is a cyclical relationship between these three elements, so that doctrine informs perceived experience and vice versa, with both doctrine and experience informing how a believer perceives their interaction with a divine entity (cf. Tremlin 2005). This notion of a cyclical relationship can also be described in discourse dynamic terms as the “feedback” and “feedforward” process that occurs between two or more people engaged in discourse and the “socio-cultural cloud” (Cameron 2012). This way of looking at the connection was reinforced by the analysis of the testimonials, so that, for example, it was possible to offer some explanation for the general emphasis on the language of intimacy and personal relationship in the Christian testimonials by referring to Evangelical doctrinal beliefs concerning the Son of God becoming human. Focusing on *collections* of testimonials and *general* patterns of emphasis within those collections will tend to foreground this link between collective community beliefs or doctrinal frameworks and the experience of individuals within that community.

However, just as there is a distinction between semantic and episodic memory, there is also a distinction between the *things* believed and the complex *situations* that are perceived to be personally encountered. The first should be more easily controlled and monitored by the community, but the second should be far harder. This doesn’t mean that we should expect *general* patterns of discontinuity between the language of doctrinal belief and the language of personal experience, but it should be reasonable to predict that there will be many *individual* discontinuities. These individual discontinuities would of course be rendered invisible if a researcher is only searching for general patterns of emphasis, as I was in the previous chapter. However, they should come to the surface if

the focus remains at the level of the individual, as they will in this chapter. And if it is found that there is in some cases a level of disconnection, what might the implications be for the area of inter-faith dialogue? This is an issue that I will discuss at the end of this chapter.

One final issue that I wish to consider at the beginning of this chapter is the importance of the language of experience in building a picture of the way that an individual Christian or Muslim perceives their religion. As an example of this, consider this quote from the data relating to a Muslim believer that I will be considering below: "I have a private relationship with God". When we come to build a picture of a particular divine entity that an individual believes in, it is of course important to draw on the doctrinal beliefs of that individual. However, it is also important to draw on the language that individual uses to describe their perceived interaction with that divine entity. It should not be forgotten that sentences like the one above may not be classed as doctrinal statements, but nonetheless they say something very important about how that believer perceives a divine entity. The qualification of *relationship* with the adjective *private* has important implications that provide invaluable information. However, that information might not provide a clear match with the information that we might derive from the doctrinal beliefs of the community that individual belongs to, such as the absolute otherness of God discussed in the previous chapter. These differences are often dismissed by conservative believers as essentially inconsequential, but I will argue in this chapter that they should be viewed as highly significant. The reason for this is that it opens up the possibility of two individuals believing in the same theoretical doctrines, but having very different perceived experiences. This in turn challenges the notion that believers with the same doctrinal beliefs have exactly the same conception of the divine entity they believe in.

I will therefore address this third research question by focusing on the language of individuals as individuals rather than primarily viewing that language in terms of its membership to a particular belief community. I will also focus on a genre other than that of testimonials, while retaining my focus on the language of experience, and will also focus on unplanned, spoken interaction instead of

carefully planned, written texts. With these three key points in mind, I will gather data from three videoed discussions between conservative Muslims and Christians. This will produce three pieces of discourse which I will analyse in two parts. The first part will focus on the question of how much the movement and divine relationship language of each participant may have been influenced to varying degrees by the fact that it took place within the context of dynamic interaction. It will therefore focus on instances of metaphor appropriation and the use of personal stories that are told to the other participant for a particular reason. These instances will be explored in terms of whether they could be viewed as helping to cultivate empathy between the participants and decrease distance and difference, or whether they could be viewed as blocking empathy and increasing distance and a sense of difference. The second part will then critically compare each participant's use of language relating to movement and divine relationship metaphors with the general patterns of emphasis identified in the analysis of the testimonials in the previous chapters. The intention behind this second part of the analysis will be to identify key similarities and differences between the language of experience of each individual and the general patterns of emphasis. I will then go on to discuss the possible implications these key differences and similarities might have for the domains of religious studies and cognitive anthropology.

I will begin by discussing issues related to this expansion beyond written testimonials to unplanned, interactive discourse. This discussion centres on an outline of relevant aspects of the field of *conversation analysis* and the extensive differences between the careful expressions of ideas in a planned, written text as compared to an unplanned, dynamic interaction with a participant that holds to opposing beliefs. I then move on to address the question of who the study was aimed at and how the participants were chosen. This involves a consideration of what questions will be asked to determine the participants' placement within the categories of Evangelical Christian and conservative Muslim. This will lead to an examination of the structure of the study, including a justification of its explicit targeting of the language highlighted in the previous chapter. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the transcripts of the participants' interactions during the study and

how the conclusions of that analysis can be applied to my central thesis of the relation between metaphors related to movement and proximity and assumptions of certainty, and the implications for dialogue.

4.2 Conversation Analysis and the Differences between Written Texts and Spoken Interactions

One of the key differences between planned, written texts and unplanned spoken interactions is the fact that a text such as a testimonial is primarily (although never completely) constructed by an individual thinking alone, whereas a spoken interaction is “co-constructed” by two or more participants (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008: 166). The study that is reported in this chapter is based on a combination of these elements. It has an initial, written element free of the immediate pressure to converge or diverge in the form of pre-discussion tasks given to each participant, followed by a section of spoken interaction. This is in contrast to the data analysed in the previous chapter, which was derived purely from planned, written texts. My intention in constructing a study that includes an unplanned, interactive component is to explore whether the co-construction that can often take place in interactive discourse will produce examples of convergence or unusual uses of movement and proximity metaphors that were not present in the testimonial language. It is therefore necessary to first explore some of the characteristics of interactive conversations before I proceed to an examination of this study’s structure.

The process of co-construction during unplanned discourse leads to a principle that is of particular interest to any comparison between expressions of belief in planned, written texts and unplanned, spoken interactions: what is said in spoken interactions must, to some degree, owe both its *origin* and its *perspective and content* to the “connecting influences” of what was just said and may be said in the near future by another participant (Cameron 2010c: 84-85; Paltridge 2006: 108; Bhaktin 2006: 105-107). Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008: 166) use the language of complex systems theory to describe this process of convergence as a “coupling” of two systems. In terms of how a religious

believer may choose to express his or her beliefs, it is difficult to underestimate the effect of this coupling when compared to the more (although far from completely) disconnected nature of planned, written texts. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008: 173) succinctly capture this effect in their observation that “speakers influence each other on various dimensions, including the physical, emotional, and conceptual or ideational, when they formulate talk contributions with the other person ‘in mind’, designing utterances that, for example, will not offend, that will explain adequately and appropriately, or that will be effective in achieving goals”. Grice (1975: 45) alludes to this same influence within the context of his *co-operative principle* with the statement that when you take part in any functioning conversation you will always endeavour to make each contribution “such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged”. This point that discourse opens up the participants to the possibility of influencing and being influenced by each other is further reinforced by the basic structure of conversations. For example, the dividing of conversations into *turns* and *adjacency pairs* places pressure on the participants to respond in an appropriate manner and at an appropriate moment (Paltridge 2006, Sacks et al 2004).

Having established the influence that participants in a conversation must have on each other, I now wish to focus on the specific characteristic of *appropriation*. This aspect will allow me to further explore how this process of coupling contributes to the essential fabric of conversations taking place within the frame of a discussion or debate:

Appropriation: There can be a whole range of social factors operating underneath processes such as turn taking that may influence the direction of a face-to-face discussion or debate. These would certainly include well-known factors such as the increased influence of politeness, empathy and behaviour mirroring in face-to-face encounters (cf. Levinson 2006: 311-323; Paltridge 2006: 72-78; Hoffman 2000: 37-45; Larsen-Freeman 2008: 170; Cameron 2010a). Strong evidence for this can be drawn from research into the mirroring of gestures that can be seen among participants in a

conversation, for example, “if one person in a group places his or her hands behind his or her head, the likelihood is that other members of the group will follow this action” (Larsen-Freeman 2008: 170). Another phenomenon that can be related to the influence of empathy is *appropriation*, or one participant in a conversation picking up and using the language of another, often adapting it in some way for their own purposes. One example of this can be seen in the first discussion I will analyse below. The Muslim believer makes the point that people are free to choose what they want to believe in, “... ultimately we decide, we make the decision which direction we want to go”. When the Christian believer takes his turn, he responds by picking up on the Muslim’s use of *direction*, “... you said all those friends that you had in school, different directions and decisions, I wish you had me as a friend because I feel like some of what you are saying, although I hear your heart in it, is based on misunderstanding”. This is a common form of appropriation that involves making use of another participant’s metaphors – a strategy that Cameron (2011) associates with a possible indication of empathy in discourse. However, we will also consider that, within the context of a debate or a discussion, appropriation can also sometimes be an integral part of a particular strategy aimed at providing the perception that one has “won” a discussion or argument.

I have so far discussed some important differences between planned, written texts and unplanned, spoken interaction, but I have yet to identify the practical relation of this discussion to the study that forms the focus of this chapter. I believe the principal point is that it is crucial to take into consideration the fact that the participants in a spoken interaction are locked into consistently responding to each other. It must therefore be accepted as highly probable that participants’ language will to some degree converge with each other, or perhaps at times diametrically diverge. What should not be expected is that the participants’ language will remain completely unaffected by the other’s language.

However, it is important to beware of exaggerating the differences between non-interactive, planned written texts and interactive, spoken discourse. Discussions and debates, no matter how high-

pressure they may be, and no matter how much a part convergence may play, cannot completely hijack a participant's ability to express what he or she thinks in his or her own words. Planned, written texts should also not be seen as completely immune to a process of convergence and some form of extended turn taking (they must in some way be a response to something), or be viewed as disconnected from the wider discourse around them. However, it is difficult to deny that there is more of an increased, immediate and consistent pressure to meaningfully and appropriately engage with another's topic, direction and language than there is in a planned, written text. On the other hand, it is also probably more difficult for a participant in a discussion to fall back on conventionalised, formulaic repetitions of what should be said. It should be recognised that both are, to some unspecified degree, valuable in different ways. This point justifies the need for a study that combines both aspects: an initial, written element free of the immediate pressure to converge or diverge, followed by a section of spoken interaction intentionally designed to encourage and explore the results of such pressure.

Having explored some of the key issues in the differences between written texts and spoken interaction and briefly introduced the advantages of combining them, I am able to move on to an exploration of the precise structure of the study proposed above.

4.3 Participant Selection

In my analysis of religious language in the previous chapter, my focus was on authors of one particular genre of text (religious testimonials) from two particular discourse communities identified by their religious beliefs and their affiliation to a particular publication or website. In this study I wish to move beyond the precise confines of the *Evangelical Times* and *islamfortoday.com* while still retaining my focus on Evangelical Christians and conservative Muslims. This requires some form of identifying criteria that can allow potential participants to be accurately assessed as belonging to these categories of believers.

In section 3.2 I provided a brief working definition of both Evangelical Christianity and Conservative Islam. In summary, I stated that Evangelical Christians could be essentially defined by their absolute belief in the inspiration of the Bible and their commitment to the notion that salvation is attained through faith in the atoning death of Christ and not through works. I then went on to state that conservative Muslims could be essentially defined by their belief in the absolute truth of the Qur'an and their commitment to the five pillars of Islam: *Shahada*, *Salat*, *Zakat*, *Hajj*, and *Sawm*. Using these definitions, I created two pairs of questions that required affirmative answers in order to establish that all the participants I used in the study could be placed within my categories of Evangelical Christian or conservative Muslim. The questions have been included below in table 4.1:

| Table 4.1: Questions for the identification of conservative religious believers |
|---|
| Questions for the identification of Evangelical Christians: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have an unqualified belief in the full divine inspiration of the Bible? • Are you saved through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and not through your own works? |
| Questions for the identification of conservative Muslims: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have an unqualified belief that the Qur'an is the word of God? • Do you adhere to and practice some form of the five pillars of Islam: the declaration of faith (<i>Shahada</i>), prayers (<i>Salat</i>), fasting (<i>Sawm</i>), alms giving (<i>Zakat</i>) and pilgrimage (<i>Hajj</i>)? |

My intention in designing the study was to encourage a discussion based around the lexical and grammatical elements that had been highlighted in the testimonial analysis. This required enough participants to make a sizeable qualitative analysis possible, but not too many as to make the transcribing process unmanageable. It was therefore decided to use a total of six participants: three

Muslims and three Christians in three separate studies. I will now move on to a discussion of what these participants were asked to do.

4.4 The Structure of the Study

The study was designed around two written tasks, with a ten-minute period of discussion following the completion of each task. Each period of discussion was based around the participants' responses when they were allowed to see what the other participant had written for each task. These language tasks were designed to fulfil a dual purpose: firstly, provide a stimulating foundation for the discussion stages, and secondly, enable participants to work with the language that was highlighted in the previous testimonial analysis. A brief discussion about early designs and a detailed examination of the structure, rationale and instructions for each task and period of discussion are outlined below:

Early Designs: This second study went through several stages of development before it reached the present form. My aim was always to design a follow-up study that would focus on the language and agency patterns that I had highlighted as interesting in the analysis of the testimonials, but I considered several different approaches. My first idea was a series of statements related to a person talking about their perceived encounter with a spirit. Examples of these statements were, "I believe there is a spirit that guides me in my life" and "The spirit is often with me". Participants were asked to arrange the statements in order of how certain they thought the person was that the ghost truly existed. I rejected this idea of a study because of its focus on the notion of a spirit, which I felt to be too artificial. Instead, a new version was developed that asked participants to imagine a visit from five pairs of two Jehovah's Witnesses. Each pair centred their description of their beliefs around a different key statement: "I follow this belief", "I am certain that this belief is true", "This belief guides me", "This belief lives inside of me" and, "This belief directs me". Participants were asked to rank each of these statements according to the level of certainty they felt the speakers had about their

beliefs. The reason why this idea was also rejected was because of its very restrictive, closed structure. It could only engage with a limited number of target words and phrases and it was impossible to determine whether the results were due to the vocabulary used or the agency pattern. The fact that participants also had no freedom to use their own language or agency patterns meant that it was also very difficult to draw conclusions that could be applied to their specific belief communities.

I therefore moved away from these closed designs towards the idea of an open discussion that would follow a structured set of tasks. The structured tasks would focus the participants on some of the target vocabulary while giving them complete freedom in the formation of their own agency patterns and the addition of their own vocabulary. The tasks would also be designed to stimulate the discussions by encouraging them to engage from the outset with each other's worldviews and language. The discussion phases encouraged the participants to generate a sizeable amount of language related to the target vocabulary primed during the tasks. It also allowed me to investigate the kind of language that would be generated during unplanned, spoken interaction as opposed to the planned, non-interactive, written language I analysed in the testimonials. However, as with any study, there would be disadvantages as well as advantages to its structure. I will now move on to discuss in more detail the structure of this study and to examine some of aspects of the study that could be viewed as problematic.

First task and discussion: The participants were seated next to separate tables that were far enough apart to prevent them from seeing what the other participant would write. Each one was given a blank card, and asked to draw on their knowledge of each other's religious beliefs and write three points on how they thought the other participant would answer if they were asked how they arrived at a sense of certainty that their beliefs were objectively real and true. At that point, their knowledge of each other's religious beliefs was restricted to the fact that the Muslim participants knew that they were talking to a Christian who believed that the Bible was the word of God, while

the Christian participants knew that they were talking to a Muslim who believed that the Qur'an was the word of God. The instructions for this task given to the participants have been listed in table 4.2 below. These instructions were read to the participants.

Table 4.2: First task and discussion: instructions for participants (with notes on procedure between instructions):

- You have each been given a blank card. I want you to think about the other person and draw on your knowledge of their religious beliefs. If they were to be asked **how they arrived at a sense of certainty that their beliefs are objectively real and true**, what do you think would be the three main points that they would mention as evidence?
- If you are unable to think of three possible points, feel free to leave some of the points blank.
- Feel free to use a single word, phrase or sentence for each point.
- I will be giving you a maximum of five minutes to complete this task.
- *[At this point I waited five minutes, but stayed in the room in case there were any questions or problems.]*
- Could you now please attach those answers to the top of the whiteboard?
- Take a look at the answers the other person has given in terms of your arrival at a sense of certainty that your beliefs are objectively real and true. Do you agree or disagree with them? Do you wish to expand on or qualify anything they have said? I will give you around ten minutes to make any comments you want to make in any order that you want to make them. Anyone can begin and anyone can finish, and also feel free to interrupt each other if you wish and respond to any of the comments made. The ten minutes will start as soon as I have left the room. When I re-enter the room, try to begin drawing the discussion to a close.
- *[At this point I turned on the video camera and left the room.]*

By asking the participants during the task to answer for each other, the intention was to compel them from the outset to engage with the beliefs of the other while focusing on the issue of certainty. It is possible that, due to the influence of factors such as politeness and natural reticence, a situation may develop in the interactive section where each participant states his or her beliefs, but avoids any

subsequent critical engagement. If, however, the participants are compelled to think about the other and are also able to later view what that person has written about aspects of their belief, then the pressure to actively engage with them should be increased.

Another important purpose of this task is that it enables the participants to engage with a natural usage of metaphorical language related to movement through the use of the word *arrived* in the instructions. The use of *arrived* also naturally foregrounds the dynamic process of believing rather than the theoretical dimension of discussing beliefs as static objects. This intention to get the participants to work within the frame of metaphors related to movement in addition to language that emphasises the process of belief was further consolidated in the second part of the written stage, which I will now move on to examine.

Second task and discussion: Each participant was given a blank card, in addition to nine strips of card with one word from the following list written on each card: *find, come, follow, guide, lead, bring, through, with, and in*. They were then asked to arrange the nine words in order of how frequently they use them to describe an important aspect of their personal experience of being a Christian or Muslim. This second task was concluded by asking the participants to write five sentences that described their personal experience of being a Christian or a Muslim that each included one word from the top five words of their list. The precise instructions given to participants are listed in table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Second task and discussion: instructions for participants (with notes on procedure between instructions):

- Think of sentences and phrases that you often use to describe your personal experience of being a committed believer.
- You have each been given nine cards with one of the following words written on each card: *find/found, come, follow/followed, guide/guided, lead/led, bring/brought, through, with, and in*. All of these words are used to

some degree by both Muslims and Christians to describe their personal experience.

- Again, think of the language that you often use to describe your personal experience of being a Christian or a Muslim. I now want you to arrange the nine words in order of how frequently you use them as part of that language. If you use a word more often than the others, then place it at or near the top of your list. If you don't use a word as frequently as the others, then place it at or near the bottom of your list. I will give you three minutes to complete this task.
- *[At this point I waited three minutes, but stayed in the room in case there were any questions or problems.]*
- I now want you to focus on the top five words in your list. I want you to think about how you would use them in a sentence that would describe an aspect of your personal experience of being a Christian or a Muslim. Starting from the top word, I want you to write a sentence using that word on the card that is marked with the number one, then write a sentence using the second word in your list on the card that is marked with the number two, and so on until you have written a sentence on each of the five cards. I am going to give you seven minutes to complete this task.
- The phrase "personal experience of being a Christian or Muslim" is deliberately vague, so feel free to interpret it in any way that you want.
- You should not use more than one of the words in a single sentence.
- All the words are in their active form and where relevant have also been given in their passive form. However, feel free to use any tense (e.g. by using present, present continuous, future, etc.) or voice (e.g. a passive sentence or active sentence, etc.) or person (e.g. first, second or third person, etc.).
- Try to choose the words and write the sentences as quickly as possible without thinking too much about the content. Remember, there are no wrong or right answers, so there is no need to feel anxious about "getting it right". This study is also particularly interested in the first ideas that come into your head, whatever they are.
- If you write a sentence and then change your mind, draw a single line through that sentence and write the replacement sentence next to it.
- I will give you seven minutes to complete this task.
- *[At this point I waited seven minutes, but stayed in the room in case there were any questions or problems.]*

- I now want you to stick those sentences on the board behind you so that the other person can clearly see them.
- This is the last task that I will give you before we conclude this study. Please take a look at the five sentences that the other person has produced. I want you to compare them with your own sentences and make any conclusions concerning any key differences and possible reasons for those differences. Do you think they indicate any important differences between how Muslims and Christians practise and live out their faith? Again, I will give you a maximum of ten minutes to make any comments you want to make in any order that you want to make them. Anyone can begin and anyone can finish, and also feel free to interrupt each other if you wish and respond to any of the comments made. The ten minutes will start as soon as I have left the room. When I re-enter the room, try to begin drawing the discussion to a close.
- *[At this point I turned on the video camera and left the room.]*
- *[After returning and allowing the discussion to naturally conclude, I formally announced the end of the study.]* The study/discussion is now complete, so feel free to leave the room. Please ensure that you do not communicate with any participants that may be waiting outside. Thank you again for your assistance.

As I mentioned above, one of the aims of the tasks was to encourage the participants during the discussion period to engage with some of the metaphorical language that was found to be interesting in the analysis of the testimonials in the previous chapter. It would of course have been possible to give the participants a topic to discuss without engaging in any form of priming. However, it was necessary for the study to be designed within the time constraints of three one-hour sessions, which meant that the participants could only be allowed to talk for a limited period of time. There was therefore a need to explicitly focus the participants on the target language. In order to avoid priming the participants in terms of specific collocations and patterns of agency (which were the main focus of the study), the task was designed so that only isolated, disconnected words were shown to them, forcing them to produce their own associations. In addition, in order to avoid forcing the participants to make use of language they normally did not use, they were directed to discard four out of the nine words. It should also be made clear that the main focus of this study was not the language that the participants generated during the tasks, but the content of the subsequent discussions. One last

point aimed at addressing the possible criticism of unnecessary levels of priming is that, as the subsequent analysis will demonstrate, there was a high level of variation in the type of language and patterns of agency that the tasks and the discussions generated.

Methodology for analysing the language: As I have pointed out above, this is a follow-up study complementing the previous analysis of Muslim and Christian testimonials. As a result of this, it will primarily focus on the same types of metaphorical language (proximity and movement metaphors), and will use the same identification procedure (the Pragglejazz Metaphor Identification Procedure) as the previous study. The challenges of applying this identification procedure to the analysis of movement and proximity metaphors in religious language have been discussed in detail in section 3.3 of this thesis and apply equally to this study.

Ethical issues: There are two main ethical issues that are related to this type of study. The first issue relates to the nature of analysing conservative religious language. In previous chapters I have highlighted that such language can lead to conflict and that it involves oversimplified categorizations of reality. It is very likely that the participants of the study would view these assertions as negative, and probably would not have agreed to participate if I had shared these ideas with them before the study. I was also aware from the outset that, in terms of displays of empathy and the blocking of empathy, I may also be placed in a situation where my analysis of their language might lead me to conclusions that the participants themselves would disagree with. It would have been inappropriate to discuss these issues with the participants before the study because, even if they had still agreed to participate, it would probably have led them to behave in an uncharacteristic manner. My approach to this issue was therefore not to discuss these issues upfront, but to be willing and open to discuss them if any of the participants became concerned before or after the study, and to encourage them to withdraw if they became uncomfortable.

A second ethical issue was the possibility of an argument developing during the study. I felt it was necessary to leave the room during the discussion phases, so this perhaps increased the chances of

some form of unpleasant disagreement. My solution to this was to make sure that when I left the room I remained close to the door, so that I would know if an argument was beginning and be able to quickly re-enter the room if I felt it was necessary. I also made sure that I re-entered the room just before each discussion concluded so that I would know if one or both of the participants were feeling uncomfortable. The problem of course with this type of study is that a certain amount of disagreement was encouraged, and that some conservative religious believers are very accustomed to heated debate. It is therefore very difficult to know when an intervention is necessary. My rule-of-thumb was therefore to rapidly intervene if I detected any form of one-sided verbal bullying, or any sense that the participants were no longer interested in interacting and had moved to talking at each other.

Having discussed how the study was structured, the methodology for the analysis of the language, and the ethical issues related to the study, I am now able to move on to an overview of the results derived from recording the three pairs of participants.

4.5 The Results

Three pairs of conservative Muslims and Christians were invited to take part in the study after answering in the affirmative to the questions testing for conservative belief. These participants contacted me after seeing my post on the Centre for English Language Studies, University of Birmingham website that offered to pay 20 pounds for volunteers for a study of the language of Muslim and Christian conservative religious believers. All of the individuals invited attended as planned. The participants, along with their country of origin, age group, gender, occupation and details of their religious affiliation are listed below in table 4.4:

| Table 4.4: Participants | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| | Muslim Participants | Christian Participants |
| Pair 1: | <p>Muslim Believer 1 (MB1):</p> <p>Age group: 20s</p> <p>Occupation: MA TEFL student</p> <p>Gender: male</p> <p>Nationality: British</p> <p>Religious affiliation: Sunni Muslim</p> <p>Previous contact with Christianity: Extensive. MB1 was a Christian before he became a Muslim.</p> | <p>Christian Believer 1 (CB1):</p> <p>Age group: 20s</p> <p>Occupation: MA TEFL student</p> <p>Gender: male</p> <p>Nationality: British</p> <p>Religious affiliation: Evangelical Christian attending a Pentecostal church</p> <p>Previous contact with Islam: Extensive. CB1 had previously engaged in missionary work aimed at converting Muslims and had a working knowledge of Arabic.</p> |
| Pair 2: | <p>MB2:</p> <p>Gender: female</p> <p>Age group: 20s</p> <p>Occupation: MA TEFL student</p> <p>Nationality: Omani</p> <p>Religious affiliation: Ibadhi Muslim</p> <p>Previous contact with Christianity: Limited.</p> | <p>CB2:</p> <p>Gender: male</p> <p>Age group: 20s</p> <p>Occupation: Self-employed businessman</p> <p>Nationality: British</p> <p>Religious affiliation: Non-denominational Evangelical Christian attending a house church</p> |

| | | |
|---------|--|---|
| | | <p>Previous contact with Islam: Extensive.</p> <p>Spoke about having Muslim friends and visiting mosques in India to discuss Christianity with Muslims.</p> |
| Pair 3: | <p>MB3:</p> <p>Gender: female</p> <p>Age group: 20s</p> <p>Occupation: MA TEFL student</p> <p>Nationality: Omani</p> <p>Religious affiliation: Ibadhi Muslim</p> <p>Previous contact with Christianity: Limited.</p> | <p>CB3:</p> <p>Gender: female</p> <p>Age group: 20s</p> <p>Occupation: BA Theology student</p> <p>Nationality: Indian</p> <p>Religious affiliation: non-denominational Evangelical Christian attending a house church</p> <p>Previous contact with Islam: had previously engaged in some conversations with Muslim believers.</p> |

In section 3.5.2 above, I noted that the *islamfortoday.com* website represented a Sunni and Shia inclusive approach to Muslim belief. Despite only minor doctrinal differences with Sunni Islam (such as the insistence that the Qur'an was created), the Ibadhi school of Islam defines itself in terms of its separatism and avoidance of inclusivist approaches (Rahman 2002; Glasse 1989). Therefore in many respects it can be regarded as an even more conservative form of Islam than that represented by the *islamfortoday.com* website.

