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CONCEPTUAL BLENDING AND EARLY CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

Vernon K. Robbins

1. Introduction

The emergence of early Christianity during the first century C.E. is a truly remarkable phenomenon. The literature this movement produced during its first seventy years of existence exhibits profound creativity in the context of traditional cultures, which are known for their conservative nature. Years ago, scholars like Amos Wilder (1964) observed that there were amazingly "new" formulations of phrases and words in New Testament literature. There has, however, been only limited progress in our understanding of how this "newness" emerged. Many scholars have exhibited and discussed the wide reaching diversity in traditions, concepts, and practices among different groups of early Christians. There have been only a few attempts, however, to develop modes of analysis and interpretation that show what one might call the "inner workings" of visualizations, conceptualizations, and orientations in the context of this diversity.

Ilkka Pyysiäinen has done some very interesting thinking about this in a paper entitled "Intuition, reflection, and the evolution of traditions." For my purposes, his discussion of "selection," "guided variation," and "biased cultural transmission" are very helpful (Pyysiäinen 2005: 289–92). His discussion feeds naturally into analyses of "partial mapping" and other things in *conceptual integration theory* (alternatively called *conceptual blending theory*), which I will discuss below. Pyysiäinen also observes the presence of "pre-narrative" as frameworks that guide reproduction (Pyysiäinen 2005: 290). István Czachesz (2007) also has presented some very helpful concepts in "Toward a Cognitive Psychology of Early Christian Transmission." In the context of three alternative approaches to religion in cognitive science, Czachesz discusses schema theory, and introduces four "scripts" upon which he thinks early Christian literature relies: martyrdom script; gospel script; healing script; and divine call script (Czachesz 2003). In my view, this is a very promising approach, especially when it is correlated both with "serial recall,"

when scripts serve as underlying story-grammars to narrative (Czachesz 2003: 21), and with “the cognitive relevance hypothesis of Christology,” which Czachesz describes as “the early Christian conceptualization of Jesus adapted to the economy of the mind by closely approaching the archaic idea of ancestors” (Czachesz forthcoming).

In the context of various new approaches to religion from the perspective of cognitive science on brain and mind, my approach is especially informed by Conceptual Blending (or Conceptual Integration) Theory and Critical Spatiality Theory. Instead of four scripts (Czachesz), my socio-rhetorical analysis exhibits six rhetorical dialects (called rhetorolects) that blend dynamically with one another in first century Christian discourse. Each of the rhetorolects emerges in embodied cognition through interaction with specifically located contexts that provide picturing based on seeing places and spaces through social and cultural experiences. This aspect of discourse I call rhetography, namely evoking pictures through pictorial expression (Robbins forthcoming a). Each rhetorolect is nurtured in the mind through cultural frames that evoke story-lines containing a sequence of pictures in the context of pictorial narration. Each rhetorolect also contains reasonings, which I call their rhetology, namely “assertions,” “supports,” and “juxtapositions” of thoughts that evoke “meanings” in the context of images, actions, feelings, and so forth. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s *The Way We Think* (2002) and Seana Coulson’s *Semantic Leaps* (2001) have been especially helpful in my analysis and interpretation of the dynamic and complex conceptual blending that occurs among the six rhetorolects that have emerged in my socio-rhetorical analysis.¹ An excellent Afterword in the 2003 publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (2003) explains the relation of Conceptual Blending (Integration) Theory to conceptual metaphor theory. The first programmatic conceptual blending interpretation of a New Testament passage in a socio-rhetorical framework has now been completed and will be forthcoming soon as a published book (von Thaden 2007).

The six rhetorolects that have emerged in my analysis are: *wisdom*, *prophetic*, *apocalyptic*, *precreation*, *miracle*, and *priestly* rhetorolect. One of the challenges is to discover how these rhetorolects blend with one

¹ I am especially grateful to Robert von Thaden and Bart B. Bruehler, two Ph.D. graduates from Emory University who have advanced the use of Conceptual Integration Theory and Critical Spatiality Theory for interpreting early Christian texts in their dissertations.

another. Perhaps certain blends of two, or perhaps three, rhetorolects create “emergent blend structures” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) that are especially generative in early Christian discourse. We are just beginning to find our way with these things. This essay gives a preview of blending in early Christian miracle discourse. But first a little more introduction to the six rhetorolects.