House churches or groups can often be viewed as an identity marker of some Evangelical Christian communities in that they wish to separate themselves from more mainstream Protestant Christian denominations such as the Church of England. These groups often define themselves as non-

denominational and claim to adhere to Biblical principles rather than any traditional creed that would mark them out as belonging to a particular traditional denomination.

The written parts of the study were collected and have been reproduced below. Only the discussion stages of the study were videoed and subsequently transcribed. The transcriptions were organised according to tonal units (units that ended in “a final pitch contour of the type associated with the end of a sentence” or clause (Chafe 1993)). For reference purposes, the full video files can be found in appendix 3.1 on the CD (MB1 and CB1), 3.2 (MB2 and CB2) and 3.3 (MB3 and CB3), while the complete transcripts of the discussions can be found in appendix 4.1 (MB1 and CB1), 4.2 (MB1 and CB1) and 4.3 (MB1 and CB1). When referring to language from the transcripts, the first discussion will be referred to as p1 (part one) and the second discussion will be referred to as p2 (part two). Line numbers will also always be provided in the form of ‘l’ followed by the line number, so, for example, a reference to CB2’s first use of the phrase “presence of God” in the first discussion in line 67 in the transcript will be referenced as p1l67.

The answers given for the first and second part of the written stage have been included below (tables 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10), along with summaries of the first and second part of the discussion stages.

The first pair to take part consisted of two participants that I will refer to as Muslim Believer 1 (MB1) and Christian Believer 1 (CB1). The first task consisted of asking the participants to write down three points relating to how they think the other participant arrived at their sense of certainty in their religious beliefs (see table 2 above). MB1 completed this task with a reference to the Christian Bible and two closely related references to experience: “life experience” and “travel”. CB1’s answers included references to Muslim doctrine, the perceived continuity of the Qur’an and a perceived confusion in the beliefs and behaviour of other religious believers outside of Islam. It is interesting that these perceptions closely match the emphasis on a system of belief in the Muslim language and the importance of personal experience in the Christian language that I will discuss in the results section below. Their responses to the task have been reproduced below in table 4.5:

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| Table 4.5: First task for Muslim believer 1 (MB1) and Christian believer 1 (CB1): |
| First task, MB1 (<i>How does the other participant arrive at certainty?</i>): |
| <p><i>[1] scripture</i></p> <p><i>[2] life experience</i></p> <p><i>[3] travel</i></p> |
| First task, CB1 (<i>How does the other participant arrive at certainty?</i>): |
| <p><i>[1] Tawhid – the simplicity of the doctrine of God’s unity. [note: Tawhid is the Muslim doctrine that God is one, not one-in-three, three-in-one as the Christian doctrine of the Trinity maintains]</i></p> <p><i>[2] The unbroken-ness (continuity) of the Qur’an throughout the centuries.</i></p> <p><i>[3] Conflicting, unclear, confusing messages – in words and behaviour – from other world religions or their followers ...</i></p> |

The two participants were then asked to display their answers on the board behind them and then given approximately twenty minutes to discuss whether they agreed or disagreed with what the other participant had written, or wanted to add anything. I will now move on to give a brief, evaluative synopsis of the discussion (see appendix 3.1 for the video file and appendix 4.1 for the full transcript).

CB1 begins by addressing MB1’s decision to view life experience and scripture as the key elements that have enabled CB1 to arrive at certainty. He states that in his view reason and intellect would play a more important role than life experience. I will pick up on this foregrounding of reason and intellect in the discussion section below as a notion that appears to contradict the patterns of emphasis I established in the analysis of the Christian testimonials. MB1 then goes on to agree with

CB1's assessment of the doctrine of the unity of God being the most important element in MB1's arrival at certainty in his beliefs. He expands on this by arguing for the superiority of Islam over Christianity because of its adherence to the oneness of God, its simplicity (he views the Trinity as man-made complexity and confusion imposed over the truth of the unity of God), and consistency (he views the Old Testament as inconsistent with the New Testament). I will argue below that this supports the view that MB1 wants to foreground elements of an objective system of belief over a way of believing that is based around a personal, intimate relationship with a divine entity. CB1 responds by stating his belief in the consistency of the Bible and arguing that the Christian view of the trinity is viewed as being confusing and inconsistent because of the ineffective ways in which Christians talk about it, and how it has been misunderstood by those outside Christianity. He goes on to argue that the Muslim view of God is too simplistic and then argues for a side point that it is important to realise that many Christians do not view the word of God as being the Bible but take it as a reference to Jesus. MB1 responds by returning to the subject of the unity of God and arguing that God is unique and therefore the word of God should not be equated with Jesus. He then moves on to make the point that believers should be able to communicate directly with God without the need for an intermediary. CB1 again argues that the Muslim view (of Jesus being an intermediary between God and man) is too simplistic. One of the interesting aspects of this discussion is that MB1's language follows many of the patterns of emphasis established for the Muslim believers in the analysis of the testimonials. In contrast, as I shall explore below, CB1's language often does not exhibit the patterns of emphasis established for the Christian believers.

After the discussion, the participants were moved on to the second task. This consisted of first asking the participants to arrange nine words in order of how frequently they used them as part of their usual language for talking about their experience of being a Christian or Muslim believer. The participants were then asked to use the top five words in their list to produce five sentences that would describe an aspect of their personal experience of being a Christian or a Muslim (see table 3 above).

MB1 chose words such as *with*, *came* and *in* that were commonly used by the Christian believers in the testimonials to express personal, divine-relationship language, and yet in his sentences, he used them to express alternative notions. For example, in terms of his use of *with*, instead of referring to being with a divine entity, he simply referred to reaching a conclusion “with the experience and knowledge I gathered”. In contrast, CB1 made use of words like *in*, *follow* and *through* to explicitly express a relationship with a divine entity, for example, “With Christ in my life, my black-and-white world became coloured”. The five sentences from both participants have been reproduced below in table 4.6:

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| Table 4.6: Second task for Muslim believer 1 (MB1) and Christian believer 1 (CB1): |
| Second task, MB1 (<i>Make sentences from the chosen words that reflect your experience of being a Muslim</i>): |
| <p>[1] By the permission of Allah I <u>came</u> to Islaam</p> <p>[2] <u>Through</u> my life experience I believe Islaam to be the truth</p> <p>[3] I spent some time researching other religions as well as attending religious ceremonies and events, and <u>with</u> the experience and knowledge gathered I concluded that Islam to be the truth</p> <p>[4] The concept that God is One and that this principle should reflect throughout religion <u>guided</u> my decision to accept Islaam</p> <p>[5] I accepted Islaam <u>in</u> the 90s.</p> |
| Second task, CB1 (<i>Make sentences from the chosen words that reflect your experience of being a Christian</i>): |
| <p>[1] <u>With</u> Christ <u>in</u> my life, my black-and-white world became coloured</p> <p>[2] I submit to God <u>through</u> Jesus</p> <p>[3] Recognizing the reality of the spiritual <u>brings</u> a more-than-helpful sense of perspective</p> <p>[4] I <u>follow</u> Jesus – and I happen to be a Christian!</p> |

The two participants were then asked to display their sentences on the board behind them and then given approximately twenty minutes to discuss any interesting differences they noticed or observations that they wanted to make. I will now move on to give a brief, evaluative synopsis of this discussion (see appendix 3.1 for the video file and appendix 4.1 for the full transcript).

CB1 initially struggles with the discussion activity, claiming that the task was a “little bit too linguistic for me” (second discussion, line 3, subsequently referred to as p2l3). MB1 therefore takes over and begins by talking through the sentences he wrote and his rationale for writing them. He particularly focuses in on his life experience and the process of research he underwent to arrive at his belief in Islam. This leads him to talk about the superiority of Islam compared to other world religions and how other religions such as Christianity have complicated and distorted the truth. Again, MB1’s emphasis on a process of research and reflection and a foregrounding of doctrinal issues or the system of belief matches some of the patterns of emphasis in the Muslim testimonial language. CB1 briefly responds by acknowledging some of the translation issues with the Bible while essentially arguing for the accuracy of the manuscripts it was based on. He also argues that it may be over simplistic to argue that truth is deliberately distorted by man because humans are often unable to see the truth without divine help. Once more, CB1 does not foreground personal relationship language, instead opting to foreground doctrinal issues in the same way that MB1 does. His allusions to divine aid in the process of arriving at truth remain theoretical and are never operationalized in a first person, autobiographical manner in the same way that they often were in the Christian testimonial data. MB1 continues the theoretical discussion by arguing that the process of blinding occurs after humans have come into contact with the truth and decided to reject it, because if humans were naturally blind to the truth, then it would be unjust because people would have been

deprived of the fair opportunity to embrace that truth. CB1 concludes the discussion by wishing he had debated these issues with MB1 when he was younger before MB1 had been persuaded to join Islam by his Muslim friends. I will argue below in the discussion section that this kind of construction of hypothetical situations serves the purpose of covertly conveying certain presuppositions, such as the presupposition that MB1 was weak minded when he was young and that explains why he was so easily led towards a religion that is being perceived by CB1 as self-evidently incorrect.

Perhaps the most important question relating to both of these discussions between MB1 and CB1 is whether CB1 backgrounds personal relationship language because he is being temporarily influenced by the language of MB1, or whether it is because he *generally* conceptualises and operationalizes his doctrinal beliefs in a different way to CB2 and CB3. I will address this key point in detail in my discussion of the results in section 4.6.2 below.

Having briefly outlined the results of the two sets of tasks and the two periods of discussion completed by MB1 and CB1, I will now move on to an outline of the results of the tasks and discussions completed by MB2 and CB2.

As we saw above, the first task consisted of asking the participants to write down three points relating to how they think the other participant arrived at their sense of certainty in their religious beliefs (see table 2 above). MB2's answers included a reference to the feeling of "peace in Christianity". This fits with the Christian pattern of emphasis identified in the testimonial language relating to the importance of subjective feelings in the formulation of a sense of certainty. However, MB2's second answer – the influence of family and reading about Christianity – could be viewed as matching the patterns of emphasis found in the Muslim testimonial language better than the patterns found in the Christian testimonial language. She also refers to the Christian need for a system of salvation that can get "rid of the sins" that Christians believe all humans are born with and the observation that Christians will respect those who love Jesus, although it is difficult to ascertain how these last two points relate to an arrival at certainty of belief. CB2's answers included

references to the Qur'an, the perception that Westerners are immoral, the notion that Allah "blesses those that live by his rule" and the teaching of Islam. It is interesting that all these points match an emphasis on language relating to a system of belief involving a set of prescribed rules. The answers to the task have been reproduced below in table 4.7:

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| Table 4.7: First task for MB2 and CB2: |
| First task, MB2 (<i>How does the other participant arrive at certainty?</i>): |
| <p><i>[1] Peace in Christianity</i></p> <p><i>[2] Arrived at certainty because of the influence of family and readings on this religion</i></p> <p><i>[3] to get rid of the sins he believes is born with</i></p> <p><i>[4] I guess the other person respects whoever loves Jesus and believes that Allah is one</i></p> |
| First task, CB2 (<i>How does the other participant arrive at certainty?</i>): |
| <p><i>[1] Qur'an</i></p> <p><i>[2] Lifestyle of 'Westerners' is wrong (morally etc.)</i></p> <p><i>[3] Allah blesses those who live by his rule</i></p> <p><i>[4] Teaching</i></p> |

The two participants were then asked to display their answers on the board behind them and then given approximately twenty minutes to discuss whether they agreed or disagreed with what the other participant had written, or wanted to add anything. I will now move on to give a brief, evaluative synopsis of the discussion (see appendix 3.2 for the video file and appendix 4.2 for the full transcript).

MB2 begins the discussion by disagreeing with CB2's written statement that disagreement with the Western way of life would be one of the points that would allow her to arrive at certainty in terms of her belief in Islam. She concedes that there are certain aspects of the West that she disagrees with, but there are also aspects that she likes. CB2 then partially disagrees with MB2's statement that he has arrived at certainty through influence from his parents. He concedes that some members of his family were Christian, but that his personal commitment to Christianity and his arrival at certainty in terms of his Christian beliefs were not as a result of his family connections. He then explains that his sense of certainty is derived from his view that Christianity makes sense to him, in addition to his experience of "the presence of God" (see table 13 below) in his life, as well as experiencing the Bible as the living word of God. CB2 makes repeated use of this divine proximity metaphor, "the presence of God", developing a clear pattern of emphasis relating to the foregrounding of a perceived personal relationship with God, while MB2 does not appropriate this type of language or make use of a similar variation of her own. She instead responds by talking about the importance of the Qur'an for her beliefs and how she believes the book "gives solutions to what happens" (first discussion, line 149, subsequently referred to as p1149) in her life. Both participants then note that they are able to continuously discover new things in their respective sacred texts, although CB2 indirectly relates this to divine relationship language by pointing out that he is able to discover these new things because of the Holy Spirit highlighting them to him. MB2 then moves towards focusing the discussion on a theoretical point of doctrine by asking whether CB2 believes that all humans are "born with sin". CB2 replies that he believes that all humans are fallen because of Adam and Eve and that some sins can also be inherited from a person's parents. He then goes on to explain the idea that these sins can be cleansed by asking Jesus, who died for the sins of humanity, for forgiveness. MB2 then explains that she believes all humans are born without sin and that they are all responsible for their actions after their birth.

Again, after the discussion, the participants were moved on to the second task. This consisted of first asking the participants to arrange nine words in order of how frequently they used them as part of

their usual language for talking about their experience of being a Christian or Muslim believer. The participants were then asked to use the top five words in their list to produce five sentences that would describe an aspect of their personal experience of being a Christian or a Muslim (see table 3 above).

MB2's sentences revolved around following the set of rules set down by the Qur'an, but also included references to being guided by God, as well as allusions to her own life experience as a Muslim. In contrast, CB2's sentences made use of prepositions like *in*, *with* and *into* to make a range of divine proximity sentences that were very similar to the kind of language encountered in the Christian testimonial data. The five sentences from both participants have been reproduced below in table 4.8:

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| Table 4.8: Second task for MB2 and CB2: |
| Second task, MB2 (<i>Make sentences from the chosen words that reflect your experience of being a Muslim</i>): |
| <p>[1] I <u>follow</u> the right path <u>in</u> this life</p> <p>[2] Allah <u>guides</u> us to His path <u>through</u> His Holy Quran and by sending prophets</p> <p>[3] When I <u>came</u> <u>through</u> a bad experience, I don't feel upset because I know that it is the best thing Allah has given me</p> <p>[4] <u>Through</u> reflecting on the good and bad moments I <u>came</u> <u>through</u>, I feel my faith becomes stronger and deeper</p> <p>[5] I <u>find</u> the Islamic rules so useful <u>in</u> governing every aspect of my life</p> |
| Second task, CB2 (<i>Make sentences from the chosen words that reflect your experience of being a Christian</i>): |
| <p>[1] The Holy Spirit lives <u>in</u> me</p> <p>[2] I have a personal relationship <u>with</u> God</p> <p>[3] I <u>follow</u> Jesus' teaching and example</p> |

[4] My Salvation comes through Jesus' sacrifice

[5] Invited Jesus into my heart and the presence of God came into my life (Presence of God, Jesus came into my life/heart)

The participants were then asked to display their sentences on the board behind them and then given approximately twenty minutes to discuss any interesting differences they noticed or observations that they wanted to make. I will now move on to give a brief, evaluative synopsis of this discussion (see appendix 3.2 for the video file and appendix 4.2 for the full transcript).

CB2 begins by acknowledging that the laws that Christians should follow are very similar to the laws that Muslims are expected to follow, and MB2 responds by acknowledging that the way she views the Qur'an is similar to the way that CB2 views the Bible. MB2 then asks CB2 to explain how he believes salvation is attained, and he responds by asking her to first outline how salvation is attained in Islam. MB2 states that reaching heaven depends on following the Qur'an, and CB2 responds by pointing out that the key difference between their beliefs is that MB2 believes she will get to heaven by what she does, while he believes he will get to heaven by believing what Jesus has done for him. In my previous analysis of the testimonials, I highlighted the importance of this difference, but also discussed the fact that there can often be an overlap between the language of the two religions in the sense that Allah can be viewed as sometimes bringing believers to belief in Islam, while Christian believers can also often emphasise the importance of their willing acceptance that salvation has been achieved for them. We can also see a level of overlap and even convergence here in that MB2 goes on to point out that although she believes that what she does is important, she also believes in the mercy of Allah who forgives her even when she does do something wrong. This tentative degree of convergence continues with CB2 building on MB2's point by stating that in both Islam and Christianity the view is that God judges the heart of the believer and not just their outward actions. MB2 agrees but then re-focuses the discussion on what she views as one of the biggest doctrinal

differences between Christianity and Islam: the Christian belief that God is comprised of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. CB2 then explains that the trinity should be viewed as referring to three aspects of God, rather than three separate parts to God. MB2 then asks if Christians need to go to Church in order to speak to God. What follows could be viewed as one of the strongest displays of empathy in all three discussions. CB2 responds by saying that he can speak to God anywhere, but that he goes to church in order to spend time with other Christians because then they can help and guide each other in difficult times. CB2 consolidates this point by outlining a personal situation where sometimes he does not know what God wants him to do at a particular time, and then it is helpful to be able to meet with other Christians and listen to their advice. After some degree of apparent misunderstanding, MB2 agrees with what CB2 is saying by acknowledging that his experience of sometimes being unsure about what God wants him to do is something that she also sometimes experiences. I will argue in the discussion section 4.6.1 below that this is a particularly important moment in the discourse because it does not just involve an acknowledgement of some theoretical doctrinal similarity, but a similarity in a perceived shared experience of relating to a divine entity.

Having briefly outlined the results of the two sets of tasks and the two periods of discussion completed by MB2 and CB2, I will now move on to an outline of the results of the tasks and discussions completed by MB3 and CB3.

As with the previous pairs, the first task consisted of asking the participants to write down three points relating to how they think the other participant arrived at their sense of certainty in their religious beliefs (see table 2 above). MB3 appeared to find the task challenging and was only able to provide two points: “salvation” and “original sin”. It is possible that MB3 viewed the notion that Christians believe that Jesus’ death on the cross saves them from the sin that they believe is inherent in humanity as central and therefore crucial in any sense of certainty. CB3 also referred to two elements that could be viewed as central to the belief system of the other participant: “Prophet

Mohammed” and the “Qur’an”. It is interesting that she also included a reference to praying and experience, acknowledging that from her perspective the practice of her beliefs were a crucial element to a sense of certainty. The answers to the task have been reproduced below in table 4.9:

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| Table 4.9: First task for MB3 and CB3 |
| First task, MB3 (<i>How does the other participant arrive at certainty?</i>): |
| <p>[1] <i>Salvation</i></p> <p>[2] <i>Original sin</i></p> |
| First task, CB3 (<i>How does the other participant arrive at certainty?</i>): |
| <p>[1] <i>Prophet Mohammed (pbuh)</i></p> <p>[2] <i>The Qur’an</i></p> <p>[3] <i>Prayer?/Experience</i></p> |

The participants were then asked to display their answers on the board behind them and then given approximately twenty minutes to discuss whether they agreed or disagreed with what the other participant had written, or wanted to add anything. I will now provide a brief, evaluative synopsis of the discussion (see appendix 3.3 for the video file and appendix 4.3 for the full transcript).

MB3 begins by disagreeing with CB3’s written statement that the Qur’an and the Prophet Mohammad would be the most important points in her arrival at the certainty of her beliefs. She goes on to explain that the most important point would be her belief in the oneness of God, and that her experience of prayer, fasting and pilgrimage would also be very important. It is interesting to note that from the outset, MB3 appears to want to emphasise the personal, practical aspects of her way of belief, while also making it clear that the divine entity itself should be foregrounded as the

foundation of her faith even more than the signposts that are perceived to point towards that divine entity. CB3 responds by describing the basis for her arrival at certainty as the transition from believing in God without experience to experiencing the spirit of God in her life, as well as the spirit working through the Bible. In a similar way to CB2, CB3 follows the pattern of emphasis highlighted in the Christian testimonial data of foregrounding personal divine entity relationship language. MB3 moves on to highlight the difference between their beliefs in terms of Christians believing their salvation is certain because of Jesus' death and Muslims believing that their salvation can only be certain after they have earned it through a life of following the Qur'an. She then argues that the Christian view is unfair because it means that Jesus was punished for what others did wrong. CB3 acknowledges that it may be regarded as unfair, but that God's love is so generous that he is not concerned about it being unfair from Jesus' perspective. MB3 responds by arguing that God cannot be a loving father if he is willing to have his son killed for something he didn't do, and CB3 counters by arguing that he is a loving father because he loved humanity enough to send his son to save them. MB3 then contrasts the Christian view with her own view that she finds peace in her relationship with God and even though she cannot be certain about her salvation, she knows that God will be just when he judges her and will give her salvation if she deserves it. I will argue in the discussion section below that this exchange is one of the key indicators that MB3 is working with a way of believing that foregrounds a system of belief that is perceived to be objective, logical and fixed while being universally available and applicable. In contrast, CB3 is working with a way of belief that foregrounds a dynamically evolving personal relationship between the individual believer and the divine entity that may appear "messy" and illogical when an attempt is made to reduce it to a system. However, what is particularly interesting about this discussion is the fact that MB3 also foregrounds relationship language in a way that MB1 and MB2 do not. This foregrounding becomes even more salient as she goes on to talk about her *private* relationship with God – a relationship that does not require a middle man that she needs to confess to. CB3 makes very frequent use of relationship language throughout the discussion, but it is important to note that MB3 is the first to refer to a

relationship with God, so it is therefore difficult to argue that MB3's unusual foregrounding of this type of language is due to her convergence with the language of CB3. CB3 agrees that a relationship with God, as well as Jesus and the Spirit, is the key part of religious faith, and explains that she can talk to God at any moment, and not just five times a day, but she then goes on to maintain that it is only through Jesus that she can understand and be assured of her salvation. MB3 then concludes the first part of the discussion by pointing out that she doesn't understand the idea of the trinity, and attempts to re-focus the discussion on a doctrinal point in much the same way as MB1 and MB2 does. However, despite the fact that CB3 does attempt to briefly explain the doctrine of the trinity, she then switches to emphasising that theoretically understanding the trinity is not as important as experiencing it through the death of Christ and being given the Spirit.

Again, after the discussion, the participants were moved on to the second task. This consisted of first asking the participants to arrange nine words in order of how frequently they used them as part of their usual language for talking about their experience of being a Christian or Muslim believer. The participants were then asked to use the top five words in their list to produce five sentences that would describe an aspect of their personal experience of being a Christian or a Muslim (see table 3 above).

In a similar way to MB1, MB3 chose the preposition *in*, but did not use it to make sentences related to divine proximity, and instead used it in phrases like "in afterlife" and "in my life". MB3 also chose *guide* and *follow*, but did not use them in direct reference to a divine entity. In contrast, all of CB3's sentences directly referred to a divine entity, and the preposition *in* was used to form an explicit divine entity proximity sentence, "The Spirit lives in me", in addition to using *with* to form another divine proximity sentence, "God is always with me". The five sentences from both participants have been reproduced below in table 4.10:

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| Table 4.10: Second task for MB3 and CB3 |
| Second task, MB3 (<i>Make sentences from the chosen words that reflect your experience of being a Muslim</i>): |
| <p>[1] Mohammad, peace be upon him, was sent by Allah to <u>guide</u> us</p> <p>[2] True faith <u>in</u> afterlife leads muslims to be more committed</p> <p>[3] The Holy Quran brings peace and tranquillity <u>in</u> my life</p> <p>[4] Instructions of the prophet Mohammad and the holy Quran are to be <u>followed</u> in order to reach a better relationship with Allah</p> <p>[5] Faith must always be <u>accompanied</u> by practice</p> |
| Second task, CB3 (<i>Make sentences from the chosen words that reflect your experience of being a Christian</i>): |
| <p>[1] The Spirit lives <u>in</u> me</p> <p>[2] God speaks <u>through</u> me</p> <p>[3] God is always <u>with</u> me</p> <p>[4] I am <u>guided</u> by the Spirit</p> <p>[5] I am <u>led</u> by his power</p> |

The participants were then asked to display their sentences on the board behind them and then given approximately twenty minutes to discuss any interesting differences they noticed or observations that they wanted to make. I will now move on to give a brief, evaluative synopsis of this discussion (see appendix 3.3 for the video file and appendix 4.3 for the full transcript).

MB3 begins by arguing that actions have a more important role in Islam than they do in Christianity because the focus is on what the individual does and the consequences in the afterlife for those actions. CB3 responds by arguing that actions are also important in Christianity, but that the

emphasis is doing those actions through the power of God and his Spirit. One pattern of emphasis that is very clear in the language of CB3 throughout the first and second discussions and in her five sentences listed above is this sense of the divine entity doing things *through* her and the perceived *power* of the divine entity's agency. There appears to be a very strong sense of perceived channelling in the language of CB3 that is not appropriated at all by MB3. Although MB3 does not appear to engage with this language of the divine entity working through her, this kind of language does seem to prompt MB3 to further foreground the logic and fairness of Islam as a detached system of rules. She even appropriates CB3's phrase "his [God's] power" (p21123) and uses it to emphasise the power of God to punish those who do not follow this system of rules. MB3 further emphasises the need for a system that is logical and fair by asking CB3 what the difference between a good Christian and a bad Christian would be if all Christians are regarded as saved. CB3 answers the question by saying that the difference is in the fact that bad Christians will struggle and be unfulfilled, but good Christians will be able to make best use of their life because they are living according to how God wants them to live. MB3 responds by pointing out that it would be unfair if she was striving to do everything she should do but another Christian was not, but both would get the same reward. CB3 answers by explaining that not doing what God wants is more difficult than doing it, because when you live in the way that you should live, you are able to experience being with God. CB3 goes on to argue that she would find it scary to be in a situation where if she didn't pray five times a day then her salvation would be in danger. MB3 acknowledges that it is a scary situation and one that should be taken seriously, but also adds that God is merciful. CB3 responds by arguing that truth should set a person free and that as a Christian she does things because she loves doing them rather than because she has to do them to earn salvation. As I will argue below in the discussion of these results in section 4.6.2, there seems to be a strong sense of alternative views of reality clashing here and preventing meaningful convergence. MB3 seems to continually adopt a systems-based view in this second discussion that views CB3's responses according to whether they appear fair or unfair, logical or illogical, while CB3 seems to continually adopt an affective relationship-based view that

views her own perceived experiences as either being related to a distant, loveless relationship with a divine entity or a close, loving relationship. Another aspect of this second discussion that also appears to contribute to a certain level of ideational conflict is CB3's use of a personal story to bring the discussion to a close. The story consists of her going into a Mosque to persuade them about Christianity. As I will argue in the discussion section 4.6.1 below, the details of the story are not as important as the presuppositions that the story requires for it to make sense to the listener. In this case, those presuppositions are that CB3 has direct access to the truth about God and that the Muslims in the Mosque did not.