2. *A Basic View of Early Christian Rhetorical Dialects (Rhetorolects)*

In the context of socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation of early Christian literature during the 1990s (Robbins 1996a,b), very different modes of argumentation began to appear, creating exceptional challenges for analysis and interpretation of all the different kinds of discourse in the New Testament, as well as in other early Christian literature. In the context of inductive analysis of portions of all the writings in the New Testament and some Christian writings outside the New Testament, six major kinds of discourse began to emerge. In 1996, it was decided that six discourses functioned as rhetorical dialects that interacted dynamically with one another to create the Christian discourse that existed by 100 C.E. In addition, I decided to follow the advice and example of Benjamin H. Hary, a sociolinguist at Emory University, to shorten the phrase “rhetorical dialect” to “rhetorolect” (Robbins 1996c). After changes in the names of three of the rhetorolects over a period of eight years, the names have emerged as: *wisdom*, *prophetic*, *apocalyptic*, *precreation*, *miracle*, and *priestly*. In each of the rhetorolects, pictorial narration and reasoning associated with particular social, cultural, and religious locations have emerged as highly significant. Focus on these locations is producing more detailed analysis of the social, cultural, and ideological aspects of socio-rhetorical interpretation (Robbins 1996a). It became obvious, first of all, that a major characteristic of early Christian discourse emerges from the patterns with which it creates enthymematic argumentation out of pictorial narration and reasoning related to people’s bodies, households, villages, synagogues, cities, temples, kingdoms and empires (Robbins 1998, 2002, 2006). In other words, the cognitions and reasonings were emerging from “lived experiences” in specific places in the first century Mediterranean world. This has led to the use of “critical spatiality theory” in socio-rhetorical interpretation (Bruehler 2008). This area of study, located in the field of cultural geography studies, builds in particular on writings by Henri

Lefèbvre (1991), Robert D. Sack (1986, 1997), Pierre Bourdieu (1989), Edward W. Soja (1989, 1993, 1996), and Stephen Toulmin (1990). James W. Flanagan has been especially instrumental in bringing critical spatiality theory into biblical study (Flanagan 1999, no date; Gunn and McNutt 2002). In 1991, Robbins used Robert D. Sack's *Human Territoriality* for socio-rhetorical analysis of "images of empire" in Acts (Robbins 1991a) and T. F. Carney's *The Shape of the Past* (1975) for the social location of the implied author of Luke-Acts (Robbins 1991b). Jerome H. Neyrey has applied strategies for interpreting the social location of the implied author to Jude and 2 Peter (Neyrey 1993), Luke's social location of Paul (Neyrey 1996), the Gospel of John (Neyrey 2002a, 2002b), and to Paul's writings (Neyrey 2003). Since 2000, Roland Boer (2000) has written an important study on "the production of space" in 1 Samuel 1–2, Michael McKeever (2000) an analysis of "refiguring space in the Lukan passion narrative," Claudia V. Camp (2002) an important essay on "storied space" in Sirach, Victor H. Matthews (2003) an important discussion of physical, imagined, and "lived" space in ancient Israel, and Thomas B. Dozeman (2003) an essay on Ezra-Nehemiah.

Socio-rhetorical interpretation is using critical spatiality theory together with cognitive theory about conceptual blending to analyze and interpret the nature of early Christian discourse. Here the foundational work is Fauconnier and Turner's *The Way We Think*.² The merger of conceptual blending theory with critical spatiality theory is clarifying the relation of social places to cultural, ideological and religious spaces in the six primary early Christian rhetorolects. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002: xv, 279): "Conceptual integration always involves a blended space and at least two inputs and a generic space." To these insights, Seana Coulson (2001) in particular has added the insight that organizing, cultural frames are continually operative, either as background or foreground, in conceptual blending. Socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation of rhetorolects proceeds, therefore, on the presupposition that places and spaces dynamically inform conceptual blending through the presence of cultural frames which this essay calls rhetorolects. Rhetorolects organize pictures of people and loca-

² The use of this book for socio-rhetorical commentary is the result of an e-mail by L. G. Bloomquist on Dec. 4, 2002, which called attention to the relation of conceptual blending theory to early Christian blending of rhetorolects, which was a topic of discussion at the Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity meetings prior to the AAR/SBL sessions at Toronto in November, 2002.

Figure 1. Conceptual Blending of Frames and Spaces in Rhetorolects.