Having outlined the details of the participants involved, as well as listing the answers they gave during the written stages and a summary of the discussions during the interactive stages, I am now able to move on to a discussion of these results in the section below.

4.6 Discussion of the Results

In the introduction to this chapter I outlined three principal intentions for setting up these discussions. My first intention was to see how closely the patterns of emphasis discovered in a particular written genre produced by a particular community within conservative Islam and Christianity would match the patterns of emphasis produced during a discussion by individuals from other conservative communities within those religions. My second intention was to focus on the degree and type of variation of movement and proximity metaphors between individuals, and not just between particular groups. My third intention was to focus on the effects that interacting with someone with an alternate worldview could have on the language of conservative Christian and Muslim believers.

In order to address these intentions in a systematic manner, I will separate the discussion of the results into two subsections. The first section will focus on the interactive aspects of the language

produced, such as the examples of metaphor appropriation and recontextualisation and issues related to the effects of empathy and adopting the perspective of the other, as well as strategies that were used to inhibit or block all of the above. The second section will focus on comparing the patterns of emphasis found in the language of the six individuals involved in the study with the patterns of emphasis identified in the analysis of the testimonials. I will then return to the key issues that have been the focus of this thesis, such as the importance of the language of experience in terms of its relationship to certainty and applications to the field of religious dialogue, and discuss them further in the light of my analysis of the tasks and videoed discussions. Conclusions concerning how dynamic interaction may influence a participant's language will also be applied to the issue of how it is possible that dynamic interaction can aid, but also in some situations inhibit, such attempts.

I have so far discussed in detail how episodic situations are used to express how individual religious believers experience what they believe. What I have yet to do is place this expression of personal experience within the explicit context of dynamic discourse. How do individual religious believers respond to the episodic situations of the other, and how do they formulate and utilise their own situations to fulfil various functions within a critical discussion with believers of other religions? In order to address this question, the section below examines how language relating to religious experience was used as both a rhetorical tool and a bridge builder in the discussions analysed in this chapter.

4.6.1 The Role of Interaction in Participants' Language

In the previous section my main focus was on isolating and analysing the language of each individual participant. In this section I will re-examine the language from an interactive perspective, examining how elements of it appear to be influenced or in some way shaped by its occurrence within an unfolding conversation. One element that I will be particularly interested in are occurrences of *appropriation* and *recontextualization* or *redeployment* of metaphors that occurred at an earlier

point in a discussion, or, to put it another way, examples of one discourse participant picking up and developing the metaphor of another discourse participant (Cameron 2010a: 89; Cameron 2010c: 89-90; Linell 2009; Semino, Deignan and Littlemore 2012). I begin by arguing that with certain topics and participants a level of similar or identical metaphor usage is to be expected. This means that in certain cases we should not be too quick to read complex rhetorical strategies or displays of empathy into them. However, I will argue that even in these cases, the language can still be of interest in terms of highlighting the different attitudes and beliefs of the participants. I will then go on to examine examples where there does appear to be some level of rhetorical strategy behind certain cases of metaphor appropriation, as well as behind other overlapping cases where one participant attempts to impose a narrative on the other. I then go on to discuss those examples where a participant appears to be offering (or attempting to force) their metaphors on the other participant through conspicuous overuse, and why this strategy often appears to have had the opposite effect than the speaker expects. I will then move on to those examples in the text where a participant makes statements that only make sense when considered from the perspective of the other participant, and those examples where a focus on action and relationship language appears to lead to a temporary backgrounding of doctrinal differences and a foregrounding of experiential similarities between participants.

Metaphor Appropriation and Recontextualisation

Metaphor appropriation can be defined as a discourse participant “taking over” a metaphor that another participant has used (Cameron 2010a: 89; 2010b: 19-20). Cameron argues that it is possible that the original user may view the appropriated metaphor as their “discourse property” and therefore need to decide whether to “refuse or allow the appropriation” (ibid). If the original user allows the appropriation to go ahead, it can be considered to be “a gesture of empathy that contributes to the larger process of conciliation” or at least “could be seen as a significant step

towards acknowledging the other's perspective through language" (ibid). However, it is important to place these observations within a particular context. That context is a process of conciliation where discourse participants attempt to take part in a type of "shared journey" that results in the development of constructive points of connection between them (Cameron 2010a: 58-70). Within this context, each participant can use metaphor when they need to talk about a difficult, even painful, aspect of their view of the world (Cameron 2010a: 4). If it is possible for those metaphors to be constructively developed by the other, and for the original user to allow that development, then it is reasonable for the analyst to identify such processes as a "gesture of empathy" (Cameron 2010a: 89).

However, in the case of this study where we are looking at discussions between Muslim and Christian participants, we are in a situation where both participants come to the discussion with a vast network of "pre-packaged" religious metaphors. Many of these religious metaphors are either identical or in some way similar, so it is often unhelpful to regard many religious metaphors as being the "discourse property" of the first person to use it in the discussion. However, as I shall argue below, in some cases I believe it *is* helpful to do so. In this section I therefore wish to argue that it is possible to identify different levels of co-occurring metaphor usage in discussions involving religious believers. I begin by considering those metaphors that we would expect to be used in a discussion of religious belief by individuals from particular religious groups regardless of the dynamics of appropriation. In these cases, we should be especially careful about viewing co-occurrences of metaphors as evidence for either a sophisticated rhetorical strategy or a display of empathy. It may be possible instead to view them simply as the expected use of particular metaphors to "draw the battle lines" or mark out the opposing viewpoints of the participants in the discussion. I briefly consider below some examples of this type of expected shared metaphor usage.

Examples of Shared Language

One example of participants using the same metaphor to simply mark out their different beliefs can be found in the use of language by both CB2 and MB2 that draws on the domain of completing a journey in order to describe the belief of *going to* heaven. Examples of this shared language were the systematic repetition of phrases related to travelling to and entry into heaven (CB2: “get to heaven” (p2l33); MB2: “reach heaven” (p2l38); CB2: “get to heaven” (p2l44); CB2: “gets you into heaven” (p2l47); CB2: “get to heaven” (p2l53); CB2: “get into heaven” (p2l78); MB2: “get to heaven” (p2l82); “enter heaven” (p2l84)), as well as MB2’s repetition (p2l11) of CB2’s phrase “right path” (p2l10)).

Another cluster of examples of using the same metaphor to mark out and engage with different beliefs is located in the use of *sent* by CB3 and MB3: “... I believe in only one God whom he sent Mohammed and the Quran to guide me towards him” (MB3, p1l8); “... both of that Mohammed and the Quran were sent to help me find God ...” (MB3, p1l11); “that God loved me so much that he sent his only son to die for me” (CB3, p1l63) and “... it doesn’t make that much sense to me that, hmm, the father, like, God in Christianity sent his only son to die for people, well I mean, what kind of father is this?” (MB3, p1l79-80).

All of these examples can be seen as attempts at conveying contrasting worldviews using mutually accepted language to evaluate particular situations (for example, what needs to be provided by a divine entity in order for salvation to become possible). What this means is that it is not necessary for the participants to alter or adapt the other’s references to the actions or situations of going, getting to a location, or sending something – they all appear to be in broad agreement about their meaning – although they clearly want to say different things about how these actions can be successfully performed, their validity, what they involve and what they lead to.

Co-occurring metaphor usage becomes more interesting when the participants make use of a shared metaphor in a way that at first glance appears similar, but under closer examination reveals subtle

differences, possibly reflecting equally subtle differences in belief. An example of this can be found in the use of *follow* by both CB1 and MB1. CB1 first used this word as part of the sentence “I follow Jesus – and I happen to be a Christian” in the second written activity. Variations of it are then used twice by MB1 and three times by CB1 during the course of their discussion. In the case of metaphors that are commonly used by believers from both religions (as discussed in section 3.5 above, there were multiple occurrences of *follow* in both collections of testimonials), it is sometimes difficult to establish whether a metaphor is being appropriated or is just naturally occurring in the language of both participants. However, regardless of the level of appropriation, what is interesting is how the participants use the same word in different ways in the same conversation. In this case CB1 had no problem directly connecting the word to a divine entity such as Jesus or God, while MB1 avoided such a direct connection, preferring objects indirectly related to God such as the Qur’an. These possible moments of appropriation and recontextualization are therefore ideal for uncovering and highlighting the different attitudes of the participants.

These differing attitudes can also be strong enough for the participant to avoid using a metaphor in the same way that the other participant does even when he or she is describing the other’s beliefs. For example, even though CB2 described his faith using repeated examples of relationship and proximity language, as well as language relating to God or Jesus coming towards him and written expressions such as “following Jesus and his teaching” (sentence [2]), MB2 avoids repeating any of these usages. Instead, she characterises his belief as following his religion, but not directly following a divine entity, “Do you believe that you are born with sins and you need to get rid of them by following Christianity?” (p11186). The phrase following Christianity is perfectly understandable, but what makes it odd is that it is a phrase that CB2 had not previously used in the discussion, and it is not one that Christians tend to use (as I established in pattern 1b in table 8 above, *following Jesus* or *following God* would be more normal). Instead, this fits with the pattern of language found in the language of Muslim believers of avoiding a direct association of *follow* with a divine entity. However, at another point in the discussion, MB2 does demonstrate a willingness to directly associate a divine

entity with a movement verb in order to clarify the Christian participant's beliefs, although only in relation to the Christian notion of a Holy Spirit and not in a specific reference to Jesus or God, "so it's like the Holy Spirit comes to every Christian?" (p2l129).

Another example of how recontextualization of a word can reveal differing attitudes occurs in CB3 and MB3's use of *power*. As I suggested in the brief synopsis of the discussion in the results section above, CB3 consistently associates this term with a divine entity and appears to use it in the sense of that divine entity's agency in her life (being moved by a divine entity is a key theme for her). She uses it nine times in the course of the discussion – eight times in the form of the phrase "his [God's] power" – while MB3 makes only a single use of it, also in the form of the phrase "his power". It may be tempting to assume that CB3 has won a battle of wills and has finally influenced MB3 to make use of a term that she would not normally make use of. However, a closer inspection of how MB3 uses the word reveals that it is being used in a way that fits predictably within an Islamic framework. CB3 predominantly uses the term to mark the perceived effect that God or the Holy Spirit is habitually having on the direction of her life, for example, "I am led by his power" (sentence 5). However, MB3 resists this repeated usage and only uses the term in answer to CB3's remark that it is scary to believe that if you do not pray five times a day your salvation is in danger, "I think it's scary, but Islam is very important, like we have this loving merciful God, he is the merciful, but again it's not good to underestimate his power ..." (p2l123). Here the power of God is being removed from this frame of *daily* divine intervention and influence and used in a sense that intuitively fits with a Muslim believer's emphasis on human responsibility and accountability in preparation for the *one-off* execution of judgement at the end of an individual's life.

All the examples of shared language so far are interesting in that they reveal the different attitudes of the participants taking part in the discussion, although it is difficult to view them as examples of sophisticated rhetorical strategy or displays of empathy. I therefore now wish to turn to examples of more explicit appropriation that do appear to involve some element of rhetorical strategy, serving

the function of challenging the perspective of the other and providing a perception of “winning” a disputed point.

Appropriating Metaphors and Imposing Personal Stories in order to Challenge Perspectives

One key reason for metaphor appropriation, or “adopting the other’s metaphor for one’s own use” (Cameron 2010a: 158), is the need to develop and adapt it for a different function (Semino, Deignan and Littlemore 2013). Within the context of a discussion or debate this process of adoption can often take the form of using another’s metaphor in order to enter their perspective and either challenge it or empathise with it. I will examine below some examples from the discussions that appear to illustrate the desire of one participant to make use of a situation described by the other for the purposes of rhetorical gain.

Towards the end of the second part of the discussion between MB1 and CB1 (p2l117-119), MB1 describes a perceived situation whereby non-Muslims are presented with an inherently simple truth, but go on to corrupt it by making it appear more complicated than it originally was. CB1 responds by arguing that this is an oversimplification, and presents his own counter scenario of people being presented with the truth but then being “blinded” to that truth by “the God of this world” (p2l195-197). MB1 responds by appropriating CB1’s reference to the notion of blindness and arguing that an individual only “becomes blinded to the truth” after that person has already decided not to embrace the simplicity of that truth (p2l201-206). This appropriation appears to have little to do with empathy and more to do with using the other’s language to challenge their perspective. For CB1, blindness to the truth is a condition that is imposed on humans (fitting with the theme of habitual supernatural interference in the life of humans that was even more frequent in the language of CB2 and CB3). MB1 appears to be aware that if he grants that humans can have blindness *done to them*, then this opens up the possibility that humans also need in some way to have salvation *done to them* (in the form of the atoning death of Christ). He therefore picks up on this perceived situation of

blindness to the truth and re-castes it within the frame of total human responsibility and accountability. This is achieved by construing this state of blindness to the truth as something that they *do to themselves* by attempting to complicate and therefore corrupt the truth.

Soon after the above example, CB1 appears to engage in a kind of tit-for-tat rhetorical strategy by appropriating one of MB1's metaphors in order to challenge his perspective. It occurs after MB1 makes his closing statement of the discussion by alluding to the freedom that all people have to be able to make their own decisions and choose the "direction that we want to go" (p2l235). Earlier, MB1 had also alluded to some friends he had met at school who had influenced his decision to become a Muslim. CB1 responds by appropriating this notion of direction and suggesting that if he could have had the opportunity to speak to him when he was younger (before he had made his mind up) then MB1 could have ended up heading in a different religious *direction*,

... and you said all those friends that you had in school, different directions and decisions, I wish you had me as a friend because I feel like some of what you are saying, although I hear your heart in it, is based on misunderstanding ... if I was, I wonder what would have happened if I had these conversations with you before, maybe five or ten years ago. (p2l239-250)

This is the only example of CB1 appropriating a metaphor that MB1 has used. This occurs just after MB1 has alluded to the decisions that we are all able to make about the "direction that we want to go" (p2l235). CB1 picks up on MB1's use of *direction*, but the intention is not to build a bridge but to send a message thinly concealed in the language of concerned friendship. The message is that MB1's direction in terms of religious belief could have been changed if CB1 had met him earlier (before he had made his mind up).

It is worth examining this response in a little more detail because of the way it makes use of a strategy of imposing a hypothetical event or, to put it another way, a hypothetical episodic situation on the other discourse participant. What I mean by this is that CB1 is attempting to construct a kind of alternate reality where he imagines meeting MB1 as a friend at school and having the chance to

persuade him before he had the chance to meet others who led him to Islam instead of to Christianity. As I indicated in my brief outline of this story in the results section above, the crucial characteristic of this constructed text world (cf. Stockwell 2002 and Gavins 2007) is that it relies on the assumption that MB1 is vulnerable and dependent on guidance in terms of what to believe, and that CB1 is wise and capable of leading someone to truth as long as they haven't already been led astray by others and become close minded. The important element of imposing personal stories on others is therefore *not necessarily* the content of the story itself (which may or may not be related to an interpretation of a current reality), but the *assumptions* about the characters within the story (which most certainly are designed to relate to an interpretation of a current reality).

This strategy of attempting to impose a personal story on MB1 appears therefore to have three possible functions. The first relates to an attempt to persuade MB1 to view his situation from the perspective of CB1 – to recognise that he (MB1) is impressionable and has been led to believe something that is patently incorrect – instead of his current perspective that his religious views are correct and CB1's are clearly incorrect. The second relates to a possible attempt by CB1 to listen to and persuade *himself* that the assumptions of his own story are valid. This second point requires some explanation. It is reasonable to assume that critical discussions can cause a certain degree of stress and frustration in individuals who are convinced that their beliefs are self-evidently correct. This stress and frustration may increase as the discussion progresses and the other participant is able to raise an increasing number of arguments that conflict with the believer's worldview. I have already noted that in this particular discussion, MB1's contribution took up 70% of the discussion. This demonstrates that MB1 was holding on to his turn far more than CB1 and appeared most of the time to dominate the discussion. It therefore appears to be reasonable to put forward the possibility that CB1's strategy of imposing this personal story on MB1 does not just serve the function of trying to persuade the person for whom the story is intended (MB1). It also serves the function of reassuring the story teller himself (CB1) by encouraging him to continue to visualise or simulate the assumptions underpinning his own story (that MB1 is vulnerable and impressionable). This could be

viewed as helping CB1 to better cope with the pressure and discomfort of being dominated in the critical discussion by MB1.

The third function appears to be related to rhetorical strategy and the observation that an imposed personal story with embedded ideological assumptions is more slippery and trickier to counter than an explicit propositional argument. People become very adept at countering arguments, especially people who often engage in debating the same topic. This is almost certainly the case with conservative religious believers who often appear to be able to rapidly activate stock, very well-rehearsed counters to a range of issues related to their belief. MB1 often displays this kind of ability to rapidly construct and chain together his own arguments while countering CB1's arguments and uses it to dominate the discussion. However, when CB1 makes use of an imposed story with particular assumptions, it appears to be harder for MB1 to process both the story *and* its embedded ideological assumptions and implications and rapidly construct an effective counter. The result is that the story is left "hanging" and its assumptions are never explicitly addressed by MB1. It therefore appears to disrupt the normal flow of the debate where MB1 had, up until that point, been able to rapidly counter every point that CB1 had raised.

This disrupting effect of imposed stories is made even more effective when the controversial assumptions of the story are partially concealed within non-controversial or seemingly sympathetic assumptions (for example, CB1 concealing or embedding the negative assumption that MB1 is impressionable and vulnerable to being led astray in the positive, "warm" assumption that CB1 is a friend who feels sorry for MB1 and just wants to help him find the right direction). This third function may also suggest why these imposed stories appear towards the end of a discussion, as they did in this case, because they may be viewed as particularly effective ways to conclude a debate in a way that may allow the story teller to perceive him or herself as having effectively "had the last word".

In the results section above, I briefly alluded to another example of this strategy of using a hypothetical event or personal story to impose particular presuppositions on the other, this time in the discussion between MB3 and CB3. Towards the end of the discussion between MB3 and CB3, CB3 recalls an event that took place in a Mosque. Again, the actual details of the personal story are not as important as the assumptions present in the perceived reality that CB3 constructs. The account has been reproduced in full below (CB3/MB3, p2|172-189):

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Christian Believer 3: | One time I went to a Mosque and I said, God, these people are hungry for the truth. |
| Muslim Believer 3: | You think so? |
| Christian Believer 3: | Well, we're all hungry for the truth, and we think what we know is true right now and that's why I want to sit there and receive from them as well, I want to get everything that I want out of them, what they believe to see if it's true really and confirm in my heart, and that's the same thing that I want for them. I say to them if they want to know the truth, like they said they were, that's the truth, so I said, if God you love us all the same, and we all want to know the truth, I'm going to stand in front of you, I want your Spirit to tell me what to say, and that's the word I spoke. If you want to know the truth, the truth should be able to set you free, and that's what I talked about, and there were conversations that followed, and it didn't really end in any particular way, I don't think, any side, but it was just brilliant because we all have access to the same God, and if we want to know the truth, just ask him, right? |

It is interesting that when CB3 first began to introduce the story, MB3 immediately picked up on the assumptions that the story appears to contain. When CB3 claims that the Muslims were “hungry for the truth” the implication appears to be that the Muslims didn’t have the truth at that time (if you are hungry, the implication is that you don’t have any food). CB3 immediately responds by attempting to persuade MB3 that she has misunderstood the assumptions of the story and that her reference to hunger was only meant to imply that the Muslims were interested in the truth in the same way as *all* human beings are, including CB3, “we’re all hungry for the truth”. However, it could be argued that this qualification acts only as a smokescreen that serves the purpose of getting MB3 to allow the story to proceed unchallenged. Evidence for this can be drawn from the fact that CB3’s subsequent conversation with God within the story only makes sense if the listener assumes that truth resides in CB’s understanding of God and his Spirit, in addition to CB3 being able to act as a channel of communication between that God and those human beings in need of the truth. In other words, CB3 construes herself as having direct access to the truth while the Muslims are still in need of it, which is what she appeared to deny in her use of the inclusive *we* in her statement “we’re all hungry for the truth”.

It is interesting that CB3 goes on to point out that the discussion in the Mosque “didn’t really end in any particular way”. This reinforces my point above that the *surface content* of the story is rarely the most important element. The most important element in both this story and MB1’s story above are the assumptions that are required for the story to make sense *to the story teller*. In this case it is the assumption that CB3 has direct access to the truth, but Muslims do not. This is qualified by the implied offer that it is possible for them to gain this direct access by changing their understanding of how a believer can relate to a divine entity (by accepting a Charismatic Christian perspective that presupposes the validity of direct, conversational access to a divine entity, typified by the phrase, “just ask him”). What is also very interesting about this story is that CB3 times it perfectly so that it becomes the last thing that is said in the discussion. The assumptions powering the story are therefore again left “hanging in the air” as the discussion closes.

This strategy of attempting to impose personal stories with seemingly hostile ideological assumptions must be contrasted with the kind of personal stories Cameron identifies in her analysis of conciliation discourse. Cameron notes that,

... the other person, once, but no longer, an enemy, has a story to tell, and taking the time and effort to listen to what he or she has to say is a gesture of empathy. However, allowing the Other to tell their story remains distinct from giving validity to that story as 'truth', and it seems likely that participants in post-conflict conciliation need to retain this distinction ... While making an effort to understand their perspective of the Other, one can, at the same time, maintain disagreement with or disapproval of the moral or ethical decisions.

(Cameron 2010a: 79)

Again, we need to recognise that the context in the target discussions is very different from the post-conflict conciliation context outlined in Cameron's quote above. In a sense, the discussions focused on in this thesis between Christians and Muslims still exist within a context of a certain degree of sociological tension and conflict. In addition, the two stories analysed within these discussions are not *just* attempts at *outlining* the perspective of the other, as they appear to be in Cameron's quote above, but are also attempts at *imposing* the perspective of the story teller on the addressee. In a sense, any possible future process of conciliation can only be initiated once these kinds of stories have been rendered completely transparent and their functions recognised for what they are.

This is not to say that the construction of stories during a discussion between believers of different religions is always negative. On the contrary, this chapter will end with the examination of an example of narrative construction that offers the most powerful possibility of empathy out of all of the language produced in the target discussions. However, for now, the key point that has been discussed in this section is that the power of this strategy of *imposing* personal stories with embedded ideological assumptions on others should not be underestimated. I have argued that it is often employed by individuals with very strong beliefs and that it is used to persuade the other, as well as to disrupt the other's capability to use pre-formulated counters. I have also argued that it is one of the strongest coping strategies for allowing an individual with a very strong belief in an idea

that is flatly rejected by the majority of others to manage the psychological pressure of that constant rejection. In other words, one of the most important functions of imposing these types of stories is the effect they may have on the person telling the story. This point has particularly important implications for the possibility of the development of empathy or the blocking of it in the course of religious dialogue. This strategy of imposing stories needs to be viewed within the context of this powerful ability to block both worldview change and the potential for empathy on the part of the story teller. I will now further examine this area of blocking empathy by considering how participants often resisted appropriating the language of the other.

Avoidance of Appropriation

Given the fact that the discussions contain a large number of metaphors, it is surprising that the participants did not make use of each other's metaphors more than they did. This lack of appropriation becomes all the more marked when we consider the fact that many of the Christian participants repeated certain metaphors to an unusually high degree. There are two possible explanations for this lack of metaphor appropriation in the face of such high levels of repetition. The first is that certain religious believers are especially resistant to metaphors generated from an opposing world view, and the second is that high levels of repetition may often have the opposite effect on the addressee than would perhaps be expected. It is possible that constant repetition of language that conflicts with the addressee's worldview does not contribute to worldview change but instead produces negative emotions and ends up consolidating the opposing worldview. Both these explanations can be viewed as overlapping with each other, so it is therefore possible that both may be the case in certain instances.

These discussions were relatively short (between 20 to 30 minutes in length), which should have made multiple repetitions of a word or phrase even more salient to the addressee. They were also designed in such a way as to encourage the participants to pay attention to, respond to and question

the other's language. When these factors are combined with the observation that some key words were repeated by participants five or more times, it becomes possible to argue that appropriation was being blocked in some way. The clearest examples of this include:

- CB2's repeated usage of the words *relationship* (with a divine entity, 5 occurrences), *presence* (of a divine entity, 7 occurrences) and *love* (between the believer and a divine entity and vice versa, 9 occurrences) and MB2's complete avoidance of these terms.
- CB3's same repeated usage of the word *love* (between the believer and a divine entity and vice versa, 13 occurrences) and MB3's complete avoidance of this word. This avoidance becomes even more noticeable when we also take into account CB3's attempt to explicitly impose the word on MB3, "love is the most important commandment, love the Lord God with all your heart, and *I'm sure it is yours as well*" (p21143-145, my italics).

In addition to the above examples, CB2 makes 10 references to proximity language and 12 references to unity language, and yet MB2 consistently refuses to appropriate the language or engage with it apart from the isolated clarification discussed above, "so it's like the Holy Spirit comes to every Christian?" (p21129).

In my brief outline of the results in the section above I referred to two types of believing – a system-based way of believing and a personal relationship-based way of believing. The view that the Christian participants are making use of a personal relationship-based way of believing, while the Muslim participants are making use of a systems-based way of believing may go some way to account for these examples of lack of appropriation. I will discuss this argument in detail in section 4.6.2 below, but in this section I will lay the groundwork by addressing the question of why there are so few examples of the kind of convergences that can be seen in the conciliation texts Cameron (2010a) analyses.

Cameron notes several examples in her data of such convergences in the form of the positive appropriation of metaphorical language introduced by another in order to establish points of connection between participants. The difference is perhaps due to a collection of factors such as the agenda of the individual participants, their motivations for being involved in the conversation, and the type of preparation that they underwent in anticipation of the conversation (cf. Cameron 2010a: 177-178). Perhaps the most important factor is the observation made in the previous section that these discussions cannot be classed as belonging to the genre of post-conflict conciliation discourse, but rather to discourse taking place within, to some extent, a context of sociological tension and conflict. When a conservative Muslim and Christian come together to discuss their differences, they are unlikely to do so with the *primary* intention of searching for points of connection and reconciling differences. MB1 provides a good example of this in that the doctrine of the unity of God and its superiority to the Christian doctrine of the trinity was an issue that appeared to be something that he had planned to focus on, or at least he had planned to find some way of integrating it into the tasks that he would be given. CB1's reference to it in the first written activity also appears to demonstrate his agenda of using the tasks to anticipate and engage with that topic.

In addition to this, his difficulty at the beginning of the second discussion task ("I don't know, it's a little bit too linguistic for me, a little out of my depth really ... after you, you know, you tell me" (p212-4)) may reflect his difficulty with adapting to the difference between his expectations and preparations for the encounter and the actual task that he was asked to perform. When both participants realised that the second discussion task was asking them to focus on similarities and differences in their experience of being a believer rather than theoretical doctrinal differences, they both had to seemingly undergo a process of rapid adaption, which CB1 appeared to find slightly harder than MB1. Conservative believers may not have a problem focusing on action and relationship language, although it is possible that for some believers the discussion of doctrine is easier in that it can be more easily prepared for and reduced to a series of community agreed and sanctioned branching arguments, responses and counter arguments. The discussion of doctrine is also

seemingly more suitable for allowing believers to calculate who is perceived as right and wrong and why they are perceived as right and wrong. A desire to talk about beliefs that are perceived as correct while explaining why other beliefs are incorrect may also account for the high prevalence of holding on to turns, the low frequency of questions, as well as the divergence from the set tasks that could be found in these discussions.

Another possible factor that may explain why participants did not pick up on language that was repeated many times is that the addressee may have sensed that the speaker was attempting to impose language upon them. In this situation, even when that language may not be in direct conflict with the addressee's beliefs, this pressure may produce the opposite effect than the one intended. This suggests that in any process of dialogue it is very possible that any form of over-repetition or attempts at imposing words or phrases that are key to the speaker's ideology could have the effect of pushing the language of the addressee further away rather than drawing it into a process of constructive convergence.

Having considered these examples where any displays of empathy through language convergence appear to have been suppressed, I now wish to turn to the few examples in the discussion that do appear to offer some evidence for signs of empathy between the discussion participants. These examples take two forms: the first involves statements that appear to be unusually sympathetic to the beliefs of the other, and the second involves an example of extended perspective alignment between the two discussion participants.

Empathy or Strategy in Statements that Adopt the Perspective of the Other

The data related to the three discussions contain almost no examples of metaphorical appropriation that could suggest the presence of empathy or any desire to build bridges between the belief systems of the two participants. One of the only examples follows MB3's statement about her

experience of being a Muslim, “...it’s this quality and peace with myself and it’s this relationship between me and God” (p11113). CB3 picks up on the word *relationship* and repeats it back to her in a positive manner, “this relationship, I love it” (p11114-115). However, as I discussed above, CB3 goes on to recontextualise the word in a way that systematically highlights the differences between her beliefs and the beliefs of MB3. This leads me to extrapolate that this instance does not so much instantiate a desire to build bridges between different beliefs, as much as it highlights CB3’s passionate acknowledgement that the word *relationship* is also crucial to her Christian beliefs, although, from her perspective, in a markedly different way to that understood by MB3. In other words, it can be viewed as another way of drawing the battle lines.

In order to explore other possible examples of displays of empathy it is necessary to shift my focus away from processes of metaphorical appropriation and concentrate on statements that would make little sense outside of the context of a dynamic interaction between two participants with very different beliefs. In the discussion between MB1 and CB1, CB1 states, “they’ll tell you that Jesus is the word of God and that is where the parallel with the Quran comes because the Quran is sent from heaven to reveal God’s way ...” (p11238-239). As an Evangelical Christian, CB1 would undoubtedly *not* believe that the Quran was sent from heaven by God. The motivation behind this statement therefore appears to be CB1 viewing his beliefs from the perspective of MB1 and subsequently looking for a comparison that would drive home the point of the importance of Jesus being the word of God. MB1 seems to also be following a similar principle when he argues, “... basically I always found that Islam seemed to appeal the best or appeal the most, in terms of, maybe it’s a problem, but the simplicity of the message and because I believe that religion is easy, it shouldn’t be difficult ...” (p21108-113). The phrase “maybe it’s a problem” appears to relate back to CB1’s counter argument that MB1’s doctrinal views are over-simplistic. This suggests that we should give this phrase the interpretation of meaning *maybe you will think this is a problem from your perspective but it isn’t a problem from my Muslim perspective*. This therefore again appears to be an example of one of the

participants briefly placing himself in the position of the other and briefly producing language from that perspective.

Another example can be found in CB2's language when he states, "... but I don't think the guidelines for the Quran and the guide that the Quran gives you and the guide that the Bible gives you aren't too dissimilar anyway, you know what I mean?" (p2116). It is unlikely that this is the kind of statement that CB2 would make if he were preaching a sermon at his local church (where he would probably foreground key *differences*, not similarities), but it is the kind of statement that fits well into a polite, non-confrontational conversation with a Muslim participant. It is important to recognise that all the participants appeared determined to avoid any language related to impoliteness or bad feeling. It is therefore a valid question to ask whether the above statements should be explained in terms of empathy and seeing through the other's eyes or just politeness strategies, although it may be possible to argue that there is some connection between these two notions.

However, too much should not be read into these brief indications of perspective expansion, because again it may have more to do with a rhetorical technique of persuasion – conceding on smaller points with the hope of softening the competitor, before winning on the big points – than it has to do with a marker of personal connection and the experiencing of the world from another's perspective. Other examples of statements that may contain a mix of factors related to empathy and rhetorical strategy include CB1's tendency to offer partial agreement with MB1's criticism followed by disagreement, for example, "... I agree that in the West especially the [Christian] concept of God's nature has been confused ... but at the same time ..." (p11179-213), "... the manuscripts in my opinion are trustworthy but I hear what you are saying about the standardisation of the translation ..." (p21157-158).

Another dynamic that may be at play here that should also prevent us from reading too much empathy into the above examples is what I shall term the *rubber band effect*. What I mean by this is a temporary "bending" in perspective or a transient appearance of empathy that subsequently disappears later in the conversation, or by the beginning of the next conversation. As I have

discussed above, CB1 appears to concede some key points with his statements that follow phrases such as “I agree that” and “I hear what you are saying about”. I have also discussed how CB1 is generally dominated in the discussion by MB1. These two points might lead to the assumption that CB1 is being “beaten” in the discussion and that the weight of the discussion is pressuring CB1 towards a worldview change. However, CB1’s technique of narrative imposition that I explored above clearly demonstrates that CB1 is still intent on assuming that MB1’s religious beliefs are self-evidently incorrect. The point is that there may be strong linguistic evidence that CB1’s rhetorical defences are crumbling, but by the end of the discussion it becomes clear that this crumbling is simply a very brief “bending” in CB1’s worldview. A worldview that is quickly able to return to its original position as soon as the competitive discourse begins to draw to a close.

I have so far been relatively negative about the presence of empathy in the discussion data. I now wish to balance this negativity with a focus on a particular stretch of the discussion between CB2 and MB2 that appears to display some degree of perspective alignment in terms of action and relationship language.

Moments of Perspective Alignment

I have so far focused on numerous examples where the participants have used their turn in the discourse to highlight the differences between their own beliefs and the beliefs of the other, highlight the perceived superiority of their own beliefs, or to block any possibility of a change in belief. One of my arguments in the previous chapter was that a focus on action and relationship language would allow committed, conservative believers to move beyond an emphasis on theoretical doctrine and the perception that belief was composed of an oversimplified, binary framework. The discussions analysed in this chapter were designed to focus the participants on action and relationship language, and yet the examples examined so far show little evidence of a move away from a perception of clear, fixed differences. Rigid doctrinal differences in the form of beliefs related

to the trinity and the unity of God and the atoning death of Christ were still relatively prominent in the discussions. This appears to demonstrate that even when action and relationship language is foregrounded, there is still a propensity for conservative religious believers to rapidly return to a focus on theoretical doctrinal differences. However, there is also some evidence that the focus on action and relationship language did produce moments where a perception of absolute differences appeared to fade into the background. In the results section above, I briefly referred to such a moment that occurred in the second discussion between MB2 and CB2. It is worth analysing this part of MB2 and CB2's discussion in some detail.

This particular stretch of discourse begins with MB2 asking CB2 whether Christians need to go to church in order to communicate with God. The question appears to be based on MB2's understanding of the mediating role of the priest in Roman Catholic belief and her assumption that CB2 follows such beliefs. CB2 is quick to affirm his Protestant Evangelical belief that there is no human mediator and that direct communication with God is possible in his form of Christianity. However, he goes on to argue that meeting with other Christians is still important because fellow believers need to support each other. He makes this point by first affirming that no one can follow their religion perfectly and that there will always be differences in a group of believers, but that, despite these imperfections and differences, fellow believers are still able to support and help each other. MB2 agrees with both points, indicating that they fit with her experience of being a Muslim. This is followed by what appears to be a brief moment of misunderstanding which is solved by CB2 rephrasing his point and stating that "sometimes it's very hard to understand what God wants in a situation, and then you need people around you to help you out". MB2 does not just agree with this observation, but also intensifies her agreement through the use of *exactly*, "to help you, yeah, exactly". The complete segment has been reproduced below:

| Participant | Type of comment | Extract |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| MB2: | Justification for earlier question | "... I wanted to check my understanding, I have heard Christians need to go to church, can't pray to God directly." |
| CB2: | Further explanation of earlier answer | "It does say that you need a fellowship with each other, doesn't necessarily have to be in a church building, I'm possibly a little bit less mainstream than some people, I'm sure you don't live perfectly according to the Quran, you try to." |
| MB2: | Agreement | "Well, yeah, I try to." |
| CB2: | Expansion of point | "Yeah, well equally like with Christians, you're not going to get everything absolutely right all the time, there might be some scripture that you think says one thing, or your teacher, because there's different sects in Islam, yeah, that will teach slightly different things, but essentially the basic tenets of the faith are the same." |
| MB2: | Agreement | "There are minor differences between sects." |
| CB2: | Expansion of point with question | "You get these minor differences, so my view on what scripture says differs slightly from a lot of the people at the church that I go to the main points are the same, but I don't think you have to meet in a church building, but you certainly have to meet with fellow Christians. If you were trying to live by the Quran and you didn't have any other Muslims to help you, you would really struggle wouldn't you?" |
| MB2: | Agreement | "Yeah." |
| CB2: | Expansion of point | "You've got God to help you and that's awesome, but sometimes you find it hard, well, like, I know I certainly do, sometimes I will find it hard to talk to God, and you need people to guide you." |
| MB2: | Partial agreement and | "I need people to help me understand the words of God but, it's like, I don't |

| | | |
|------|--------------------|--|
| | qualification | find it hard to talk to God all the time.” |
| CB2: | Clarification | “No, maybe I phrased that wrong. Sometimes things aren’t as easy, and then sometimes it’s very hard to understand what God wants in a situation, and then you need people around you to help you out.” |
| MB2: | Complete Agreement | “To help you, yeah, exactly.” |

What is very interesting about the above segment is that what is being foregrounded is the daily personal experience of being a Christian or a Muslim and the practical issues relating to having a perceived relationship with a divine entity, rather than what a Christian or Muslim theoretically believes. CB2 discusses this experience by using the same narrative creation technique that both CB1 and CB3 used, but with two crucial differences.

Firstly, the narrative is not so much imposed as offered in the form of a question, or, to put it another way, an invitation to join in the creation of a shared analogy, “if you were trying to live by the Quran and you didn’t have any other Muslims to help you, you would really struggle, wouldn’t you?”. It is only after MB2 has accepted the validity of this situation that CB2 tentatively offers a second narrative in the form of a stated situation where “things aren’t easy” and that sometimes “it’s very hard to understand what God wants in a situation”, and in that situation “you need people around you to help you out”.

Secondly, MB2 appears to be willing to respond very positively to these narratives because, unlike the narratives of CB1 and CB3 analysed above, they do not appear to rely upon a framework of underlying assumptions that can be related to the superiority of Christianity. In the absence of an obvious intention by CB2 at this point in the discussion to rhetorically “win”, it is reasonable to propose that the intention is simply to explain something (namely, why some Christians feel they don’t *have to* meet together, but still think it’s a good idea to do so). However, what is interesting about this explanation is that CB2 chooses to explain it by recourse to a *shared experience*

(sometimes it's difficult to know what God wants you to do in a given situation) and a *shared conclusion from that experience* (it's therefore good if you can meet with other believers in your religion who can support you). This strategy for explaining a point makes no sense unless at some level these two believers recognise that, despite the serious theological differences that have already been highlighted and discussed during CB2 and MB2's discussion, there are key similarities in their everyday perceived experience. If this is correct, then it is an indication that a level of empathy and bridge building was present to some degree during this section of the discussion.

In order to appreciate the significance of this example, it is important to re-iterate the positions of the majority of Evangelical Christians and conservative Muslims. The standard position in Evangelical Christianity can be summarised in this quote from an article on Muslim beliefs in the January 2007 edition of the Evangelical Times,

Only by honouring the Son do we honour the Father (John 5:23). So rejecting Christ amounts to a rejection of God.

There is no other gospel, whatever the multi-faith liberals and other deceivers may claim.

(<http://www.evangelical-times.org/archive/item/2192/Cults-and-other-religions/The-path-to-paradise-Christ-or-Muhammad-/>)

The meaning is clear: Muslims may think that they have a relationship with God, but in fact their beliefs are a rejection of the possibility of such a relationship. The standard position in conservative Islam is similarly stark. In his booklet *Concept of God in Major Religions*, Zakir Naik (2008: 23-24), a prominent Sunni Muslim apologist, states unequivocally that any religious believer who rejects the Muslim doctrine of the unity of God and attempts to argue that Jesus is God is committing blasphemy and is heading for hell. From this perspective, it's clearly impossible to simultaneously be viewed as blaspheming a divine entity while having a meaningful relationship with it.

The point here is that Evangelical Christians and conservative Muslims may be able to concede that they have a degree of similarity and overlap in terms of theoretical doctrinal issues (for example, they both recognise as authoritative the first five books of the Old Testament). However, they would

want to argue that there is absolute dissimilarity in terms of episodic situations relating to a relationship with God. This situation can be illustrated by comparing Evangelical views about Roman Catholics. There are clearly many more points of similarity in terms of theoretical doctrinal belief between Evangelical Protestant Christians and Roman Catholics than there are between Evangelical Protestant Christians and Muslims, and yet many Evangelical Protestant Christians refuse to allow even the possibility that Roman Catholics can have a relationship with God. Consider the quote below from the 2008 June edition of the *Evangelical Times*:

Beware of the Roman Catholic Church and of her pretence to have changed. Beware also of those Evangelicals who are affiliating with Rome today and who speak of Rome's errors in a soft manner. They teach that non-Catholics should join hands with Catholics to solve the social-political issues of our day, but they do not understand her doctrines. The Word of God clearly tells us, 'Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him, for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds' (2 John 9-11).

(<http://www.evangelical-times.org/archive/item/2993/Cults-and-other-religions/Has-Rome-changed-/>)

Despite the numerous similarities in doctrinal belief, most Evangelical Christians will be adamant that a committed Roman Catholic “does not have God”. From the Evangelical Christian or conservative Muslim perspective, it is therefore clearly possible to concede that believers from different belief communities can have *numerous* points of similarity in terms of theoretical beliefs without being recognised by each other as true believers. However, even the *smallest* concession that believers from another belief community can have a personal relationship with God has enormous ramifications. In terms of a relationship with God, you are either perceived to be having one (in the case of the perceived true believer) or not (in the case of the perceived non-believer). The key point here is that exclusivist religious groups *must* be over simplistic and devoid of ambiguity in this area if they are to sustain their exclusivist worldviews.

Now that I have highlighted the reason why similarities in a perceived personal relationship with a divine entity are so significant, we can now more fully appreciate the import of the above extract

from the discussion between CB2 and MB2. As I noted above, CB2 chooses to explain his point by recourse to a *shared experience* (sometimes it's difficult to know what God wants you to do in a given situation) and a shared conclusion from that experience (it's therefore good if you can meet with other believers in your religion who can support you). This strategy for explaining a point makes no sense unless at some level these two conservative believers recognise that there are key similarities in their everyday perceived experience, and this type of recognition is impossible without an unusually (in terms of conservative believers) advanced degree of mutual empathy.

However, it is still important to resist the blanket conclusion that action and relationship language automatically promotes empathy. The sections above on metaphor appropriation serving rhetorical purposes and the imposing of narratives with ideological assumptions all demonstrate how action and relationship or episodic language can be used to widen the ideological gap between the participants. It is therefore clear that this type of language does not at all guarantee an empathetic connection. However, this example from CB2 and MB2's discussion demonstrates the potential of this type of action and relationship language in terms of its ability to promote bridge building between *certain* conservative believers at *certain* times. More importantly, I believe it also demonstrates the possible potential for action and relationship discourse to be used to encourage empathy when at least one of the participants in the discussion has a thorough grasp of the range of issues discussed above and a strong desire to forge points of personal connection.

Having considered some of the interactive features of the discourse produced during the videoed discussions, I will now move on to a comparison of the patterns of emphasis in each participant's language and the patterns of emphasis identified in the analysis of the testimonial data. The section below should not be viewed as distinct from some of the interactive aspects I have discussed above. Many of the points I have explored above will be re-visited and further explored in the section below.

4.6.2 Patterns of Emphasis in the Language of Participants

In the previous chapter my principal argument was that action and relationship language has a tendency to vary across individuals, contexts and genres. This meant that it should be impossible to view such language in absolute, static terms. Instead, it should only be possible to describe such language in terms of patterns of emphasis at play at a particular time and setting within particular genres, individuals and communities. The previous chapter identified some of these patterns of emphasis in the movement and proximity metaphors found in the testimonials of the *Evangelical Times* and the website *islamfortoday.com*. The discussions analysed below do not belong specifically to those communities and also do not belong to the genre of testimonials, so we would expect the patterns of emphasis to vary. However, it may be possible to establish that patterns of emphasis within religious action and relationship language are not all subject to the same degree of variation. Some types of action and relationship language may be more closely controlled and determined by doctrinal beliefs than others. The analysis below will examine these possibilities by focusing in on the same types of movement and proximity language I focused on in the previous chapter.

In order to avoid repeated references to sections of the previous chapter, table 4.11 below summarises the various patterns of emphasis explored in that chapter. Whenever it is necessary to contrast language in the studies with patterns of language in the testimonial analysis, I will therefore refer to the numbered patterns below rather than continually referring back to the previous chapter.

| Table 4.11: Patterns of Emphasis between Religious Testimonials Established in Chapter 3 | | |
|--|---|--|
| Patterns of Emphasis and Section where Discussed: | a) <i>Islamfortoday.com</i> Testimonials: | b) <i>Evangelical Times</i> Testimonials |
| Pattern 1: COME and FOLLOW | Fewer occurrences of COME + preposition + [divine entity] or FOLLOW + [divine entity] | More occurrences of COME + preposition + [divine entity] or FOLLOW + [divine entity] |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Pattern 2: Divine proximity | Fewer occurrences of divine proximity language, occurrences usually restricted to the use of <i>close</i> | More occurrences of divine proximity language, occurrences exhibit a wider range of verbs and prepositions |
| Pattern 3: Relationship with a divine entity | Fewer occurrences of language relating to a relationship with a divine entity | More occurrences of language relating to a relationship with a divine entity |
| Pattern 4: Divine unity | No occurrences of divine unity language | Occurrences of divine unity language |
| Pattern 5: Believer-as-patient | More occurrences of type 3 (e.g. <i>guided</i>) believer-as-patient movement metaphors and believer-as-patient movement metaphors related to an argument or realisation rather than a divine entity | More occurrences of type 1 (e.g. <i>brought</i>) and 2 (e.g. <i>led</i>) believer-as-patient movement metaphors |
| Pattern 6: <i>Through with the meaning of going through a challenging life experience</i> | Fewer occurrences of <i>through</i> with the meaning <i>going through a challenging life experience</i> | More occurrences of <i>through</i> with the meaning <i>going through a challenging life experience</i> |
| Pattern 7: <i>Through with the meaning by means of</i> | More occurrences of <i>through</i> with the meaning <i>by means of</i> that suggest a process of research and reflection | More occurrences of <i>through</i> with the meaning <i>by means of</i> that suggest divine intervention |

I will now proceed to a discussion of the language used by each pair in the study and the patterns of emphasis identified in the previous chapter in the two collections of testimonials. This discussion will be ordered according to the above patterns, and the list of relevant occurrences in the language of each participant will be colour coded in order to provide a quick visual summary. This coding will consist of the three colours (green, orange and red) listed below with their meanings.

| | |
|--|--|
| | Multiple occurrences supporting a pattern, or, if the pattern is based on certain language <i>not</i> being present, no occurrences contradicting the pattern |
| | Limited support for the pattern, or, if the pattern is based on certain language <i>not</i> being present, some isolated occurrences contradicting the pattern |
| | No occurrences supporting the pattern or multiple occurrences contradicting it |

With reference to the above patterns and colour codes, I will now proceed to a comparison and discussion of the language used by each pair in the study and the patterns of language identified in the two collections of testimonials, beginning with a consideration of *come* and *follow* in relation to a divine entity.

Using come and follow in conjunction with a divine entity

In the testimonials analysed in the previous chapter, the verbs come and follow were rarely directly associated with the divine entity in the Muslim testimonials (pattern 1a in table 1 above), but were frequently associated with the divine entity in the Christian testimonials (pattern 1b in table 1 above).

In my analysis of the testimonials, I observed a tendency in the *islamfortoday.com* texts to avoid associating movement verbs such as *come* and *follow* directly with a divine entity, preferring instead to associate these verbs with words that indirectly relate to the divine entity or the belief system surrounding that entity (e.g. “... the story of how my husband and I came to embrace Islam” (MT1)”, but not *came to God*). In contrast, the Evangelical Times texts often directly associated these verbs with a divine entity, and made frequent uses of phrases like *follow Jesus* or *come to God* (e.g. “come to God in prayer” (CT1) and “I had to come to God in repentance” (CT14)). One possible explanation for this is that the Christian texts wished to emphasise the sense of intimacy associated with metaphors that draw on a domain of movement towards physical proximity, while the Muslim texts appeared to be uncomfortable with this usage.

In the section above I discussed how co-occurring metaphor usage becomes more interesting when the participants make use of a shared metaphor in a way that at first glance appears similar, but under closer examination reveals subtle differences, possibly reflecting equally subtle differences in belief. I noted that the use of *follow* by the Muslim and Christian participants in the videoed discussions was, in a similar manner to the use of *follow* in the testimonial data, a good example of this. In table 12 below, I further expand this discussion by listing the usages for both *follow* and *come* by all six participants during the tasks and the discussions. We can see that the Muslim participants tend to use these verbs in a way that indirectly associated them with God or the belief system surrounding God (e.g. “came to Islam” (p1116)), whereas the Christian participants tend to use them to refer directly to Jesus or God (e.g. “follow Jesus” (p1115)). Because the Muslim and Christian data follow patterns 1a and 1b respectively in terms of what occurs with *come* and *follow*, both of the columns in table 4.12 below have been shaded green.

| Table 4.12: Use of <i>come</i> and <i>follow</i> in conjunction with a divine entity | | |
|--|--|---|
| | Muslim Participants | Christian Participants |
| Pair One: MB1 and CB1 | [1] <i>came to Islam</i> (sen1); [2] <i>came to Islam</i> (p1116); [3] <i>follow it [the truth]</i> (p21203); | [1] <i>follow Jesus</i> (p1115); [2] <i>following Jesus</i> (p1144); [3] <i>Jesus’ followers</i> (p11207) [4] <i>follow Jesus’ teaching and example</i> (sen 3); |
| Pair Two: MB2 and CB2 | [1] <i>follow the right path</i> (sen 1); [2] <i>by following Christianity</i> (p1186); [3] <i>following the Quran</i> (p2137); [4] <i>mercy of God comes at the end</i> (p2183) | [1] <i>God comes down to a level that we can interact with him</i> (p21122); [2] <i>so it’s like the Holy Spirit comes to every Christian?</i> (MB2) <i>Yeah</i> (CB2) (p21129-130) [3] <i>follow the right path</i> (p2110) |
| Pair Three: MB3 and CB3 | [1] <i>follow this instruction like wearing</i> | [1] <i>He [Jesus] came to save me from</i> |

| | | |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| | <i>hijab</i> (p2l97-98) | <i>my sin</i> (p1l39); [2] <i>follower of Christ</i> (p2l65) [3] <i>I should follow this bit, faith</i> (p2l136) |
|--|-------------------------|---|

Despite the shift in genre (testimonial to discussion) and the expansion beyond individuals specifically associated with *islamfortoday.com* or the *Evangelical Times*, the patterns of emphasis in terms of *come* and *follow* have remained essentially similar. MB1 associates the verbs with “Islam” and “truth”, but never directly with a divine entity. This pattern is also reproduced in MB1’s metaphorical use of other related verbs, such as “embrace” being used in the phrase “embraced Islam” (four occurrences: p2l21, p2l43, p2l75, p2l102), but never in the form of embracing a divine entity. Both MB2 and MB3 also avoid directly associating these verbs with a divine entity. MB2 does refer to the coming of a particular abstract divine characteristic, “the mercy of God”, but still makes no direct reference to the coming of God.

In contrast, divine entities such as God, Jesus and the Spirit in the Christian language of CB1, CB2 and CB3 seem to readily lend themselves to being directly associated with distance closing metaphors such as *come* and *follow*. This is further consolidated by the only example of a Muslim participant echoing the Christian’s use of this type of language, although, as I noted in the section above, it was related only to the use of the Holy Spirit (a term that Muslims generally use to refer to the angel Gabriel and not a divine entity), and not Jesus or God. MB2 repeats the gist of CB2’s language back to him in order to seek clarification: “so it’s like the Holy Spirit comes to every Christian?”. The answer from CB2 is an emphatic “yeah”.