Cultural Frames (Rhetorolects)	Conventionally organized mental domains in Mediterranean culture and tradition
Generic Spaces	Conceptual mental spaces
Experienced Spaces (Firstspace)	Experiences of the body in social places
Conceptualized Spaces (Secondspace)	Sensory-aesthetic and cognitive experiences creating cultural, religious, and ideological places
Spaces of Blending (Thirdspace)	Debate, reconciliation, elaboration, and avoidance in relation to cultural, religious, and ideological places

tions together in ways that nurture special cultural memories. Certain words and phrases evoke these memories in a manner that frames the reasoning about topics the discourse introduces to the hearer. As the discourse creates pictures in the mind of special social, cultural, religious, and ideological places, it creates movements in the mind of association, dissociation, admiration, dislike, love, anger, courage, fear, etc. Figure 1 presents an abstract table that displays the presence of cultural frames (rhetorolects), generic spaces (highly multiple cognitive activities), experienced spaces (firstspace/input 1); conceptualized spaces (secondspace/input 2); and spaces of blending (thirdspace) that are dynamically related to one another in early Christian rhetorolects.

People's words and phrases evoke conventional discourse frames (rhetorolects) that invite pictures of spaces and actions that exist in cultural memory. Sensory-aesthetic experiences of the body in various social places—like household, village, city, synagogue, kingdom, temple, and empire—in the world are the "firstspace" contexts in which people develop and perpetuate special pictures and memories in their minds. People activate cognitive and conceptual abilities to interpret these social places and actions as "secondspace" cultural, religious, and ideological places. In addition, people use processes of part-whole, similar-dissimilar, opposite, etc. to relate pictures, actions, and reasonings (in "generic" spaces) to one another. In the context of these activities, people negotiate their daily lives in ongoing contexts of sensory-aesthetic experiences which are "thirdspace" "spaces of blending." Socio-rhetorical interpreters are accepting the challenge of

analyzing and interpreting six rhetorlects that function as organizing, cultural frames that blend places and spaces in special networks of reasoning and argumentation: wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, precreation, miracle, and priestly (Robbins forthcoming b). Figure 2 below presents an initial display of important places and spaces in the six primary early Christian rhetorlects.

Early Christian wisdom rhetorlect blends human experiences of the household, one's interpersonal body, and the geophysical world (firstspace) with the cultural space of God's cosmos (secondspace). In the lived space of blending (thirdspace), God functions as heavenly Father over God's children in the world, whose bodies are to produce goodness and righteousness through the medium of God's wisdom, which is understood as God's light in the world. In this context, wisdom rhetorlect emphasizes "fruitfulness" (productivity and reproductivity). The goal of wisdom rhetorlect is to create people who produce good action, thought, will, and speech with the aid of God's wisdom.

Early Christian prophetic rhetorlect blends the speech and action of a prophet's body in an experiential space of God's kingdom on earth (firstspace) with conceptual space of God's cosmos (secondspace). The reasoning in the rhetorlect presupposes that the prophet has received a divine message about God's will. The prophet speaks and acts in contexts that envision righteous judgments and actions by kings, who should be God's leaders who establish justice on the earth. As a result of the nature of God's message, the prophet regularly experiences significant resistance, and often explicit rejection and persecution. In the space of blending (thirdspace), God functions as heavenly King over his righteous kingdom on earth. The nature of prophetic rhetorlect is to confront religious and political leaders who act on the basis of human greed, pride, and power rather than God's justice, righteousness, and mercy for all people in God's kingdom on the earth. The goal of prophetic rhetorlect is to create a governed realm on earth where God's righteousness is enacted among all of God's people in the realm with the aid of God's specially transmitted word in the form of prophetic action and speech.

Early Christian apocalyptic rhetorlect blends human experiences of the emperor and his imperial army (firstspace) with God's heavenly temple city (secondspace), which can only be occupied by holy, undefiled people. In the space of blending (thirdspace), God functions as a heavenly emperor who gives commands to emissaries to destroy all the evil in the universe and to create a cosmic environment where holy

Figure 2. Blended Spaces and Locations in Early Christian Rhetorlects.