CB2 also appears to give a clear explanation for this difference that encapsulates the importance of intimacy language for Evangelical Christians through the use of a movement metaphor, “God comes down to a level that we can interact with him”. This contrasts with a statement from MB1 that

appears to explicitly counter the possibility of drawing on physical intimacy metaphors based on a spatially bounded entity, "... there is nothing like unto God ... all of the heavens would not be able to contain the Lord" (p11274-284).

In the previous chapter, I argued that action and relationship language will inherently vary more than doctrinal language from community to community (within the same religion) as well as from individual to individual. This observation was based on the argument that action and relationship language is far more complex and fluid because it is based on individual things, but on complex, dynamically unfolding personal situations. However, the consistency of these two contrasting patterns of emphasis suggests that some types of action and relationship language may achieve a certain degree of stability across particular communities and individuals within the same religion. Some action and relationship language appears to be so closely connected to bedrock doctrine, key identity markers and the belief of things (such as the *incarnation* – God becoming man – and the *Tawhid* – the Muslim doctrine of the unity and therefore complete otherness of God) that it takes on a high level of consistency and stability across multiple contexts and genres. Further support for this assertion can be drawn from the language of CB1. As I shall discuss below, despite CB1's avoidance of many of the *Evangelical Times* patterns and his closer similarity to some of the *islamfortoday.com* patterns (discussed below), even he consistently adheres to the Christian pattern 1b rather than 1a.

I have suggested that the patterns associated with *come* and *follow* and issues of intimacy are closely interwoven with the notion of closing or maintaining the perceived distance between a divine entity and a believer. These notions are closely related to concepts of divine proximity and relationship, and I will therefore turn to a consideration of how these concepts were instantiated in the language of the participants below.

Divine proximity, unity and relationship language

In the Muslim testimonials analysed in the previous chapter, there were only a limited number of references to a divine entity being construed as near a believer (pattern 2a in table 1 above) or having a relationship with a believer (pattern 3a), and no references at all to a divine entity being construed as inside a believer or a believer's life (pattern 4a). In contrast, in the Christian testimonials there were a far higher number of references to divine proximity (pattern 2b), relationship with a divine entity (pattern 3b) and divine unity (pattern 4b).

In my analysis of the testimonials, I discovered that both the *islamfortoday.com* texts and the *Evangelical Times* texts made use of language that described the believer's relationship with a divine entity through the use of metaphors drawn from the domain of being physically near something. However, the *islamfortoday.com* texts contained far fewer references and the occurrences that were found tended to be restricted to some use of the adjective *close*, for example: "I have never been so close to God as I have been since becoming Muslim" (MT5) and "Each time I went, I felt ... closer and closer to the Prophet Jesus and God" (MT7). The Muslim texts also contained far fewer cases where the word *relationship* was directly associated with a divine entity (this occurred five times (relative frequency: 0.17) in the Muslim testimonials compared to six times (relative frequency: 0.39) in the Christian testimonials). Another important difference was that the *islamfortoday.com* texts also made no use of language that went beyond the domain of physical nearness and into the domain of unity (the divine entity being construed as inside the body or life of the believer). In contrast to this, references to divine proximity and divine relationship were more frequent in the *Evangelical Times* texts, along with a wider range of variability in the divine proximity language that included a range of prepositions (e.g. *with* as in, "God was with me" (CT3)) as well as adjectives such as *close*. The *Evangelical Times* texts also contained frequent references to divine unity language, for example, *in* as in, "a person truly becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus" (CT5).

Table 4.13 below lists occurrences of divine proximity language in the discussions, table 4.14 lists occurrences of divine unity language, and table 15 lists occurrences of relationship language. As can be seen from these tables, in over half of the cases, the lists of occurrences have been shaded in green because they follow the relevant patterns of emphasis described above. However, there are some cases where the lists of occurrences have been shaded in orange to suggest that the above patterns only receive limited support, or, in the case of CB1 and MB3, shaded in red to suggest that they receive no support at all.

| Table 4.13: Use of Divine proximity and language | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Muslim Participants | Christian Participants |
| Pair One: MB1 and CB1 | [1] <i>close to God</i> (p1l334) | [no references] |
| Pair Two: MB2 and CB2 | [no references] except: <i>so it's like the Holy Spirit comes <u>to</u> every Christian?</i> " (p2l129). [discussed below] | [1] <i>the <u>presence</u> of God came into my life ...</i> [2] <i><u>Presence</u> of God, Jesus</i> (sen 5); [3] <i><u>presence</u> of God in my life</i> (p1l67); [4] <i>I [Jesus] <u>stand at</u> the door [of your heart]</i> (p1l70); [5] <i>have a relationship <u>with</u> you [God]</i> ; [6] <i>the <u>presence</u> of God</i> (p1l80); [7] <i>the <u>presence</u> of God</i> (p1l92); [8] <i>the <u>presence</u> of God</i> (p1l109); [9] <i>God's <u>presence</u></i> (p1l180); [10] <i>further along the journey <u>with</u> God</i> (p2l69) |
| Pair Three: MB3 and CB3 | [1] <i>he sent Mohammed and the Quran to guide me <u>towards</u> him</i> (p1l8); [2] <i>that will make me <u>closer</u> to God</i> (p2l99) | [1] <i>God is always <u>with</u> me</i> (sen 3); [2] <i>Being <u>with</u> him</i> [the Spirit] (p2l45); [3] <i>being in his [God's] <u>presence</u></i> (p2l87); |

| Table 4.14: Use of Divine Unity Language | | |
|--|--|---|
| | Muslim Participants | Christian Participants |
| Pair One: MB1 and CB1 | [no references] | [1] <i>In him is peace and purpose</i> (sen 5) |
| Pair Two: MB2 and CB2 | [no references] | [1] <i>The Holy Spirit lives in me</i> (sen 1); [2] <i>Invited Jesus into my heart ...</i> (sen 5) [3] <i>presence of God came into my life ...</i> (sen 5) [4] <i>Presence of God ... came into my life/heart</i> (sen 5); [5] <i>presence of God in my life</i> (p1l67); [6] <i>let him [Jesus] in</i> (p1l71); [7] <i>invite him [Jesus] in</i> (p1l72); [8] <i>[God] come into my life</i> (p1l75); [9] <i>Holy Spirit lives in you</i> (p1l88); [10] <i>God into your life</i> (p1l89); [11] <i>Holy Spirit dwells in you</i> (p1l89); [12] <i>[Holy Spirit] dwells in every Christian</i> (p1l89) |
| Pair Three: MB3 and CB3 | [1] <i>He's [God] is always in my heart</i> (p1l143) | [1] <i>The Spirit lives in me</i> (sen 1); [2] <i>I felt the Spirit in me</i> (p1l26) |

| Table 4.15: Relationship with a Divine Entity Language | | |
|--|---------------------|--|
| | Muslim Participants | Christian Participants |
| Pair One: MB1 and CB1 | [no references] | [no references] |
| Pair Two: MB2 and CB2 | [no references] | [1] <i>I have a personal relationship with God</i> (sen 2); [2] <i>[Jesus] come into my life and have a relationship with you</i> (p1l75); [3] <i>my salvation and my relationship with God</i> (p2l60); [4] <i>a result of my relationship with God</i> (p2l61); [5] <i>everybody has an individual relationship with God</i> |

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| | | (p2l149) |
| Pair Three: MB3 and CB3 | <p>[1] <i>reach a better <u>relationship</u> with Allah</i> (sen 4); [2] <i><u>relationship</u> between me and God</i> (p1l113); [3] <i><u>relationship</u> between me and God</i> (p1l116); [4] <i>private <u>relationship</u> with God</i> (p1l121); [5] <i>to reach a better <u>relationship</u> with God</i> (p2l97); [6] <i>a better <u>relationship</u> with God</i> (p2l113)</p> | <p>[1] <i>this <u>relationship</u> [with God] I love it</i> (p1l114-115); [2] <i><u>relationship</u> [with God] is the basis of your faith</i> (p1l127); [3] <i>feel like you have a <u>relationship</u></i> (p1l128); [4] <i>my <u>relationship</u> with God and Jesus and the Spirit</i> (p1l129); [5] <i>the <u>relationship</u> [with God] is strong</i> (p1l132); [6] <i>the <u>relationship</u> with the God that you have</i> (p1l149); [7] <i>I can just have this <u>relationship</u> with God</i> (p2l34); [8] <i>only a person that has that <u>relationship</u> [with God]</i> (p2l65); [9] <i>get back into a proper <u>relationship</u> with God</i> (p2l86); [10] <i>that better <u>relationship</u> [with God]</i> (p2l132); [11] <i>like you said, a <u>relationship</u> with God</i> (p2l133)</p> |

The above three tables encompass a wide, complex range of data. I will therefore break the discussion below into three sections. The first section will focus on discussing the evidence that CB2 and CB3's above use of proximity, unity and relationship language suggest a type of personal relationship-based way of believing that is rooted in combining notions of proximity and unity with a divine entity, emotion and a sense of intimate relationship. In contrast, the second section will argue that the language of the Muslim participants suggests a way of believing that is rooted not primarily in personal, affective relationship but in a system of cause and effect that is equal to all. The third section will then seek to blur the lines between these first two sections by focusing on CB1 and MB3

and how a high degree of variation may be present between individuals with the same doctrinal beliefs.

Emotion and Relationships in CB2 and CB3

As we saw in tables 4.13 and 4.14 above, CB2 uses a high volume of both proximity and unity language principally revolving around the phrase *the presence of God*. He even goes as far as explicitly tying his sense of certainty with his sense of the proximity of a divine entity, "... my *certainty is based on* basically the presence of God in my life ..." (p1167, my emphasis). This is clearly very important in terms of identifying the core of CB2's belief.

It is reasonable to argue that the majority of beliefs held by any collection of believers can be viewed as composed of three overlapping principal elements: 1) a mixture of conclusions drawn from *arguments*, 2) *faith* (or some kind of *trust* in the knowledge of others), and 3) conclusions drawn from perceived *experiences*. However, it appears that it is often possible for individuals to have the sense that one of these elements is primary. In the case of CB2, he appears to be explicitly identifying his perceived experience of the proximity of a particular divine entity as the primary core or foundation of his beliefs. In addition to this explicit acknowledgement related to the phrase *the presence of God*, he also uses a range of other verbs and prepositions to instantiate this concept of proximity that covers the construal of a divine entity *moving towards* or *into* him or being *in his life*.

CB3 does not match the frequency of CB2's proximity and unity language but does demonstrate a similar commitment to their key importance in her sense of certainty. During the discussion stage, she explained how she arrived at a sense of certainty by expanding on the language of her first sentence during the second written stage ("The Spirit lives in me"),

... but nothing really convinced me until I came to the point where I did believe in everything that I believed in, but without experience it's not valid ... and I believe I came to the conclusion when I felt the Spirit in me and when I was

moved by the Spirit, and mine, a biggie would have been experience, hmm, because I have experienced the Spirit ... (p1122-29)

CB2 and CB3 therefore both appear to share the same commitment to defining their sense of certainty as based on a perceived experience rather than an argument related to a system of belief. However, there does seem to be an intrinsic connection here between doctrine and action and relationship language. The doctrine of the Trinity formalises the belief that God, in the form of Jesus and the Spirit, *comes to people*. The thing believed – the doctrine of the Trinity – is a theological entity, but CB2 and CB3 have chosen to psychologically operationalize that doctrine through processes wrapped up in action and relationship language. For them, the perception of intimacy with a divine entity appears to have become the basis of their Christian belief and expression.

Within the domain of human relationships, the notion of intimacy is often associated with a range of strong mutual feelings or emotions between two people. Is there also an emotional dimension associated with the proximity language of CB2 and CB3? In terms of CB2, two words that are relevant to answering this question are *love* and *heart*. CB2 uses the word *love* to describe a divine entity's feeling towards a believer and vice versa nine times, as well as using the word *heart* as part of his description of his religious belief four times (in addition to gesturing towards his heart while stating, "... Christianity, I guess it makes sense somewhere in *here*" (p1162-63, my emphasis)). These words are significant because they both strongly imply an affective dimension. It is also important to note that these words are also sometimes used in relation to proximity language. Below are two key examples:

... the love that God shows for us is overwhelming and the further along the journey with God you go the more you grow to understand and love him ... (CB2, p1168-69)

... which is like Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart and you have to let him you have to invite him in ... (CB2, p1171-72)

In terms of CB3, further evidence that she wishes to distance herself from an emphasis on theoretical arguments and knowledge and focus in on the existential and emotional dimensions involved in her perceptions can be found in her statements,

... I'm moved by his love, and that's the basis of my faith. (CB3, p1178)

... there are so many other things in the Bible to say but I don't want to go into that – I do theology, so you can understand where I come from – but just the basis on what has changed my life ... it's not about oh, how can it be that God and Jesus are the same person? It's more about God became Jesus and then he died for us, that's how much he loved us ... and then when Jesus left, he wasn't just going to leave us, he gave us the Spirit. (CB3, p1168-178)

She uses the word *love* eighteen times to describe a divine entity's intense *feeling* towards her or vice versa and this is often tied, as it is in the above quotes, to proximity or unity related notions such as Jesus coming down from heaven to save believers, as well as the Spirit entering those believers.

This dimension of feelings and emotions is also made explicit in phrases such as “I *felt* the Spirit in me” (p1126 – my emphasis).

It therefore appears that for both CB2 and CB3 the perception of a divine entity always being there is also tied to a consistent perception of being the recipient of that divine being's positive feelings or emotions (as well as reciprocating those feelings). This allows a connection to be drawn proximity and intimacy and intense mutual feelings, which brings into focus how closely CB2 and CB3's belief system is systematically modelled on a physically close, embodied human relationship and the emotions involved. This connection also seems to be supported by research from a cognitive linguistic perspective that has highlighted some of the key metaphors that are used to describe relationships and emotions. Kövecses (2008: 388) has found that a comparison of lists of a range of metaphors used to describe relationships and emotions only yield two principal points of overlap, “There seems to be only a minimal overlap between the two sets. Human relationships share CLOSENESS and WARMTH with emotions”. Kövecses (2008: 387) also notes the overlapping nature of the word love in that “love is a special case here because it functions as both an emotion and a relationship”.

CB2 also goes on make this modelling of a divine relationship on a loving human relationship explicit at one point by using human relationships to explain his relationship to God,

God still wants you to adhere to this, he still wants you to live by his rules ... but you don't do them to try and get to heaven, you do them to please God ... the people that you love and care for you want to please, you want to make

them happy, you want to please them and you want to have good times with them, this is, hmm, basically comes down to love (CB2, p1150-64)

It is therefore no surprise that the word *relationship* occurs so frequently in the language of CB2 and CB3. As can be seen in table 5, CB2 makes five references to a relationship with a divine entity, while CB3 makes eleven references. In addition, CB2 and CB3 also seem to be drawing on the domain of close human relationships in their references to informally talking to a divine entity,

... like, you see, I've been talking to God, praying, before we got here, during this as well, like he would guide the conversation, things like that. (CB2, p21136-139)

... one time I went to a Mosque and I said: God, these people are hungry for the truth ... so I said, if God you love us all the same, and we all want to know the truth, I'm going to stand in front of you, I want your Spirit to tell me what to say, and that's the word I spoke. (CB3, p21172- 184)

Here, communicating with God appears to be more informal, casually interactive and more closely modelled on normal human conversation than many other types of prayer (such as the kind of formal prayers that can be seen at a Mosque).

I have so far discussed a large amount of evidence that suggests a strong connection between an emphasis on emotion, intimacy and relationships in the language of CB2 and CB3. However, all I have done up until this point is draw attention to differences in frequencies. The important question to address now is whether the highlighted similarities between these various patterns of emphasis can be viewed as adding up to a particular *type* of believing that can be contrasted with another distinct type of believing. I would argue that these repeated and combined references to interactive communication, love and proximity consolidate the view that their belief framework is not primarily based on arguments or faith, but in a cognitive dynamic revolving around "experiencing is believing" (Tremblin 2005: 77), or to be more precise, *experiencing a perceived personal relationship with a divine entity is believing*. I will go on to argue below that this contrasts with the Muslim participants, particularly MB1 and MB2, who appear to be primarily basing their belief framework and sense of certainty around arguments and intuitions relating to and faith in an all-encompassing, existential *system* rather than perceptions related to an *experienced relationship*.

A System of Justice, Accountability and Equality in the Muslim Participants

In the section 4.6.1 above I noted that CB2 repeatedly used the words *relationship* (with a divine entity, 5 occurrences), *presence* (of a divine entity, 7 occurrences) and *love* (between the believer and a divine entity and vice versa, 9 occurrences), while MB2 completely avoided any of these terms. I also noted that CB3 repeatedly used the word *love* (between the believer and a divine entity and vice versa, 13 occurrences), while MB3 completely avoided this word. I went on to point out that this avoidance becomes even more noticeable when we also take into account CB3's attempt to explicitly impose the word on MB3, "love is the most important commandment, love the Lord God with all your heart, and *I'm sure it is yours as well*" (p2l143-145, my italics). I also noted how, in addition to the above examples, CB2 makes 10 references to proximity language and 12 references to unity language, and yet MB2 consistently refuses to appropriate the language or engage with it apart from the isolated clarification discussed above, "so it's like the Holy Spirit comes to every Christian?" (p2l129). My brief explanation for this apparent appropriation block was that it was possible to view the Christian and the Muslim language as representing two very different ways of believing. I have tried to outline above in more detail the way of believing of the Christian participants that accounts for their frequent usage of words like *presence*, *relationship* and *love*. I now therefore wish to give a more detailed account below of why the Muslim participants appear to have blocked out certain types of language. I will begin with a consideration of MB1's language.

I have already alluded to MB1's statement that "there is nothing in the creation ... which is comparable to God ... all of the heavens would not be able to contain the Lord" (p1l276-184). This is a response to CB1's view that Jesus, who came to earth as a (spatially bounded) man, was a member of the trinity. It also ties in closely with MB1's agreement with CB1's sentence in the first part of the written stage that the belief in God's unity was one of the main points that helped him to arrive at a sense of certainty in his beliefs, "... I think I would agree with the first one, definitely, that the

simplicity of the doctrine of God's unity ..." (p1147-49). It can also be connected with the fact that MB1 only uses one example of divine proximity language and no examples of divine unity language. It is also worth noting that, as I pointed out in my brief discussion in the results section above, MB1, MB2 and MB3 all had no problem with choosing prepositions such as *in* during the second task (that were often used in the construction of divine unity sentences by the Christian believers), but then using them to form sentences unrelated to divine unity. These points could all be viewed as evidence for a desire to emphasise a perception of the *otherness* of a divine entity, which can again be viewed as an operationalization through action and relationship language of a theoretical doctrine (the unity of God).

MB1 appears to be certain of his beliefs for reasons that are in some respects conceptually the opposite of the reasons provided by CB2 and CB3. His certainty extends from the doctrine of the unity of God, in other words the concept that God is absolutely different from human beings. The lack of emphasis on describing his relationship with God through language drawn from the domain of intimate, spatially bounded relationships should not simply be viewed as an absence of a particular perception, but possibly a deliberate choice to emphasise an opposite perception.

It is also important to note that, as we can see from table 3, the instances of proximity language that both MB1 and MB3 use are both confined to the believer being able to close the distance between him or herself and the divine entity, but *not* vice versa, while MB2 avoids any reference at all to proximity. In MB1's case, he makes the point that, "you [the Christian believer] have to go through an intermediary in order to get close to God" (p11334), in order to make the point that Muslims can get close to God without the need for an intermediary. Here the direction of movement is clearly from the believer to God, as it is in the examples of proximity language from MB3. This is identical to the principal pattern of emphasis we observed in the Muslim testimonials analysed in the previous chapter:

[1] Following this path in a devout manner enables one to gain the pleasure of God and be *closer* to Him amid the endless delights of Paradise. (Muslim Text 4)

[2] Did I really think that God would be upset at me for wanting to get *closer* to Him? Did I really believe that Jesus would be upset with me for trying to get *closer* to God? (Muslim Text 5)

[3] I have never been so *close* to God as I have been since becoming Muslim. (Muslim Text 5)

[4] I just knew that I wanted to *connect* with God. (Muslim Text 5)

[5] Each time I went, I felt more and more distant from the congregation, but *closer* and *closer* to the Prophet Jesus and God. (Muslim Text 7)

[6] God is *with* me every moment, guiding me ... (Muslim Text 8)

[7] When I heard the Adhan (the call to prayer) I felt a *closeness* to God that penetrated my heart and soul. (Muslim Text 14)

[1] to [5] all construe the believer as the subject and suggest the believer is able to move closer to the divine entity. [7] is ambiguous in that it appears that what penetrates the heart and soul of the believer is the feeling of being close to the divine entity, rather than the divine entity itself. The only exception is [6], that suggests that the divine entity is in some sense following the believer.

In contrast to this the Christian language in the discussions tends to emphasise movement in both directions, for example, as we have seen, CB2 talks about Jesus knocking on the door of the believer's heart and hoping to be invited in and the presence of God coming into his life, while CB3 refers to coming to a conclusion after she "felt the Spirit in me", implying that the Spirit had entered her rather than she had gone to the Spirit. This tendency was also reflected in the testimonials with ten occurrences of the divine entity being construed as the subject, along with the implication or explicit statement that the divine entity was moving or had moved towards the believer, for example "Jesus came into my life" (CT6) and "I've learned that he is always with me, sustains me, stands by me in difficult times" (CT11).

Is there a conceptual significance in the fact that the Muslim participants tended to minimise proximity language that suggests that the divine entity moves towards the believer? There appears to be no significance that is explicitly discussed, but it may be possible to put forward a tentative idea.

I would argue that the significance can be found in a relation to the notions of equality in terms of equal freedom of choice, fairness, and justness and how this spatially translates into the inference that the divine entity is primarily perceived as setting himself at an equal distance from all humans. Muslim believers are encouraged to close that distance by obeying the rules of the belief system (e.g. “I can choose not to wear hijab, but then I would be breaking one of the rules that will make me closer to God” (p2199)). However, it appears that the divine entity should not primarily be viewed as closing the distance with particular individuals or using his power to persuade or compel certain individuals more than others, as appears to be the case in many of the Christian examples. Evidence for this can be drawn from the fact that these notions of equality, justness and freedom of will and choice are present in some form or other in the language of all the Muslim participants:

... because one of the names of God is the most just, so he’s not gonna be unjust to anybody, and so he’s gonna give everybody a chance and, but we are the ones who ultimately make the decision ... God could easily make everybody ... pious worshippers of him, and there would be no problem, but ... God has given us ... free will to decide for ourselves ... if Allah didn’t allow you to make your own decisions, then how would it be justified for you to ... be rewarded or punished (MB1, p21208-228)

... it’s like it gives us rules to, that show us how to behave with ourselves and with others ... we respect the points of view of others, we try to show them if they want to know about Islam, we show them the way, but we don’t force others because we have the freedom of choice in Islam (MB2, p11150-157) ... [192] what we believe in is that we are born without, it’s like innocent people ... we don’t have any sins, sin comes after this, like what you do, it’s like you are not ... punished or judged because of maybe what other people maybe in the past have done (MB2, p21192-200)

... but I can’t see your point because I can’t understand how salvation is given, I mean it doesn’t make much sense to me that someone like Jesus would be blamed or punished for my, for my sins, it’s just unfair. (MB3, p168-70) ... like even salvation is not assured, I know that God will do me justice because he will look at my heart and he will look into my deeds, and he is the just, so I’m sure I will be given salvation if I deserve it (MB3, p108-111)

What we have here is a cluster of notions that are diametrically opposed to the central perceptions of the human-like intimacy and divinely initiated interaction that we saw in CB2 and CB3. This suggests a set of beliefs that revolve around a very fixed, almost mechanical system of human cause and effect that subsequently impacts action and relationship language in the form of inhibiting expressions of divine entity to believer movement. The conflicting contrast between this focus on an incorruptible system and the focus on an affective, intimate relationship seen in CB2 and CB3

appears to become explicit at one point during the discussion between MB3 and CB3. When MB3 points out that it is unfair for Jesus to be punished for the sins of somebody else, CB3 quickly acknowledges “It is unfair, but that’s God’s love”.

Having put forward the case that there are two contrasting ways of believing at play underneath the language of the participants, it is now crucial to emphasise that there is not a simple, clear-cut divide between them. I have argued throughout this thesis that beliefs are subject to strong personal variation that should prevent us from developing fixed views about the way that all individuals within a community believe. Similar core doctrinal beliefs will be operationalized through action and relationship language in different and important ways. I will now go on to discuss two marked examples of this individual variation by focusing in on the language of MB3 and CB1.

Individual Variation in MB3 and CB1

As we can see from table 5 above, MB3 stated in sentence 4 of the second written stage, “Instructions of the prophet Mohammad and the holy Quran are to be followed in order to reach a better relationship with Allah”. She then went on to refer to a relationship with God a further five times during the discussion stages. In comparison, both MB1 and MB2 made no mention of any notion of a relationship with God. I have already made the observation that the *islamfortoday.com* testimonials analysed in the previous chapter contained a total of five references to a relationship with a divine entity in 29067 words (relative frequency: 0.17), while MB3 used it a total of six times in 1170 words (a relative frequency of 5.13). It is also important to note that this relative frequency is also even higher than the relative frequency of this phrase in the Christian testimonials analysed in the previous chapter (six references in 15524 words, relative frequency: 0.39). It is therefore very clear that this is a very potent pattern of emphasis for MB3. What is unusual about this is that the term *relationship*, in the absence of any strict qualification to the contrary, can suggest a network of connotations associated with human relationships, including the *possibility* of intimacy and a *possible*

sense of some form of proximity. In addition to this unusually high frequency of relationship language, MB3 also expands on this notion of a relationship with God by adding language that contains an even stronger implication of intimacy: “*private* relationship with God” (p11121, my emphasis)) and the suggestion of a form of divine unity language, “he’s [God] is always *in* my heart even when I’m not praying” (p11143, my emphasis).

It therefore appears that, despite MB3’s orthodox Muslim doctrinal beliefs and her action and relationship language revolving around a fixed system of universal fairness and justice (see the extract above from the language of MB3), she has developed her own individual pattern of emphasis that includes an overlay involving a perception of intimacy with the divine that is seemingly far stronger than many other conservative Muslim believers.

CB1’s language could be viewed as even more unusual in many respects. He makes no references at all to the notion of physical nearness to a divine entity and only one ambiguous statement that could be construed as a reference to divine unity (“In him is peace and purpose” (sen 5)). The construction *in him + be* is well known among many Evangelical Christians because of its use in Biblical verses such as John 1: 4-5, “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind” (New International Version). As can be seen from this example, this construction can be used simply as a way of saying that the entity being referred to as a particular characteristic or attribute, and does not necessarily imply any notion of unity. In addition to this, he makes no references to words such as *relationship*, completely avoids emotionally loaded terms such as *love* and *heart*, and speaks very little about his own personal experience. Instead, he chooses to foreground aspects of his belief that many Evangelicals choose to background, for example, insisting that “intellect and reason” should be placed above “scripture and experience” in terms of how he arrived at his certainty of belief (p119-11) and repeatedly emphasising the complexity of Christian beliefs (p11343-347)). In many respects, CB1’s action and relationship language is closer to (and in some respects even stronger than) the patterns of emphasis found in the *islamfortoday.com* texts than it was to the *Evangelical Times* texts.

However, CB1 shows no indication of having any unorthodox doctrinal beliefs and clearly viewed himself as a generally prototypical Evangelical with ambitions of being a missionary in Islamic countries. The key difference appears to be that he has chosen to operationalize his core doctrinal beliefs using different patterns of action and relationship language that appear, at that time, to represent a very different attitude toward his beliefs. The result is that the central, foundational theme of modelling experience of a divine entity on close, intimate human relationships is largely absent.

As I noted in my brief synopsis of the discussion between MB1 and CB1 in the results section above, one key question that arises here is whether CB1's choice to operationalize his core doctrinal beliefs using different patterns of action and relationship language is a local, temporary phenomena, or a stable, protracted one. Is he temporarily converging with the language of MB1, or is he expressing a stable conceptualisation that would appear across multiple discourses? It is of course impossible to be certain from looking at this one example of discourse, but what appears to be safe to say is that CB1 has a conceptualisation of his way of believing that allows him to converge with the systems-based language of MB1 to an extensive degree. In contrast, CB2 and CB3 showed no evidence of a conceptualisation that would allow such an extensive convergence. This provides some evidence for the fact that individual believers do appear, whether they are aware of it or not, to conceptualise and operationalize similar doctrinal beliefs in different ways.

I have argued above that there are different levels of variation within action and relationship language in general and between individual believers. This variation is due to the different ways in which action and relationship language operationalizes theoretical doctrinal language. These points will be further developed below when we consider those metaphors that portray the divine entity as the agent.

Believer-as-patient movement metaphors

In the Muslim testimonials analysed in the previous chapter, there were only a limited number of references to type 1 and type 2 believer-as-patient metaphors, but more references to type 3 believer-as-patient metaphors (pattern 5a in table 1 above). In the Christian Testimonials, there were more references to type 1 and type 2 metaphors and fewer references to type 3 metaphors (pattern 5b).

In my analysis of the testimonials in the previous chapter I argued that movement metaphors that construed the believer as in some sense the patient in the process or direction of movement could be separated into three types. I referred to the first type as *type 1 believer-as-patient metaphors* and defined them as those metaphors that construed the believer as being completely or almost completely passive in a process of being moved, for example, “the Lord graciously brought me to know him” (CT4). I referred to the second type as *type 2 believer-as-patient metaphors*, defining them as those metaphors that construe the movement of the believer as being the result of some level of shared agency between the believer and some divine entity. An example of this can be found in the use of *lead* in “I believe he will lead me all the way” (CT9). The use of *lead* implies that the believer is contributing in some way to the process of movement, although this process is being “helped along” by the divine entity. In this example the divine entity is also controlling the direction of the movement process. The third type, *type 3 believer-as-patient metaphors*, include those movement metaphors that appear to lack this shared process of the believer being “helped along” by the divine entity. However, this type of movement metaphor does still retain the characteristic of the divine entity to some extent controlling the direction of the movement. An example of this can be found in the use of *guide* in “God will guide us there” (MT4). It is possible for the verb *guide* to be used without any implication of physical contact or even any form of movement on the part of the guiding entity, while still clearly influencing the direction of the entity being guided. Examples such as ships being guided by a lighthouse or stars guiding a traveller serve to illustrate this possible signposting (as opposed to active leading) function. My analysis went on to reveal that the

islamfortoday.com testimonials contained relatively fewer references to type 1 and type 2 metaphors compared to the *Evangelical Times* testimonials, but considerably more references to type 3 metaphors.

As can be seen from table 4.16 below, there is stronger agreement between the usage of believer-as-patient metaphors by the Muslim participants and the pattern established in the *islamfortoday.com* testimonials than there is between the usage of such metaphors by the Christian participants and the pattern established in the *Evangelical Times* testimonials. The Muslim participants in every case restrict themselves to the use of type 3 metaphors in terms of the believer being guided by entities such as God, Mohammed and the Qur'an and altogether avoid the type 1 and type 2 metaphors. The examples of their movement metaphors in the table below have therefore been shaded in green. However, the Christian participants displayed far less consistency in their choice of language, with only CB3 making some (but not more frequent use) of type 1 and type 2 metaphors. The lists of relevant language for both CB1 and CB2 have therefore been shaded in red, while the language of CB3 has been shaded in orange.

| Table 4.16: Believer-as-patient Movement Metaphors | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Muslim Participants | Christian Participants |
| Pair One: MB1 and CB1 | <p>Type 1: [no references]</p> <p>Type 2: [no references]</p> <p>Type 3: [1] <i>The concept that God is One ... <u>guided</u> my decision</i> (sen 4); [2] <i>the concept that God is one ... <u>guided</u> my decision</i> (p1122-124); [3] <i>he is the one who <u>guided</u> me to Islam</i> (p2117)</p> | [no references] |
| Pair Two: MB2 and CB2 | <p>Type 1: [no references]</p> <p>Type 2: [no references]</p> <p>Type 3: [1] <i>Allah <u>guides</u> us to His path</i></p> | <p>Type 1: [no references]</p> <p>Type 2: [no references]</p> <p>Type 3: [1] <i><u>guidelines</u> for lifestyle are</i></p> |

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| | (sen 2) | very similar (p1l34); [2] <u>the guidelines</u> for the Quran and the <u>guide</u> that the Quran gives you and the <u>guide</u> that the Bible gives you aren't too dissimilar (p2l16); [3] he [God] would <u>guide</u> the conversation (p2l139); [4] you need people to <u>guide</u> you (p2l185) |
| Pair Three: MB3 and CB3 | <p>Type 1: [no references]</p> <p>Type 2: [no references]</p> <p>Type 3: [1] one God whom he sent Mohammed and the Quran to <u>guide</u> me towards him (p1l8)</p> | <p>Type 1: [1] I was <u>moved</u> by the Spirit (p1l27); [2] he came to <u>save me from</u> my sin (p1l59)</p> <p>Type 2: [3] I am <u>led</u> by his power (sen 5); [4] <u>led</u> by his power, by the Spirit (p2l11); [5] being <u>led</u> by him (p1l44);</p> <p>Type 3: [6] I am <u>guided</u> by the Spirit (sen 4); [7] it's [the Bible] is my <u>guide</u> (p1l37); [8] he [God] is my <u>guide</u> (p2l13); [9] being <u>guided</u> by him (p2l44)</p> |

The complete absence of any type of believer-as-patient movement metaphor in CB1's language requires some explanation. The idea that Jesus came to earth to die on the cross for the sins of humanity in order to save them (an idea that is universally central to Christian belief) should be difficult for a Christian to operationalize using action and relationship language *without* using some kind of believer-as-patient metaphors. Christian songs, especially the kinds of songs that CB1 would regularly sing in Pentecostal churches, contain numerous references to this type of language and it is also very common in the Bible itself. This may make the idea that CB1 does not *generally* use this kind of language to describe his experience of being a Christian somewhat unlikely, but the point still remains that CB1 did not emphasise this language *in the course of the discussion*.

However, it is worth noting that he does make use of a non-movement metaphor that does construe people as patients. Towards the end of the second part of the discussion stage CB1 begins to counter MB1's argument that the truth is simple and self-evidently recognisable. His counter argument is based on the perception that "the God of this world ... blinded people's eyes to the truth" (p21196-197), and therefore people may not be able to "discern" the truth when they meet it. This notion of viewing a seeming inability to accept a perceived truth as being blinded fits in with the Christian doctrine of the fall and original sin and the idea that people are acted on by the power of sin. This in turn fits with the idea that without God's grace people would be unable to save themselves. CB1's language appears to be based on a verse from the New Testament that states "The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers ..." (2 Corinthians 4:4, *New International Version*). The next two verses go on to state that the purpose of Jesus coming to earth was to reverse this state of being blind by making, "his light shine in our hearts" (another human as patient metaphor). CB1 is dominated by MB1 in the discussion (MB1 produces 70% of the discussion's language, while CB1 only produces 30%), and therefore it is possible that he is often unable to fully develop his arguments to their full extent.

However, the point still stands that CB1 chooses to primarily restrict himself to a doctrinal discussion and to the argument that MB1's doctrinal beliefs are well-meaning oversimplifications of the truth. He makes no references to any perceived experiences of divine intervention in his own life and emphasises the importance of an intellectually coherent explanation of his Christian beliefs that is, in terms of action and relationship language, almost the opposite to CB2 and CB3's approach. These patterns of emphasis have the effect of marginalising believer-as-patient movement metaphors. All these points add strong support for the argument that individuals are able to operationalize the same doctrinal beliefs in very different, even opposite ways. It is of course possible to argue that CB1 is adapting the expression of his beliefs in order to more effectively engage with MB1's system-based way of believing. However, what is interesting is that CB1 made the choice to emphasise this way of expressing his beliefs, while CB2 and CB3, facing the same situation, appear to have chosen to

emphasise personal experience and relationship language. I therefore would argue that these differences in the patterns of emphasis produced when exposed to the same communicative situation reveal important insights into a particular individual's way of believing.

I have so far discussed CB1's lack of references to believer-as-patient movement metaphors, but I have yet to offer any explanation as to why all three participants make fewer references to type 1 (e.g., *brought to* or *plucked from*) and type 2 (e.g. *led to*) movement metaphors. It is important to first begin by pointing out that the genre has changed from the more isolated, solitary and considered genre of the personal testimonial to the dynamically unfolding, more unpredictable genre of the face-to-face discussion. Given this jump to a very different and more chaotic genre, it is hardly surprising that many relatively stable patterns of emphasis in the testimonials become less stable in the language of the discussions. A second explanation that may account for the high number of type 1 and type 2 references in the *Evangelical Times* as compared to the three participants in the study relates to how different doctrinal perspectives may be operationalized in action and relationship language in different ways. The *Evangelical Times* is a magazine that embraces the set of doctrines known as *Calvinism* or the *doctrines of grace*. These doctrines emphasise the idea that Jesus did not die for everyone, but only the elect who have been predestined to be saved by God. It is therefore possible that this is another example where doctrinal beliefs influence and shape action and relationship language. It is very likely that strong doctrinal beliefs that include ideas that humans are *dead in sin* and can only be saved by being elected to salvation by God would translate into higher occurrences of type 1 and type 2 believer-as-patient metaphors. The reason for this is that these notions clearly emphasise a perception that humans are to some degree passive in the process of salvation. In contrast, those Evangelicals who are not Calvinists and therefore wish to stress the role and importance of believers actively inviting God into their lives (as CB1, CB2 and CB3 do), would make use of fewer type 1 and type 2 metaphors. A clear example of one of the participants wishing to emphasise the importance of actively inviting the divine entity can be seen in CB2's description of a verse from the New Testament that uses a proximity and movement metaphor relating to

accepting Christianity. It construes Jesus as a person knocking on the door of a house in an effort to get inside. CB2 uses five different words to stress the notion that Jesus can only enter if the believer wishes it:

... which is like Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart and

[1] you have to let him

[2] you have to invite him in

[3] so you have to say, OK

[4] yeah

[5] I want you

to come into my life and have a relationship with you

(p1171-174)

However, despite the fact that the language of all three participants contains fewer type 1 and type 2 metaphors, there is still a marked difference between CB2 and CB3's usage. The list of occurrences for CB3 in table 6 above were shaded in orange rather than green because there were more occurrences of type 3 metaphors than there were occurrences of type 1 and 2 metaphors, but it is still important to note that CB3 does make use of all three types of believer-as-patient movement metaphors. She appears to be construing herself as almost completely passive through her use of two type 1 metaphors (being "moved" and "saved from" something). I discussed above that CB3 appears to attribute a high degree of value to proximity and unity language, but there also seems strong linguistic evidence that CB3 also attaches great value to connecting this perception of proximity with the perception of being existentially moved (as well as being shown where to move to) by a divine entity. These two perceptions were juxtaposed in her sentences for the second part of the written stage. Two of her five sentences related to unity and proximity ([1] "The Spirit lives in me" and [3] "God is always with me") while another two related to being "guided" [4] and "led" [5]. In the key statement which I examined above in relation to how she arrived at her certainty of belief,

she again juxtaposed the perceptions of divine proximity and being moved, “..... and I believe I came to the conclusion when I felt the Spirit in me and when I was moved by the Spirit ... ” (p1122-29).

CB3 chooses to emphasise her charismatic theology (the belief that Christians can receive the *gifts of the Spirit*, such as *speaking in tongues* – speaking in an incomprehensible language which is believed to be the language of angels or the Spirit that may sometimes be subsequently interpreted in the form of a comprehensible message – and *prophetic dancing* (see p1129-31)). This emphasis ties in with her claim “God speaks through me” (sentence 2) and led me to describe her language in the synopsis of the discussion results as similar to the language of channelling. Many Christians use this phrase *moved by the Spirit* to describe a kind of nagging feeling or ‘leading’ to do something.

However, here the suggestion is that language such as “when I was moved by the Spirit ... I have experienced the Spirit in the sense of prophetic dancing” (p1127-29) has a literal as well as a metaphorical dimension. My evidence for this is that she appears to sometimes perceive herself as being prompted by the Spirit to not just talk but also *physically* move (in the form of dancing), and crucially she views this movement as something that is beyond her control. Below is her response to a follow-up email asking her if she could expand upon this phenomenon:

Yes, it has been classified/named as prophetic dancing when I tried explaining it in the English context. I received it when I was 13 in Mizoram [in India] when we were worshipping in church. It is a dance/movement prompted by the spirit that I can't control. It usually happens during praise and worship (singing). All I can say is, it looks absolutely bizarre! But it's something I cannot control. I don't receive it every time we worship either. It is a spiritual gift, a form/part of worship.

This close connection between proximity and being acted on also appears to be present in perceptions of having conversations with the divine entity. In section 4.6.1 above, I discussed in detail one such case that she recounted in the form of a personal story she used towards the end of her second discussion with MB3. It began with the following account, “one time I went to a Mosque and I said: God, these people are hungry for the truth ... so I said, if God you love us all the same, and we all want to know the truth, I’m going to stand in front of you, I want your Spirit to tell me what to say, and that’s the word I spoke” (p21172 -183). This indicates that CB3 perceives a lot of her

proximity language as having some degree of a literal dimension to the point where she converses with an entity that she perceives as in some sense standing in front of her and able to dictate to her. It therefore appears that her perception of her religious beliefs and experience is deeply rooted in a sense of intimate, personal relationship (as noted above, she refers to a relationship with God nine times and also uses the word *love* twenty two times) and a kind of informal conversational approach with overlapping metaphorical and literal elements. This is further emphasised in her closing comment, “we all have access to the same God and if we want to know the truth, just ask him [God], right?” (p2l188-189).

I have argued that proximity and the language of being moved is crucial for CB3’s perception of her religious beliefs and experience and her certainty that those beliefs are absolutely correct. I have also argued that this type of language suggests an underlying sense that goes beyond simply *believing* that a divine entity acts on her. In addition to belief, there also appears to be particular situations where she perceives herself as *experiencing* this divine agency in a sense that may not be entirely construed as metaphorical. This emphasis on particular experiences stands in stark contrast to CB1’s avoidance of patterns of emphasis related to experiencing divine intervention. This difference in the way that these Christians operationalize their doctrinal beliefs can also be found in the way that they use the word *through* in the course of their discussions. We will therefore turn to an analysis of the usage of *through* in the section below.

Use of ‘Through’

In the Muslim testimonials analysed in the previous chapter, there were fewer occurrences of ‘through’ with the meaning ‘going through a challenging life experience’ (pattern 6a in table 1 above) than there were in the Christian testimonials (pattern 6b). However, there were more occurrences of ‘through’ with the meaning ‘by means of’ that suggested a process of research and reflection (pattern

7a), while in the Christian testimonials there were more occurrences of ‘through’ with the meaning ‘by means of’ that suggested divine intervention (pattern 7b).

The analysis of the testimonials in the previous chapter arrived at two conclusions with regard to the use of *through*. The first conclusion was that the *islamfortoday.com* texts tended to focus less on subjective life experience than the *Evangelical Times* texts, leading to a lower frequency of occurrences of *through* with the meaning of going *through* a challenging life experience, for example, “I went through many periods of confusion, happiness, doubt and amazement” (MT8). The second conclusion was that the *islamfortoday.com* texts tended to use *through* with the meaning *by means of* to emphasise a process of research and reflection, for example “I was able to ask and get answers that I confirmed through further research” (MT1). In contrast, the *Evangelical Times* texts used it to emphasise divine intervention, especially in terms of the attainment of salvation, for example, “I have the power to live a changed life through the Holy Spirit, who lives within me” (CT10).

Table 4.17 below lists the occurrences of *through* for the six participants. All the lists of occurrences for the Muslim participants have been shaded in red to reflect the fact that none of them confirmed either of the *islamfortoday.com* patterns outlined above. CB1 was again atypical in his language and avoided using the word *through* altogether. This has been reflected below by leaving his list of occurrences empty and shaded in red. Support for the second conclusion concerning divine intervention was present in the language of CB2 and CB3, but the data from the discussions didn’t match the data from the testimonials in terms of references to going *through* a difficult life experience. Both of their lists of occurrences have therefore been shaded in orange.

| Table 4.17: Use of Through | | |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------|
| | Muslim Participants | Christian Participants |
| Pair One: MB1 and CB1 | <p>[1] <i>through my life experience</i> (sen2);</p> <p>[2] <i>went through a period where I was</i></p> | [no references] |

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| | <i>searching (p2l22); [3] <u>through</u> all those experiences (p2l69)</i> | |
| Pair Two: MB2 and CB2 | <i>[1] Allah guides us to His path <u>through</u> His Holy Quran (sen 2); [2] when I came <u>through</u> a bad experience (sen 3); [3] <u>through</u> reflecting on the good and bad moments [4] I came <u>through</u> (sen 4); [5] this is what will make me happy <u>through</u> the whole life (p1l103);</i> | <i>[1] my salvation comes <u>through</u> Jesus' sacrifice (sen 4); [2] the forgiveness comes <u>through</u> Christ (p1l245); [3] ask God for forgiveness <u>through</u> because Christ died for your sin (p1l247-248); [4] it's not <u>through</u> what you do that gets you into heaven (p2l47); [5] your salvation comes <u>through</u> ... Jesus (p2l55)</i> |
| Pair Three: MB3 and CB3 | <i>[no references]</i> | <i>[1] experience <u>through</u> the Spirit (p1l32); [2] makes my experience real <u>through</u> the Bible (p1l39); [3] makes complete sense only if it's <u>through</u> Jesus Christ (p1l150); [4] I only understand the loving God <u>through</u> Jesus Christ (p1l151); [5] assurance of heaven <u>through</u> Jesus Christ (p1l152); [6] my experience <u>through</u> the Spirit (p1l153); [7] that it is only <u>through</u> him [the Spirit] [8] and <u>through</u> God (p2l12); [9] <u>through</u> his grace and power that you are able to do good things (p2l38); [10] life that you can have <u>through</u> Christ [11] and <u>through</u> his power (p2l60); [12] understanding <u>through</u> the Spirit (p2l65); [13] only be possible <u>through</u> love (p2l141); NOTE: the phrase <u>by</u> his power also occurs 6 times</i> |

MB1 made more references to his life experience than CB1, and also used *through* with the meaning of *by means of* to refer to the importance of his life experience in his decision to become a Muslim. However, some support for the *islamfortoday.com* pattern 7a relating to research and reflection can be drawn from the fact that MB1 described a large part of his life experience as a process of research and reflection:

... when I started looking into the religious world, you know, I look into the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, you know, I had a few Sikh friends you know, I had friends who had embraced Islam from school, you know, Judaism, looked into many things, you know, you know, and basically I always found that Islam seemed to appeal the best, or appeal the most in terms of, maybe it's a problem, but the simplicity of the message ... (p2194-111)

This fusion of life experience and a journey of "looking into" the wider domain of religious belief in general (and not just increasing knowledge about the believer's own sacred text and religion) was essentially restricted to MB1. One explanation for this could be that MB1 is a convert to Islam (in the UK), whereas MB2 and MB3 were brought up as Muslims in a Muslim society (the Oman). This may also explain some other similarities to the *islamfortoday.com* testimonials that were not so visible in the language of MB2 and MB3. These include MB1's insistence on the self-evident, simple truth of Islam compared to other religions, the notion that all religions can be viewed as pointing to Islam, and his emphasis on arriving at the truth (he refers to the words *truth* or *true* eight times during the course of the discussions).

MB2 made no reference to a process of research and reflection, and used *through* both to describe emotions related to her subjective life experience ("... will make me happy through my whole life ...") and to describe the importance of the Qur'an in terms of guidance, while MB3 avoided using the word altogether.

Even when we allow for the many unusual characteristics of CB1's language, it is still very surprising that he also never uses *through* and also says nothing about the atoning death of Christ. This becomes even more unusual given the fact that both CB2 and CB3 have both used the word to the attainment of salvation *by means of* Jesus' death in the same way as the testimonial authors did in

the *Evangelical Times* texts. This reinforces my conclusion from the previous section that, in terms of action and relationship language, CB1 wishes to emphasise the importance of the intellect and the system of belief over any perceived experiences of direct intervention or emotional intimacy relating to a divine entity.

As I alluded to above, both CB2 and CB3 did not adhere to pattern 6b in terms of using *through* to describe *going through a challenging life experience*, but they did adhere closely to pattern 7b in terms of frequent references to the notion of divine intervention. CB2 appears to be determined to highlight what he sees as the key difference between Islam and Christianity by using *through* solely to repeatedly emphasise the attainment of salvation by means of the crucifixion. In contrast to this, CB3 uses *through* with the meaning of *by means of* in reference to a range of agencies (such as a divine entity - the Spirit, God or Jesus - the Bible and the emotion of *love*) to attain a range of effects, including salvation, understanding, and the ability to do good works. She also uses other language that has a similar meaning, for example she makes use of the phrase *by his power* six times in the discussion. This very high repetition of language that suggests she can only do something by means of another power or force produces a very strong effect of passivity and powerlessness when not dependent upon divine agency. This effect is further strengthened by the believer-as-patient movement metaphors we examined above, as well as her language in the follow-up interview (quoted above in the section on believer-as-patient metaphors) relating to prophetic dancing, “I can’t control ... it’s something I cannot control”. This appears to be exactly the opposite effect that the Muslim participants seemed to be conveying by their emphasis on an uninterrupted system of responsibility and accountability discussed in the section above on proximity, unity and relationship language.

I have now discussed a range of language related to metaphors of proximity and movement, as well as the extensive degree of variation between individuals this range of language suggests. I will now outline a framework drawn from research in cognitive psychology and cultural anthropology that

may allow a more coherent assessment of some of the different types of belief that appear to have been encountered in the above analysis.

4.6.2 Connecting the Strands

My analysis of the testimonials essentially leads me to conclude that the Muslim participants revolve their patterns of emphasis around a rule-based system of human cause and effect that is applied equally to all and does not strongly emphasise an affective dimension. In contrast, CB2 and CB3 revolve their patterns of emphasis around affective language relating to a personal, intimate relationship with a divine entity, who has done something in order to provide them with the possibility of salvation. These conclusions can be closely related to the conclusions I arrived at concerning the patterns of emphasis identified in the *islamfortoday.com* testimonials and the *Evangelical Times* testimonials. However, in the present analysis I have moved beyond looking only for differences between individuals belonging to a different religion (Islam and Christianity). I have also looked for individual differences between people belonging to the same religious group. I found, for example, that MB3 appears to embrace this pattern of emphasis revolving around a system of human cause and effect, but also emphasises close relationship language (in contrast to the other Muslim participants). CB1, on the other hand, makes very little mention of personal relationship and intimacy language (in contrast to the other Christian participants) and appears to emphasise the importance of the intellect and the truth of the theological ideas within his belief system.

The question that I want to ask now is whether it is possible to look towards developments in the fields of cognitive science and the study of religions in order to provide a possible context for these patterns of emphasis and differences. What I mean by this is that we should not focus purely on the different doctrines of different religions, but also on the different cognitive models that may underpin those doctrines. I will therefore now move on to a brief review of the LCCM theory that I

discussed in the second chapter and discuss how this theory could be applied to the findings of this chapter.

In my overview of LCCM theory, I discussed how Evans (2009) proposes that a person's "beliefs about the current state of the world" could be divided into their perception that reality consists of *things* and *events*. According to Evans (2009: 194-200), things are composed of *individuals*, such as a particular Christian that I have met, and *types*, such as my abstracted, stereotypical notion of a Christian. Events are composed of a connected series of two or more *episodic situations*, such as the run-up to a particular discussion with a Christian that I have had in the past, the discussion itself or what I did or how I felt as a result of the discussion, and *generic situations*, such as my abstracted, stereotypical notion of the form and structure that discussions with Christians take. Episodic situations are themselves composed of a series of discrete, situated images (ibid), which means that episodic situations and individual entities have an inseparable relationship. You cannot have a situation that does not consist of images of things, and it would therefore be unnatural to separate things and events. In terms of this relationship between individuals, types, images and situations, Evans argues that,

A situation is comprised of a series of images. Hence, and as with an image, a situation may consist of a relatively stable set of individuals and types. The difference is that a situation, while occupying a relatively constant region of space, is dynamic, in the sense that entities may interact and move around, and there is change over time. For instance, a situation might involve a person approaching the sofa, sitting down, turning their head to look at the picture on the wall, turning their head away again, sitting for a while before getting up and moving away from the sofa.