Cultural Frames (Rhetorlects)	Wisdom	Prophetic	Apocalyptic	Precreation	Miracle	Priestly
Social, Cultural, & Physical Realia (1st Space)	Household, Vegetation, Living Beings	Political Kingdom	Political Empire, Imperial Temple, Imperial Army	Political Empire & Emperor's Household	Human Body & Unexpected Phenomena & Transformations in the natural world	Altar, Temple & Temple City
Visualization, Conceptualization, & Imagination of God's World (2nd Space)	God as Father-Creator (Progenitor), Wisdom (light) as Mediator, People as God's children, Jesus as God's Son	God as King, God on king's throne in heavenly court, Selected humans as prophets and kings, Selected people as God's kingdom, Jesus as Prophet-Messiah selected and sent by God	God as Almighty (<i>Pantokrator</i>), Jesus as Son of Man, King of Kings and Lord of Lords	God as Eternal Emperor-Father, Jesus as God's Eternal Son	God as Transforming Power, Selected humans as agents of God's transforming power, People as healed and transformed by God, Jesus as Healer & Miracle-Worker	God as Holy and Pure, God on priestly throne in heavenly temple, Selected humans as priests, People as God's holy & pure priestly community (assembly, city, kingdom), Jesus as Priest-Messiah

Figure 2 (cont.)

Spaces of Mental Conception (Generic Spaces)	Cause-effect, change, time, identity, intentionality, representation, part-whole Formal argumentative topics: opposites, grammatical forms of the same word, correlatives, more and less, time, turning back upon the opponent, definition, varied meanings, division, induction, previous judgment, parts, consequence, contrast, openly and secretly, analogy, same result, before and after, purpose as cause, for and against, implausible probabilities, contradictions, cause of false impression, cause and effect, better, doing contrary to what has been done, mistakes, meaning of a name. ³					
	Human body as Producer of Goodness & Righteousness	Human body as Distributor and Receiver of justice (food, bodily needs, honor)	Human body as Receiver of resurrection & eternal life in a "new" realm of well-being	Human body as Receiver of eternal life through friendship (belief & loyalty) with God's eternal Son	Human body as Healed and amazingly Transformed	Human body as Giver of sacrificial offerings and Receiver of beneficial exchange of holiness and purity between God and humans
Ongoing Bodily Effects and Enactments: Blending in Religious Life (3rd Space = Space of Blending)						

³ Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.23.1–29 (1397a–1400b); Kennedy 1991: 190–204.

bodies experience perfect well-being in the presence of God. Apocalyptic rhetorlect, then, features destruction of evil and construction of a cosmic environment of perfect well-being. The goal of this blending is to call people into action and thought guided by perfect holiness. The presupposition of the rhetorlect is that only perfect holiness and righteousness can bring a person into the presence of God, who destroys all evil and gathers all holiness together in God's presence. Apocalyptic redemption, therefore, means the presence of all of God's holy beings in a realm where God's holiness and righteousness are completely and eternally present.

Early Christian precreation rhetorlect blends human experiences of a deified emperor (like the Roman emperor) and his household (first-space) with a philosophically conceptualized cosmos (secondspace), with the presupposition that God has the status in non-time and non-space of a loving heavenly emperor with a household populated by loving people. The result of this philosophically utopian blending is the presence of the loving Emperor Father God in God's heavenly household before all time and continually throughout God's "non-time." God's Son existed with God during "non-time" before time began with the creation of the world. This "eternal" Son does what His Father asks him to do, and heirs and friends of the eternal emperor and his eternal son receive eternal benefits from their relation to this eternal household. In the space of blending (thirdspace), God functions as heavenly Emperor Father who possesses eternal blessings He will give to people as a result of his love for the world and the people in it. People may enter into this love by believing, honoring, and worshipping not only God but also his eternal Son and members and friends whom God sends out with a message of eternal blessings. Precreation rhetorlect, then, features love that is the source of all things in the world and the means by which people may enter into God's eternal love. In this rhetorlect, God's light is love that provides the possibility for entering into eternal love, rather than being limited to light that is the basis for the production and reproduction of goodness and righteousness. The goal of the blending in precreation rhetorlect is to guide people towards community that is formed through God's love, which reflects the eternal intimacy present in God's precreation household.

Early Christian miracle rhetorlect has a primary focus on human bodies afflicted with paralysis, malfunction, or disease. In this context, a malfunctioning body becomes a site of "social geography." Miracle rhetorlect features a bodily agent of God's power who renews and

restores life, producing forms of “new creation” that oppose powers of affliction, disruption, and death. The “location” of importance for early Christian miracle rhetorlect, therefore, is a “space of relation” between an afflicted body and a bodily agent of God’s power (first-space). In this rhetorlect, there is no focus on any particular social, cultural, political, or religious “places” on earth. A bodily agent of God’s power, wherever it may be, is a “location” where God can function as a miraculous renewer of life (secondspace). A major goal of miracle rhetorlect is to effect extraordinary renewal within people that moves them toward speech and action that produces communities that care for the well-being of one another (thirdspace).