(Evans 2009: 197)

Having briefly provided an overview of Evans' notion of images, situations and events, it is now possible to explore how these elements could relate to the findings of this chapter. It is clear that both the Muslim and the Christian language presuppose rich networks of things and events in their language. In terms of the things, such as *God*, *heaven* and *hell* there are some key similarities in their attributes, and of course some key differences. However, I will argue below that the biggest

differences are to be found not in the attributes of things or situations in general, but in the episodic situations that relate *specifically* to an interaction between a divine entity and the individual believer. I will also argue that it is these differences that primarily account for the foregrounding of the affective dimension in the language of some Evangelical Christians and the backgrounding of such language in the conservative Muslim believers I examined.

I have consistently argued in the last two chapters that the evidence from the testimonials and from the discussions *in most cases* supports the view that the conservative Muslim believers use language that tends to put less emphasis on the believer being close to the divine entity. In addition, the evidence supports the notion that the believer may move towards the divine entity, but the divine entity does not move towards the believer. In contrast, the evidence from the testimonials and the discussions *in most cases* supports the view that the Evangelical Christian believers use language that tends to put greater emphasis on the believer being close to the divine entity. In addition, the evidence also supports the notion that the divine entity may move towards the believer *as well as* the notion that the believer may move towards the divine entity. It is of course possible to describe these differences in terms of foregrounding particular *attributes* or *values* of the individual thing, namely the divine entity, being discussed. According to Evans (2009: 200), attributes can be defined as “one aspect of the larger whole”, while values can be described as “subtypes of attributes”. An example of foregrounding specific attributes of the divine entity could include emphasising the aspect of *absolute otherness* over *emotional warmth*, or vice versa. However, it is often more natural to depict these differences through the construction of images that make up particular episodic situations, for example, indicating intimacy through the use of language such as, “Oh for a closer walk with Christ” (CT9) or “Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart” (CB2). Such attributes, even when unstated, may also be inferred from how certain images are constructed (for example, the tendency to talk about the abstract belief system instead of the perceived concrete entity by using phrases like “following Islam” more often than “following God”, or, conversely, the tendency to talk

about the perceived concrete entity rather than the abstract belief system by using phrases like “following Christ” more often than “following Christianity”).

It is when we discuss such images in this context that we see the extent of the difference between the Christian and Muslim language in these discussions. It takes the same amount of time to describe God in terms of the attributes of, for example, being more distant or more intimate, but when we describe that difference in terms of episodic situations between the divine entity and the believer, we see that there is a higher number of images with a greater richness in detail in the episodic situations in the Christian language and less detail in the images in the Muslim language. For example, in just a small extract of CB2’s language (p167-80), he uses a rich tapestry of imagistic language when he describes his experience of choosing to become and then continuing as a Christian. This includes: “the presence of God in my life” three times, a “relationship with God”, Jesus knocking at the door of a Christian’s heart and waiting to be invited into a Christian’s life, and his description “the Holy Spirit like lives in you, once you invite God into your life, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and in every Christian, once you invite God into your life he actually takes up home in your life kind of thing”. In contrast, there are very few situations that relate to MB2’s specific interaction with a divine entity beyond the more generic situation of a cycle of asking for and receiving forgiveness.

In terms of these images, I have consistently argued for two general patterns. The Christian testimonials and discussions contain language that exhibits greater explicitness and concreteness in terms of images of interaction between the believer and a divine entity. There is also a higher frequency of language that depicts the believer and the divine entity in those images as being physically closer and more intimate, as well as a higher frequency of language that relates to the divine entity acting on the believer. My intention at this point is not to argue that the Christian language is primarily imagistic and episodic while the Muslim language is primarily related to entities. Instead, my argument is that the Christian and Muslim language both describe individual entities (such as God, heaven, hell, their sacred texts, etc.) and episodic and generic situations (such as

reading their sacred text and following its guidelines) related to their religious experience according to a similar format and principle, despite some fundamental disagreements. However, *when it comes to describing episodic situations relating to interaction between the individual believer and a divine entity, the Christian language generally makes use of images that are more frequent, explicit, concrete and richer in detail, and which depict the believer as more passive.*

I have now devoted a sizeable part of this section to locating my conclusions concerning my analysis of the testimonials and the discussions within a cognitive linguistic framework of things and events. I now intend to move towards justifying this effort and explaining its wider psychological significance, but first it is necessary to explore why this framework may appear controversial to some researchers. I will begin by focusing on the arguments proposed by certain researchers interested in social and cognitive psychology that religious believers may be categorised as *either* emphasising elements of a more universalistic doctrinal mode *or* a more individual and affective imagistic mode. The conclusions of this bifurcation of the nature of religious belief will then be carried over into my consideration of a second theory of dual modes of processing that focuses on the perception of directly experiencing or “feeling” an object of belief (the experiential system of processing) on the one hand and constructing belief from conclusions drawn from a network of arguments that are perceived to be irrefutably logical (the rational system of processing) on the other hand (Epstein and Pacini 1999).

As I outlined in chapter two, Evans’ view that cognitive models consist of things and events relates closely to theories from cognitive science relating to *semantic* and *episodic* memory. Episodic memory relates to the storing of information as particular situations related to particular moments, while semantic memory relates to the storing of information as a decontextualized, abstracted piece of general knowledge (McCauley 2005: xii). These different types of memory are distinct from each other, but are viewed by many researchers as “processually connected” in that semantic memory is seen as derived from episodic memory through a process of “abstraction and generalization”

(Whitehouse 2000: 5-6). This thesis has consistently focused on the significance and value of episodic memory, so it is therefore important to briefly examine other researchers that also share this specific interest in the relationship between episodic memory and the expression of religious belief. Within the relatively new field of cognitive anthropology there has been a consistently strong interest in how different ways of encoding memories may have a far reaching effect on how groups of religious believers transmit (and therefore talk about) their beliefs. This interest is clearest in the work of Whitehouse (2000) and his theory of *modes of religiosity*, which I will discuss below.

Whitehouse, in his theory of modes of religiosity, argues that religious groups tend to transmit their beliefs through either a *doctrinal mode*, based around the workings of semantic memory, or an *imagistic mode*, based around the workings of episodic memory (Whitehouse 2000). This doctrinal mode is characterized by “the frequent repetition of both ritual and dogma ... expressed in language” leading to a “continuous and stable influence on people’s attitudes, beliefs and actions” (Whitehouse 2000: 9). Whitehouse argues that in this type of “universalistic ideology”, the individual person and particular religious experiences are backgrounded in favour of “presumed commonalities in the thought and behaviour of anonymous others, a state of affairs which is only conceivable with reference to semantic knowledge” (Whitehouse 2000: 10). In contrast, the imagistic mode based on episodic memory revolves around experiences that contain a high degree of emotional arousal, “common identity among religious adherents in the imagistic mode is fundamentally particularistic, based on lasting episodic memories of undergoing the traumatic lows and ecstatic highs of sacred events together with a specifiable group of individuals” (Whitehouse 2000: 10). The features that are of interest to my analysis relate to the doctrinal mode favouring a learned “universalistic ideology” or uniform system that does not primarily revolve around an affective dimension, while the imagistic mode revolves around individual “internally generated” experience and high emotional arousal (Whitehouse 2000: 9-10; Boyer 2005: xiv).

Features that are similar to these are also found in discussions relating to the application of other dual information processing models from social and cognitive psychology. One of the motivations behind the proposal of some of these models is to explain why “abstract theological reflection exists side by side with intuitive forms of religion” (Tremelin 2005: 73). In his assessment of Whitehouse’s arguments, Tremelin (2005: 71) refers to one of these models - the *Cognitive Experiential Self-Theory* (CEST) model proposed by Epstein and Pacini (1999) - as “a promising example of dual-processing-model building” in that it is able to offer an explanation for making a distinction between a “theological level” that is rooted in language and “relatively affect-free” and a more instinctive and emotional “basic level”. Due to its importance within the field of dual-processing models, its importance to researchers investigating religious practices within the field of cognitive anthropology and its relevance to the subject of episodic memory, it is worth examining this model in some detail.

Epstein and Pacini (1999) argue that religious believers can make use of two broad processing systems. The first is a “rational system” that is “deliberative”, “reason-orientated” and “capable of high levels of abstraction” (Epstein and Pacini 1999: 463; Tremelin 2005: 71). Note that the term *rational* is not being used here in the sense of something being regarded as universally logical, but in the sense of it activating abstract reasoning processes in the brain of the believer. The second is an “experiential system” typified by the sense that “experiencing is believing”. This system processes and expresses information in a primarily “concrete” and “holistic” form directly associated with emotions and feelings (Epstein and Pacini 1999: 463). The various differences between these two modes of processing have been summarised in table 4.18 below (adapted from Epstein and Pacini 1999: 463):

| Table 4.18: Comparison of the Experiential and Rational Systems | |
|--|---|
| Experiential System | Rational System |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holistic responding 2. Automatic, effortless processing 3. Affective processing: Pleasure or pain orientated (what feels good or bad) 4. Associative connections 5. Encoding of reality in concrete images, metaphors, and narratives 6. More rapid processing: Orientated toward immediate action 7. Slower, more difficult changes: Changes with repetitive or intense experience 8. More crudely differentiated constructs: Broad generalization gradient, stereotypical thinking 9. More crudely integrated and less coherent networks: Dissociative, emotional complexes ; context-specific processing 10. Passive and preconscious experience of events: We are seized by our emotions 11. Perceived self-evident validity: "Experiencing is believing" | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analytic responding 2. Intentional, effortful processing 3. Logical processing: Reason-orientated (what can be formulated as an argument) 4. Logical connections 5. Encoding of reality in abstract symbols, words, and numbers 6. Slower processing: Orientated toward delayed action 7. More rapid, easier changes: Changes with strength of argument and new evidence 8. More highly differentiated constructs 9. More highly integrated and coherent networks: Context-general principles 10. Active and conscious experience of events: We are in control of our thoughts 11. Need for a perceived justification via logic and evidence |

This proposed model has a number of features that are beyond the scope of verification from the point of view of analysing language. For example, its insistence on a clear distinction between "preconscious experience of events" and "conscious experience of events" would be impossible to

address through any analysis of texts, and indeed may be problematic to establish even through rigorous forms of experimentation (cf. Gibbs 2005: 22). However, there are certain other features that an analysis of language could address.

One immediate problem with this dual-processing approach as well as Whitehouse's theory of modes of religiosity, is that they suggest an either-or situation, where religious belief is either *primarily* reliant on an experiential *or* a rational system (in the case of Epstein and Pacini) or upon semantic *or* episodic memory (in the case of Whitehouse). The reason why this is a problem is that according to cognitive linguistic researchers such as Evans, cognitive models cannot be functional without being constructed from networks consisting of *both* things *and* events, not primarily one or the other. Researchers outside of Cognitive Linguistics have also expressed disagreement with this either-or situation, preferring to view processing modes as different "bundles of features", where certain features may be present and other features may not be, and where it is possible that features from both modes co-exist (Boyer 2005: 10, 25; Pyysiainen 2005: 149).

Epstein and Pacini offer some support for this either-or situation by pointing to experiments where subjects seem to be simultaneously aware of the presence of both systems, but still decide to foreground one system over the other. For example, they describe the following experiment:

... participants are given an opportunity to win money by blindly drawing a red jelly bean from one of two bowls that contain a designated percentage of white and red jelly beans. A small bowl always contains 1 in 10 (10%) red jelly beans, and a large bowl always contains 100 jelly beans, with the percentage of red jelly beans varying from 5% to 10%. We have found that most participants choose to draw from the 9% (large) rather than from the 10% (small) bowl, and that a surprisingly high number (nearly a quarter) even prefer to draw from the 5% (large) bowl ...

(Epstein and Pacini 1999: 466)

The key point to this experiment is that many of the participants who chose the larger bowl with *relatively* fewer red jelly beans were aware that their choice was irrational and statistically indefensible, but felt compelled to follow their feelings (ibid). Epstein and Pacini therefore are able to argue that the participants had to make a choice to either follow a rational mode of processing by

adhering to their knowledge of statistics, or to follow an experiential mode of processing by paying more attention to their “gut feelings”.

However, it appears from the structure of this experiment that Epstein and Pacini’s rational and experiential systems are different from Evans’ individuals and types and episodic situations and generic situations. In order to illustrate this point, it is helpful to analyse the difference that Epstein and Pacini see in the thinking of the various participants. They view those participants that chose from the smaller bowl as adhering to the objective principles of statistics, while they see those who chose from the larger bowl as adhering to something like the vague feeling that “in real life it is better to go with the bowl that offers more absolute chances to win” (ibid.). This is a very interesting finding from a very interesting experiment, but the results are not directly applicable to the cognitive linguistic distinction between things and events. The reason for this is that the decision to make judgements based on statistics or irrational feelings are both as much a result of personal evaluations abstracted from past relevant episodic situations as they are the result of abstracted ideas that have no grounding in any past situation at all. I would argue that it is essentially impossible to divorce even the most seemingly objective of decisions from reflections upon and evaluations of our past experience. However, this is not to say that the observation that emotion can be a key factor in episodic situations is without value for the cognitive linguistic perspective.

Evans has never provided a detailed account of how emotions and feelings are connected to and influence the form of things and events. However, it would appear to be reasonable to argue that a greater degree of emotion could be attached to a rich network of specific, concrete-like and more embodied images constructed as specific memories, for example, the presence of X in my life, my relationship with X, X knocking on the door of my heart, X coming into my life, X dwelling inside of me, X taking up home within me, etc., than a simple abstracted statement of an attribute, such as X is capable of personal intimacy (cf. Whitehouse 2000: 7; Barrett 2005: 120; Epstein and Pacini 1999: 463). One of the central points of Whitehouse and Epstein and Pacini is that personal memories of

situations that we perceive ourselves to have experienced are more conducive to the affective dimension than a list of relevant abstracted attributes. This is a point that should not at all conflict with a cognitive linguistic perspective. If this is indeed the case, we should be able to predict that *an individual who describes a richer and more expansive network of episodic situations about a divine entity relating to him or herself will tend to use more emotional language to describe their religious belief concerning that divine entity.*

I would therefore argue that patterns of emphasis identified in the language of CB2 and CB3 and many of the *Evangelical Times* testimonials fit well with a process of being attracted to encoding religious belief through a richer network of images and episodic situations relating to the believer and a divine entity. I would also want to argue that this both causes and is caused by an increased emphasis on the affective dimension in terms of a focus on what *feels* good or bad and an emphasis on love and intimacy that was repeatedly emphasised to an unusually high degree in the language of CB2, CB3 and the authors of the Christian testimonials.

In point 5 in Epstein and Pacini's table (table 15 above), they refer to the experiential system encoding language in terms of concrete images and metaphor. Again, I would argue that it would be more accurate to propose that richer networks of images and episodic situations inevitably involve drawing on a higher frequency of metaphorical language. This in turn gives such language the appearance of being more concrete because metaphor draws on more concrete and physical source domains in order to describe more abstract situations.

It should also be no surprise that the perception of these images and episodic situations relating to a divine entity and the believer also involve a higher frequency of language relating to the believer perceiving him or herself as passive and acted on. The reason for this is that a plethora of images and episodic situations relating to a divine entity and a believer presuppose the perception that a divine entity is often breaking into the daily life and experience of the believer. Given that the entity is always portrayed as exponentially more powerful than the believer it should not surprise us that

there is a high degree of language relating to the entity as the active object and the believer as the subject. This would account for point 10 in the experiential system in table 15, as well as going some way towards explaining the higher frequency of believer-as-patient metaphors in CB3 and the *Evangelical Times* testimonials (in addition to the operationalizing of specific doctrinal beliefs).

In addition to the above points, I have argued throughout my analysis of CB2 and CB3 and the *Evangelical Times* testimonials that there appears to be a sense that belief and certainty are based on perceived experience rather than theoretical arguments. Epstein and Pacini (1999: 473) explicitly relate this to their experiential system (point 11 in table 15 above). They argue that in the experiential system, reality is perceived to be directly appropriated through feelings and senses, while in the rational system, the truth about reality is built up through processes of reasoning and interpreting evidence. Some evidence for this can be seen in the case of CB2 and CB3 where certainty appears to be based on the perceived reality of “the presence of God” or “being moved by the Spirit” rather than a conclusion drawn from any form of logical inference. However, from a cognitive linguistic perspective it is not necessary to create an either-or situation here, but simply to point out that CB2 and CB3 are placing a greater emphasis on inferences drawn from images and episodic situations and therefore their language about their religious beliefs inevitably revolves more around specific perceived memories or experiences than it does around abstracted items of belief.

In contrast, the patterns of emphasis in the language of CB1, the Muslim discussion participants and the *islamfortoday.com* testimonials fit better with a process of expressing abstract notions such as human responsibility, justness and fairness. I would argue that this is achieved partially through a reduced focus on networks of images and episodic situations relating to interaction between the believer and a divine entity. I have noted that the language of MB1, MB2 and MB3 has a weaker emphasis on words relating to the expression of intense emotion and feelings between the believer and a divine entity. Epstein and Pacini would want to claim that this weaker emphasis fits with the encoding of reality primarily through a rational system that is “relatively affect-free” (Epstein and

Pacini 1999: 463). However, from a cognitive linguistic perspective, it is sufficient to account for this difference by simply pointing to the smaller number of images and episodic situations relating to interaction between the divine entity and the believer. As I argued above, the word *love* when used to describe a feeling directed from the believer towards the divine entity or vice versa is a strong indication of emotion being intertwined with religious belief. CB2 used the word in this way nine times and CB3 used it thirteen times, but MB1, MB2, and MB3 lacked the potential opportunities to use the word because of their far smaller number of episodic situations relating to interaction between a divine entity and a believer. However, it is important to re-iterate the point that I am *not* arguing that the Muslim believers are not interested in expressing episodic situations *per se* – the discussions contain numerous references by the Muslim participants to personal situations. My point is that the Muslim language simply exhibits a *weaker emphasis* on specific images and on episodic situations relating specifically to *the interaction between a divine entity and an individual believer*.

I have so far argued that there is a tendency among the Muslim participants to emphasise human responsibility and therefore to minimise episodic situations describing interactions between a divine entity and the individual believer. I have also argued that there is more language in the Christian texts that appears to reflect the perception that a divine entity has broken into their daily life in order to consistently interact with them, resulting in an emphasis on such episodic situations. However, this perception of experiencing divine interaction does not appear to be solely tied to the operationalization of doctrinal belief and the consolidation of community ideas. There also appear to be some key differences between individuals within the same belief community. As we have seen, MB3 (who comes from the same Ibadhi Muslim community in Oman as MB2) uses more frequent and stronger relationship language, even to the point of describing her relationship with God as a “private relationship” and describing God as always being in her heart. On the other hand, CB1 (who comes from the same Pentecostal Evangelical Christian community as CB2) avoids almost all references to proximity, unity, relationship and believer-as-patient language, while also largely

avoiding emotional language. Just as I have argued that it is possible for religious systems and leaders to encourage the foregrounding of one processing mode over another, I would also argue that it is possible for individuals to have particular attitudes, personal characteristics and personal backgrounds that may lead them to also personally foreground one mode over another.

The foregrounding of a particular processing model may also be influenced by varying reactions to different contexts and situations. Tremlin (2005: 78-79) puts this propensity for religious believers to deviate and adapt the sometimes strict, orthodox dogma of their belief systems down to the idea that “in each person there is both an “official” concept and an “implicit” concept that they can use” in everyday life. This implicit concept is forged within the constant interaction and tension between, on the one hand, universalistic, catch-all beliefs and, on the other hand, individual instincts, intuitive perceptions, personal attitudes and characteristics, unique contexts and situated experiences. It is also important to emphasise the relationship between these situated experiences and the different contexts or genres through which believers describe these experiences. What CB1 says within the context of a dynamically unfolding discussion with a conservative Muslim may be very different from what he would say if he were writing a testimonial for use by his local church. We should not forget that taking part in a discussion or writing a testimonial are actions that would be processed by the participant as episodic situations influenced in their own ways by a particular affective dimension, as well as particular limitations and constraints in terms of format, style, timing, pressure, and levels of influence from others.

I would also argue that it is worth focusing particularly on episodic situations because they can be viewed as especially difficult to precisely synchronise between individuals from the same belief communities. It appears to be reasonable to maintain that it is easier for religious leaders to monitor and regulate *what* people theoretically believe within their community, but more difficult to precisely monitor and regulate *how people experience* what they believe. It follows from this that any religious community that encourages the expression of a rich network of episodic situations

relating to a divine entity interacting with a believer, will probably exhibit more differences in belief between individuals about that divine entity. This would go some way to explaining the wider differences between the Christian participants compared to the Muslim participants.

I would like to bring this chapter to a close by returning to my focus on action and relationship language. I have spent a lot of time exploring the importance of episodic situations and their relevance to my conclusions concerning the language used in the testimonials and the discussions. However, what I have yet to mention is the point that episodic situations are in many ways analogous to action and relationship language. Throughout this thesis, I have consistently focused my analysis not on what religious people say they believe, but on how they describe their experience of what they believe. To put it another way, the focus of this thesis has not been so much upon specific individuals and abstracted types, so much as specific episodic situations expressed through the religious believer acting on a divine entity or, in many cases, vice versa. I have also maintained throughout this thesis that action and relationship language can only be described in terms of patterns of emphasis and not clear, fixed differences. The above exploration of episodic situations and especially their 'messiness' in terms of individual differences between members of the same belief community further consolidates that belief. Further research into this area should further highlight the relative uniqueness of each individual believer, despite the illusion of the unity of belief that religious leaders and communities often wish to maintain.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

I will conclude this thesis by drawing together the various analyses and discussions from each of the chapters, in addition to exploring how the points raised by those discussions could be further developed. I therefore begin by providing an overview of the chapter on cognitive models and certainty and how it provided a basis for my analysis of both the religious testimonials and the videoed discussions. After a brief overview of the findings of the analyses, I draw together all of the various strands by exploring the various strategies that a conservative believer employs in order to maintain the perspective that reality is simple and binary and reducible to a set of clear, fixed truths. I then discuss how the results of these analyses could have important applications to the area of interfaith dialogue between conservative belief communities, but also qualify those applications by discussing in more detail why such communities tend to be highly resistant to dialogue. I conclude by suggesting that further research could address the possibility of whether the strategies used by conservative religious believers are also used by other communities and individuals outside of the domain of conservative religion.

5.1 An Overview of the Thesis

This thesis began with an exploration of the nature and structure of cognitive models. I explored the argument that even when people use seemingly objective terms, such as *mother*, they are selecting particular cognitive models and focusing on certain characteristics of those models over other characteristics (Lakoff 1987; Taylor 2003; Evans 2009). These cognitive models could be viewed as different ways of construing reality and are seen within Cognitive Linguistics as a fundamental aspect of how we categorise what we see around us. I went on to argue that cognitive models also imply certain premises about how we build up our knowledge of the world and the nature of that

knowledge. First of all, human beings appear to have no choice but to categorise what they encounter. It is seemingly impossible to orientate to and successfully interact with the environment without constructing networks of categories (Lakoff 1987; Taylor 2003). We also have a tendency to often view our category choices as obviously correct and self-evidently true, or at least “feel the pressure to pick one model as being the right one” (Lakoff 1987:75). Human beings also often feel the need to disagree with the choices of others, as well as use arguments to support their own choices, attempt to demonstrate their superiority and justify their beliefs (cf. Lakoff 1987:72). Such arguments may appear (especially to the user) to be purely concerned with the uncovering of objective knowledge about some aspect of our environment, even though their primary outcome is often nothing more than the further consolidation or nuancing of existing viewpoints (cf. Mehan 2006; Wisdom 2000).

It may be understandably controversial to many researchers to apply these premises relating to the subjectivity of knowledge to our ideas about concrete, observable things. However, when we consider highly complex, abstract networks of ideas such as worldviews, the notion of cognitive models seems more difficult to resist. I argued that cognitive models appear to be particularly suitable when we consider conservative religious worldviews, which tend to be built around notions of absolute certainty and oversimplified, fixed views of reality. It also appears that key aspects of language help belief communities maintain this perception of a fixed, concrete view of the world. Notions such as the *illusion of semantic unity* suggest that words like *car* inevitably involve a diverse range of things being encapsulated by a single basic category (Evans 2009:207). In terms of conservative religious worldviews, this illusion of semantic unity is at its most prevalent with the use of abstract terms like *non-believers*, *true believers*, *true*, *false*, *good* and *evil* that group a wide array of judgements, values, perspectives and people into phrases that often *appear* to the user to be simple and clearly bounded. Metaphor is another aspect of language that can be particularly important in the expression of conservative religious worldviews and the perception that such worldviews are obviously correct. Metaphor is ideal not just for construing the abstract as

something concrete, basic and more tangible (Pragglejaz 2007, Charteris-Black 2004), but also for encoding certain presuppositions relating to agency and certainty. For example, If I say *God brought me to know him*, I am already assuming beyond doubt that there is a God, and that he is clearly both male and personally interested in me, and that he is capable of and willing to break into my life and compel me to change my ideas about the world.

In order to further explore my interest in applying the notion of cognitive models to the area of certainty and conservative religious worldviews, I therefore chose to focus on metaphorical language. I also chose to further narrow my focus by concentrating on movement and proximity metaphors in conservative Christian and Muslim testimonials. I was particularly interested in these types of metaphors and the genre of the religious testimonials because I wanted to avoid revolving my analysis around theoretical doctrinal beliefs and instead focus on action and relationship language, or language relating to the experience of believing. This follows the premise that certainty is not primarily derived from the acceptance of theoretical arguments, but from the way we express and interpret relevant personal experiences. My first intention was therefore to explore the possibility that a sense of certainty could be located in the seemingly self-evident assumptions that needed to be made in order for an individual's language about their experience to make sense. A second intention was also to collect evidence for the possibility that when the language used by individual believers was compared, it would provide evidence that the differences were not as clear and fixed as the believers themselves might expect. In short, I was looking for evidence for or against the ideas that firstly, human beings often feel self-evidently certain about the choices they make with regard to cognitive models and secondly, that reality is often more complex and category resistant than we often perceive it to be. I also hoped that this analysis would lead to some application to the field of inter-faith dialogue, particularly between the religions of Christianity and Islam.

What I found was that both the Christian and Muslim testimonials were rich in movement and proximity metaphors that construed the abstract process of belief as something basic, concrete and

tangible. However, I found key differences between the two types of texts in their patterns of emphasis relating to agency, intimacy and affective language. The evidence suggested that the Muslim texts tended to derive a sense of certainty from more frequent references to the responsibility of the individual believer and his or her own journey of research and reflection. In contrast, the Christian texts tended to derive a sense of certainty from more frequent references to the idea of being acted on by a divine entity, perceived as more consistently breaking into their daily life. I also found it interesting to note that these differences were not absolute, but could only be derived from comparing total frequencies of particular patterns of metaphor use across a sizeable sample of texts. The reason for this was that, despite the existence of general patterns of emphasis across the two collections of texts, there was still a large degree of variation between the individual testimonials. For example, in the Muslim texts I identified a lower frequency of language that related to intimate, relationship language relating to the believer and a divine entity. This even extended to a very infrequent use (compared to the Christian texts) of phrases like *follow God*, and the more frequent use of more impersonal phrases like *follow Islam*. In contrast, I found language related to intimate personal relationships far more frequent in the Christian texts, and very few occurrences of phrases like *follow Christianity*. This led me to suggest that, in the Muslim texts, there was a connection between an emphasis on human responsibility and the perception that truth could be arrived at through rational thought and reflection. This in turn went hand-in-hand with the low frequency of language relating to intimate contact and proximity between the believer and a divine entity because this contact could be viewed as compromising the notion of total human responsibility. This is a very “tidy” set of observations and extrapolations that have a lot of textual evidence in their favour. However, if we focus in on particular individuals, we soon discover marked irregularities. For example, consider the Muslim testimonial below:

I’ve heard Christians say that with Christianity you “know God on a personal level”. In Islam, your relationship with God is so much deeper than that. God is with me every moment, guiding me, teaching me, loving me, protecting me, liberating me, enlightening me, comforting me ... (MT8)

This Muslim Testimonial author appears to be making the point that Islam should not just match the language of intimacy and proximity used by Christians, but should intensify it. These kinds of examples should not lead to the argument that the uncovering of general patterns of emphasis should be avoided. Such patterns of emphasis should still be viewed as invaluable in allowing researchers to develop a working understanding of a particular belief community. However, such examples do highlight the fact that at the level of the individual's experience, there may rarely be total alignment with established general patterns of emphasis.

This could also be applied to the area of interfaith dialogue, where there can often be a focus on the conflicting doctrinal differences between *different belief communities*. This focus on the level of the community may conceal the possible wide-ranging implications for interfaith dialogue of analysing the differences between the personal experiences of *individuals within the same community*. If we were to observe that there were key differences between the personal experiences of two Evangelical Christians within the same belief community, this may, for example, influence how we frame our analysis of the key differences between an Evangelical Christian and a Sunni Muslim. It is now therefore possible to see why relying purely on a search for general patterns of emphasis between two collections of texts belonging to different religious communities could be limiting.

Another obvious limitation of my analysis of testimonials was that it focused on the expression of experience through the prism of a single genre. I was therefore also very interested to see whether the general patterns of emphasis that I had observed in the testimonials would also be visible if I switched my focus to the very different genre of the unplanned face-to-face discussion. What could be the impact of the pressure to immediately respond to another discourse participant in a dynamically unfolding conversation, or the pull to empathise or to disagree and win an argument with that participant? Could focusing religious believers on action and relationship language (instead of theoretical doctrinal differences) encourage them to empathise with each other's viewpoints? In order to therefore further address these areas, I followed up my analysis of testimonials with an

analysis of videoed discussions between individual Muslim and Christian believers. These discussions revolved around some of the action and relationship language that I had encountered in the different patterns of emphasis, such as *find*, *follow*, *come* and *guide*. In addition to being able to take a closer look at differences between individuals and genres, I was also able to test to see if the patterns of emphasis could be confirmed when looking at believers from other conservative Muslim and Christian communities outside of *islamfortoday.com* and the *Evangelical Times*.

The results of my analysis of the discussions were predictably “messy”. CB2 and CB3 (Christian Believers 2 and 3) reproduced many of the key patterns of emphasis highlighted in the testimonial analysis and also explicitly related them to a sense of personal certainty, while CB1 reproduced very few of the patterns. MB1, MB2 and MB3 (Muslim Believers 1,2 and 3) all reproduced some of the key patterns of emphasis, but MB3 also included seemingly intimate relationship language that appeared close to one of the patterns of emphasis found in the Christian testimonials. In terms of the focus on action and relationship language encouraging empathy, I found several examples where action and relationship language was either not being appropriated by the other, or was being appropriated seemingly for purposes of “winning” a point. I also found two examples where personal stories or scenarios were used that presupposed ideas that the other participant would have strongly disagreed with. In the first example, CB1 presented an imagined scenario that would only have made sense if it was presupposed that MB1 was vulnerable and easily led astray in terms of false religious ideas. In the second example, CB3 told a story about a visit to a Mosque in order to preach the gospel that would only have made sense if it was presupposed that CB3 had direct access to the truth but Muslims did not.

However, I did also discover possible signs of empathetic language. I encountered examples where the participants used language suggesting similarity between Christian and Muslim beliefs that would probably appear very out of place in the language of testimonials. I also found an example where a Christian participant (CB2) drew a parallel between his experience of relating to God and the

Muslim's experience in order to make a particular point about the importance of meeting with other believers. I argued that this example was particularly interesting because it only made sense if the Christian and the Muslim both assumed the possibility that their experiences were similar. This assumption of a degree of shared experience is not an assumption that individual conservative religious believers normally operate with, so it is possible that the situation of being involved in a face-to-face discussion had something influence here.

Having provided an overview of the possible interaction between cognitive models and certainty and the results of the analysis of both the testimonials and the discussions, it is now possible for me to draw together some key strands. In terms of conservative Muslim and Christian belief, both the analysis of the testimonials and the face-to-face discussions could be viewed as illustrations of the theory that at least certain groups of people can regard their choices of cognitive models and aspects within those models as self-evidently correct. The authors of the testimonials and the participants in the discussion may have located their certainty in different aspects of their experience, but the point is that their use of language did suggest that they were *all* certain about their beliefs. The language I analysed also could be viewed as illustrating the notion that people can view the choices of others as clearly wrong and misguided. However, these findings are hardly surprising and could probably be lifted from any surface analysis of conservative Muslim and Christian language. My discussion of the results has gone a step further by arguing that that this sense of certainty originates from different aspects of the believers' cognitive models. I have also argued that this sense is also primarily tied to how believers perceive and interact with the episodic information that they store in their minds. What I mean by this is that certainty is not *primarily* located in a belief in theoretical doctrinal beliefs (the *things they believe in*), but in terms of the way that they perceive and cognitively structure the *situations they experience*.

This brings me back to the notion of action and relationship language and the view that such language is intimately connected to the notion of storing memories as a series of episodic situations

consisting of connected images of things and entities. For example, during the discussions, CB2 states that his sense of certainty is based on the experience of inviting God to “come into my life and have a relationship” with him, resulting in “the presence of God in my life”. Another example is MB3 stating that her certainty is based on “my religion because I believe in only one God whom he sent Mohammed and the Quran to guide me towards him”. The key in both these examples is not so much a static doctrine about the divine entity itself (God), but a connected series of perceived interactive events and situations that consolidate particular ideas about a divine entity. These connected situations also do not have to involve interaction with a divine entity, despite the fact that they consolidate ideas about that divine entity. For example, as I argued in my conclusion to chapter 3, the Muslim testimonials displayed a pattern of emphasis relating to the believer going through a journey of research and reflection that led to belief in Islam. Here again, a sense of certainty is not being expressed as a static thing, but as a process of connected situations and events construed as a journey or quest. For example, in answer to the question of what her certainty was based upon, MB2 explained that at first she was just a Muslim because her parents were Muslim, but this changed as she grew older,

... but later I tried to, you know, read behind the words of the Holy Quran, to read more books and watch more programmes in order to know more about Islam, and the more I know, the more I, it's like I feel like this is the right thing in my life, and this is what will make me happy through the whole life. (MB2)

It is as if certainty of belief is not so much made up of layers of arguments, as layers of *personal perceptions and experiences* that shape knowledge and the arguments derived from that knowledge. At the centre of this sense of certainty and arrangement of knowledge is therefore the inescapable experience of feeling ‘right’, or at least a search for such a feeling. And of course if a worldview can be perceived as feeling ‘right’, then it often follows that other worldviews will be perceived as feeling ‘wrong’.

These points are relatively uncontroversial, but in order to get a fuller understanding of conservative religious belief, it is also important to explore why people need to feel that their worldview is right.

Once I have explored a possible answer to this question, it is then possible to use that explanation as a frame within which I can draw all the various strands of this thesis together.

5.2 Drawing the Strands Together: An Overview of the Strategies Employed by Conservative Religious Believers to Maintain Certainty

One possibility that can be extrapolated from our incorrigible need to construe and categorise our environments is that many humans find reality frighteningly complex, confusing (in terms of identifying a clear, consistent purpose or reason for being) and on many levels beyond control. Some process of imposing categories on reality can therefore be viewed as necessary in order to manage an inevitable degree of anxiety and allow the environment to be experienced, at some level, ordered, purposeful and controllable.

However, it is clear from the language of conservative religious believers that the goal is not to manage anxiety but to attempt to completely eliminate it. This elimination can only be achieved through the imposition of absolute categories, or, to put it another way, arriving at absolute truth about key aspects of the world and our position within it. These categories do not necessarily have to provide answers to every aspect of reality, but it is crucial for conservative religious believers that these categories at least presuppose that the divine being they are constructed around does have all the answers and can be absolutely trusted. The point here is that in order for these categories or cognitive models relating to that divine being to function effectively, they need to be perceived as being essentially correct and stable. If there is constant, shifting doubt about the validity of those categories, then the believer will inevitably experience anxiety and emotional flux. Such anxiety and flux would lead to the collapse of those categories, which will in turn be replaced by others that are perceived as being more correct and stable. This cognitive process of searching for a sustainable perception of veracity and stability is what we see in religious testimonials. Once stable categories are perceived to have been established, it is necessary to maintain that apparent stability by filtering

out evidence that reality is in fact more confusing and complex than those categories allow. This explains the hostility towards notions such as postmodernism and relativism, which are seen by conservative religious believers as the primary threat to viewing a particular religious belief as “enduringly true and right” (Piper 2007:49, see section 2.2 above for a more detailed discussion).

It is also necessary for the believer to discover ways of re-interpreting experiences and situations that may suggest that other competing categories are right. We saw this again and again in the discussions. For example, in the case of the discussion between MB1 and CB1, one possible interpretation of the situation of people rejecting Islam or Christianity is that they believe the ideas underpinning these religions to be unconvincing. This interpretation may appear to be clearly preferable to the vast majority of non-believers, and yet both MB1 and CB1 do not even consider it as a possibility. Instead, MB1 interprets this situation as evidence that people cannot handle simple, direct truth and need to complicate and contort it until it is no longer the truth. In contrast, CB1 interprets this situation as evidence that people are “blinded by the god of this world” and therefore need to be saved. We see here that both MB1 and CB1 are interpreting situations in a way that best supports their established worldviews.

This point overlaps with the related point that any experience that may be perceived as naturally supporting the believer’s worldview will be foregrounded, and conversely any experience that appears to undermine it will be backgrounded. We can see this in the language of MB1 when he observes that “the almighty reflects throughout his creation, and he points to him being the creator”. This sentence only makes sense when particular feelings, intuitions and perspectives about the world around us are foregrounded, while other aspects and possible conclusions relating to our current knowledge of the world are backgrounded. This last point also includes the foregrounding of a certain type of language that is viewed or felt to be useful in consolidating certainty, such as the use of metaphor. For example, the metaphorical reference to the concrete and very unambiguous act of

physical pointing in the above quote serves to foreground the perception that it is *obvious* that our environment provides incontrovertible evidence of a creator.

It is important at this stage to outline how these ideas contribute to the current debate between objectivists and those who would argue that complex beliefs about our environment must consist of some level of construal and imposed categorisation. As I argued in chapter two, scholars such as Wisdom (cf. 2000) and Mehan (cf. 2006) are well known for their arguments that humans have a tendency to interpret the available data in order to support their existing perspective. Cognitive linguists such as Lakoff (cf. 1999) and Goatly (cf. 2007) are also well known for identifying how metaphor usage can have both a conscious and subconscious role in consolidating an individual's or a society's ideologies. Researchers such as Larsen-Freeman, Cameron and Gibbs (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; Cameron 2010c; Gibbs 2011b) have foregrounded the importance of moving away from a static, rigid view of language, and therefore a move away from the static, rigid view of the attitudes that language can represent. Finally, work in Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Anthropology is beginning to highlight the importance and implications of our experience of the world being encoded in our brains as episodic memories, or memories consisting of a connected series of situations or events (cf. Barsalou 1999; Evans 2009; Whitehouse 2004; Whitehouse and McCauley 2005). My contribution to this debate is therefore essentially synthetic. My aim has been to explore certainty by bringing together the ideas of philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Wisdom along with notion of cognitive models and the role of metaphor, combining them with both a discourse dynamic approach and an approach that foregrounds the importance of experience over theoretical statements of belief. Does this synthetic combination of ideas and approaches lead to any distinctive conclusions concerning a conservative religious believer's sense of certainty? I believe it does.

First of all, it warns us that if the process of categorisation is to be successful in effectively reducing anxiety, it is crucial that the individual over time develops cognitive models that are increasingly

resistant and hostile to worldview change. However, the discourse dynamic dimension informs us that some form of change and development over time in language and the way it is used, along with the attitudes reflected in that usage, are inevitable and unavoidable (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008). Secondly, this proposed hostility to change explains why belief communities often attempt to draw up a prescribed set of seemingly rigid beliefs and experiences that act as static membership markers to a particular belief community. However, this thesis has consistently argued that theoretical beliefs and doctrines are things that are easier to monitor by the community and represent as static, as compared to expressions of perceived experiences. These expressions are far more complex and fluid and therefore more difficult to monitor (cf. Tremlin 2005:78-79). This suggests that there may often be a disconnection between, for example, an individual's theoretical statements of belief about a divine entity and the expression of a perceived experience about interaction with that divine entity. Consequently, it also suggests that there will be a good chance of clear unity between members of the same belief community in terms of theoretical statements of belief, but far less chance of clear unity in terms of expressions of experience relating to those beliefs. Essentially, what I am arguing for is the point that many conservative religious believers exist in a state of contradictory tension. They represent themselves as belonging to a homogenous community confidently and collectively drawing near to a state of impenetrable, anxiety-free certainty. However, if my synthesis is correct, they are also deriving their certainty primarily from experiences that are at some level inevitably divergent. This would suggest that at one level conservative religious believers may genuinely experience a strong sense of certainty with regard to their view of the world, while at another level they may experience varying degrees of anxiety over the need to struggle to extract oversimplified, unambiguous levels of consistency from the fact of complexity and constant change. This anxiety may account for some of the more defensive types of behaviour that can be seen in some communities, such as the relative popularity of home schooling and a propensity to send ministers to study theology at approved Bible colleges rather than at mainstream Universities.

Having drawn together the various strands of this thesis and introduced the notion of tension between the way the conservative religious believer perceives reality and the actual nature of that reality, I am now able to move on to a discussion of whether these findings have any practical application to the area of inter-faith dialogue.

5.3 Potential Applications to the Area of Inter-faith Dialogue

The strategies for maintaining certainty discussed in the section above may account for why committed, conservative religious believers in general tend to be characterised by a seemingly unshakable sense of certainty, but it also allows for the fact that believers experience and interpret reality in very different ways. I believe this acknowledgement of key differences in where conservative believers locate their certainty can be applied to the domain of inter-faith dialogue. I would want to argue that being aware of the key patterns of emphasis in the language of a believer in terms of experience and perspective can help in any attempt at meaningful conversation. This would depend of course on the ability of at least one participant in the dialogue to be willing and able to identify relevant patterns of emphasis, either before or during any process of dialogue. Pieces of research such as this could therefore be useful in showing how such patterns could be identified and how they could be linked to an individual's core experience of their beliefs. Research such as this could also encourage participants in a dialogue process to move away from a primary focus on a list of theoretical points of doctrinal disagreement. Instead, they could be encouraged to focus on differences and similarities in core experience expressed through action and relationship language. At the end of the previous chapter I observed that a focus on action and relationship language is no guarantee of successful bridge building. However, this does not negate my central argument in both my analysis of the testimonials and the discussions that action and relationship language are at the heart of a religious believer's expression of their way of believing. If there is to be any possibility of

progress in terms of dialogue, any approach to analysing language that is able to identify patterns of emphasis relating to core perceptions and experiences should be viewed as valuable.

This research could also have one other key application to the domain of inter-faith dialogue. As we have seen, conservative religious worldviews hinge on clarity and rigidity and the unambiguous perception of differences between believers and non-believers and similarities between believers and other believers. This need to see clear differences and the closely related need to separate from those that are different often entail very negative evaluations of those who are perceived to be non-believers. Any research that therefore identifies similarities between individuals from competing belief communities and differences between individuals from the same belief community could therefore be used to attempt to dilute this very rigid sense of oversimplified, binary difference. It could be argued that the relativizing of differences in experience is the most powerful strategy available to an individual that is attempting to soften the divide between two entrenched belief communities. As I argued above, it is easier for a community to monitor and prescribe theoretical statements of doctrinal belief, but it is far more difficult for a community or sacred text to ensure that perceived experiences are identical.

We have seen a clear example of this in the case of MB1, MB2 and MB3. In the case of these two Muslim believers, it is obvious that they share the same doctrinal belief in terms of, for example, the unity of God and the rejection of the Christian notion of a Trinity. It is clear therefore that their theoretical statements *about* God are identical or at least very similar. However, their expression of their experiences in terms of how they relate to God is very different. As we saw in my analysis of the discussions in chapter four, MB1 and MB2 never make use of the term *relationship* when describing events in his life that relate to God and makes no use of phrases such as *came to God* or *follow God*, preferring more impersonal phrases such as “came to Islam” (MB1), “follow it [the truth]” (MB1) or “follow the right path” (MB2). The only exception to this is MB1’s isolated use of the phrase “close to God”. In contrast, MB3 refers to the Qur’an having the purpose of guiding her

“towards him [God]” and following the commands of the Qur’an in order to get “closer to God”. She also talks about God as an entity that is “always in my heart” and uses the term *relationship with God* five times, including the use of such intimate phrases as a “private relationship with God”. The perceived experiences of MB1 and MB2 and the perceived experience of MB3 appear to be very different here. It is almost as if they are talking about two different kinds of divine entity – one distant and more impersonal and the other more intimate and closer and more modelled on the nature of human relationships. And yet these three individuals are absolutely committed to the same essential doctrinal framework that involves, among other things, a description of the nature of Allah. We can see now that if we focus on doctrine, we will be faced with what appears to be a homogenous group of believers, but if we focus on expressions of experience, we will inevitably encounter extensive individual differences. An important avenue for further research in terms of avenues for inter-faith dialogue would therefore be to explore how entrenched conservative believers could be made more aware of how the perceptions and experiences of their fellow believers are not as clear and fixed as they may have perceived them to be.

My analysis of the discussions also highlighted another point relating to the importance of experience and its implications for inter-faith dialogue. In chapter four, I discussed the moment in the discussion between MB2 and CB2 when they talked about the experience of being occasionally unsure of God’s will. This part of the discussion lasted several turns and exhibited a high degree of convergence, despite the fact that the discussion as a whole was typified by doctrinal disagreement on areas such as the Trinity. The point I am making here is that the example discussed above focused our attention on the *divergence* between the experiences of individuals within the *same belief community*. This example focuses our attention on how shared experiences can sometimes produce *convergence* between individuals from *different belief communities*. Both of these points deserve further research in order to explore how they could be further operationalized during processes of inter-faith dialogue.

However, it is important to return to the conservative religious believers' acute awareness of the fact that any form of relativizing can blur the differences between belief communities. This factor will always be one of the key reasons why such awareness-raising will often (but not always) fail. This returns the focus to the strategies for maintaining certainty discussed above. If the cognitive models of conservative religious believers can only be effective if they are viewed as "enduringly true and right" representations of reality (Piper 2007:49), then the vast majority of such believers will be highly resistant to any evidence of relativism. At the level of the group, this does appear to guarantee that processes of dialogue that are aimed at softening doctrinal views and bringing competing conservative belief communities together will consistently fail, regardless of the language used. However, this does not contradict my earlier point that the findings of this thesis could be usefully applied to the field of inter-faith dialogue. There are two reasons for this. The first is based on an awareness that communities are made up of individuals. Attempting to soften the beliefs of an entire community may be impossible, but building bridges with particular individuals who have had particular experiences is more tenable. The second reason is based on the premise that reality *is* complex, confusing, uncontrollable and ever-changing. Conservative religious believers may have developed powerful processes of cognitive categorisation designed to ensure that the metaphysical aspect of reality is always experienced as binary, rigid, and over simplistic. However, it is difficult for a conservative Evangelical Christian to consistently avoid the realization that, for example, first century Christians were very different from sixteenth century reformers, and that sixteenth century reformers were very different from twenty first century Protestant Evangelicals. It is difficult for them to consistently avoid the realization that each individual in their community, including themselves, has different experiences and ways of viewing and interpreting those experiences, as this thesis has demonstrated in the case of two particular belief communities. In addition, the nature of language may help conservative religious believers on one level, but not on another. As we have seen, aspects of language such as the illusion of semantic unity and metaphor help to construe elements of our environment as either less complex or less abstract than they may be in reality.

However, our need, for example, to use terms such as *loosely speaking*, *strictly speaking*, *ish*, *technically*, *real*, *fake*, or *par excellence* suggests that we are all aware that category boundaries are not as fixed as they may sometimes appear to be (Taylor 2003: 63-83).

To summarise my point here: my research on the nature of certainty and cognitive models affirms that believers will be highly resistant to softening their positions. Whenever conservative believers *look through* the propositions, metaphors, and metonyms that they use, their beliefs will always be consolidated and strengthened, and will continue to *feel* self-evidently true. However, it is always possible that particular individuals will encounter situations that prompt them to *look at* the language that they use, while looking at the language that others use. A focus on engaging with the particular perceptions and experiences of individual believers and raising awareness in terms of the shifting, often category resistant nature of reality may therefore still contribute to an effective process of dialogue with particular individuals at particular times.

Throughout chapters three and four and up until this point in my conclusion my attention has been fixed on conservative religious believers. However, an important question to ask at this point is whether my investigations into an individual's sense of certainty could have wider implications beyond the domain of conservative religion. I will now move on to address this final consideration.

5.4 Applications beyond the Domain of Conservative Religion

In order to properly conclude this thesis, it is necessary to briefly discuss one last issue that involves a broad suggestion for further research. I have already suggested that many of my conclusions in chapters 2, 3 and 4 can be arranged into a list of cognitive and linguistic strategies that are employed by conservative religious believers in order to maintain their sense of certainty. These strategies are based on the premise that processes of categorisation can only appear to be truly effective to the categoriser if they appear to that individual to be self-evidently correct. It also includes the points

that the cognitive frameworks of conservative religious believers are able to filter out certain aspects of reality, re-interpret situations that appear to support opposing experiences, and foreground situations and types of language that appear to support their experience and beliefs. The question that this begs, along with the findings of the analysis in both chapters 3 and 4, is how much of this is totally unique to the conservative religious believer? Are such cognitive strategies employed by more liberal Christian and Muslim believers, or members of very different religions, such as Buddhist believers? Could they be applied to how people experience and interpret situations as supporting particular political beliefs or beliefs about certain groups or races within a society? Could they be applied to how we experience, develop and maintain strong ideas about movies, music, or video games? And finally, is it possible that a variation of these strategies could be applied to how researchers, particularly within the Arts and Humanities, experience the world and the data they draw from it as supporting a particular paradigm over others? The later work of Wittgenstein (2009) and his argument that categories do not objectively represent the world as much as they represent an agreement made at a particular time for a particular function could be viewed as laying the groundwork for such applications. Lakoff's (1987) work on cognitive models and the pressure that people feel to choose one way of classifying an aspect of the world over another also offers some support for extending the application of the model. Further support for extending some aspects of the model can be found in the evidence gathered by the other researchers discussed in chapter 2. For example, Mehan's (2006:538) analysis of how a team of Psychiatrists continued to believe in their basic premise "despite evidence that is presented to the contrary", Gould's (1983) analysis of how scientists interpreted their data concerning human intelligence to support racist conclusions, Al-Zahrani and Kövecses analysis of ideological language in Darwin's explanation of his findings, and Wisdom's (2000:285) observation that people tend to emphasise the pattern in the data that best fits their model of the world.

My argument that a sense of certainty is primarily located in an individual's experience would also have important implications if applied to some worldviews outside of conservative religious belief

systems. In terms of conservative religious belief, I have, for example, argued that it was possible for a believer to theoretically believe that believers from other religions could not have a relationship with God, and yet in certain cases their willingness to identify shared experiences with individuals from other religions may suggest the opposite view. The key here is that theoretical statements and expressions of experience may often be out of sync in the language of individual conservative religious believers. However, in contexts outside of conservative religious belief, the opposite may sometimes be the case. An individual may make theoretical statements that they are not certain about their beliefs or they may make careful use of hedging, but the expression of their experience may suggest that they are operating with the assumption that their beliefs are completely correct. Based on my argument that certainty is primarily located in experience, I would argue that research that could be related to interfaith dialogue should focus more on the way individuals express their experience than the content of their theoretical statements.

In addition to the above point, further research in terms of exploring a sense of certainty outside of conservative religious belief would still need to remain focused on situated analyses that focus both on differences between belief communities and differences between individuals. This means first looking for general patterns of emphasis in how a given group locates a sense of certainty at a given time and within a specific genre, and then determining how particular individuals within that community deviate from those general patterns. The aim here would be to progress beyond a catch-all critique of objectivism and the notion that certainty is derived from either being right or being deluded. I would like to move towards situated analyses of how particular individuals from a specific group with particular accepted beliefs forge their own stable, often rigid interpretations of their environment based on their perceptions and experience.

What I would also need to address is whether it is possible to meaningfully compare the results of this future research to the results of my findings in this thesis that relate to conservative religious belief. For example, would it be more accurate to visualise conservative religious believers as

operating with cognitive models that are *qualitatively* different from the cognitive models of others?

To put it another way, when we talk about the way conservative religious believers perceive the world around them and the way other individuals do, are we talking about two completely different cognitive processes? Or is it more likely that elements of these conservative religious models, experiences and perceptions have important connections with the models, experiences and perceptions of the vast majority of people? Finding answers to these questions could allow applied linguistics and cognitive psychology to further bridge the gap between fields such as anthropology and theology. At the same time, it could also further develop the view that conservative religious belief is a thoroughly human response to the nature of our existence, and, to some extent, expected, predictable and closer to other ways of interpreting the world than might be expected.

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