Early Christian priestly rhetorlect blends human experiences in a temple or other place of worship (firstspace) with a concept of temple city and God’s cosmos (secondspace). Reasoning in priestly rhetorlect presupposes that ritual actions benefit God in a manner that activates divine benefits for humans on earth. In the space of blending (thirdspace), people make sacrifices by giving up things that give them well being in the form of giving them to God. Food, possessions, and money may be offered up to God, but also honor through thanksgiving, prayer, hymns, and worship. Some of these things may be given to God by giving them to other people on earth, or by allowing other people to take things like honor or fame away without protest. The greatest sacrifice people can offer to God, of course, is their entire life. Usually, in contrast, a person gives up only certain highly valued things in life. Early Christian priestly rhetorlect features thanksgiving, praise, prayer, and blessing in contexts regularly perceived to be sacrificial in intent and practice. By the end of the 1st century C.E. much, though not all, Christian priestly rhetorlect was somehow related to Jesus’ death on the cross. Priestly rhetorlect features beneficial exchange between God and humans in a context of human sacrificial action. The goal of the conceptual blending is to create people who are willing to give up things they highly value in exchange for special divine benefits that come to them, because these sacrifices are perceived to benefit God as well as humans. In other words, sacrificial actions by humans create an environment in which God acts redemptively among humans in the world.

The inclusion of conceptual blending theory and critical spatiality theory in socio-rhetorical interpretation allows an interpreter to construct a topology of spaces in early Christian rhetorlects and to interpret the rhetorical power of the blending of spaces in these rhetorlects.

Since each of the rhetorlects presents social, cultural, religious, and ideological language, story-telling, and argumentation that evoke specific pictures, emotions, cognitions and reasonings, each rhetorlect made vital contributions in distinctive ways to a new culture of discourse that was emerging during the first century. Since many of the social places present in early Christian discourse (like household, village, places of sacred ritual, city, etc.) continue to exist to the present day in some reconfigured form, early Christian discourse continually functions anew in places believers perceive to be similar in social, cultural and religious function. Some believers locate their thinking primarily in one rhetorlect at a time, blending aspects of other rhetorlects into this one rhetorlect for very specific purposes. Other believers locate their thinking in a particular blend of multiple rhetorlects, inviting selective aspects of other rhetorlects in implicit, subtle and nuanced ways. The variations produce a dynamic conceptual, cognitive, and verbal system of Christian discourse that is highly adaptive to multiple contexts and cultures. Figure 3 below exhibits the dominant social, cultural and ideological rhetoric internal to each rhetorlect.

Dynamic blending of the six early Christian rhetorlects created a richly variegated culture of early Christian discourse by the end of the first century. Believers blended each rhetorlect dynamically with the other rhetorlects either by blending multiple rhetorlects into one dominant rhetorlect or by blending particular rhetorlects together in a particularly forceful manner. The dynamics of these blendings

Figure 3. Rhetoric internal to each Rhetorlect.

Wisdom	Prophetic	Apocalyptic	Precreation	Miracle	Priestly
Speech of God, Christ, and believers produces fruitfulness	God calls people, including Christ, to call and exhort people to be a righteous kingdom	Christ’s initial coming produced a new beginning and Christ’s return will produce a new world	God’s and Christ’s primordial existence produces eternal life in believers	God’s power working in and/or through Christ and believers produces bodily transformation	Sacrifice by Christ and believers produces glorification of God and holy benefit for believers

throughout the verbal culture of early Christianity produced a continually increasing combination of cognitions, reasonings, picturings, and argumentations. This interactive process continued in Christian discourse throughout the centuries, and it continues in our present day. The following Figure shows the spaces where double-domain blending could occur. There is a potential for thirty double-domain blends in the following table. The blending in early Christian discourse is so dynamic, however, that multiple blends of various kinds appear. For this reason, there will be no attempt in this essay to fill the following table simply with double-domain blends, like wisdom and prophetic, wisdom and apocalyptic, wisdom and precreation, and so forth.

3. *Wisdom Blends with Prophetic, Priestly, and Apocalyptic Rhetorlect in 2 Peter 1:5–8*

Instead of attempting to fill the table in Figure 4 with dual-domain blends, like prophetic wisdom or apocalyptic wisdom, the discussion below exhibits two samples of blending in early Christian discourse.

Figure 4. Potential Double-Domain Blends in Early Christianity Discourse.

	Wisdom	Prophetic	Apocalyptic	Precreation	Miracle	Priestly
Blended Wisdom Rhetorlect	X					
Blended Prophetic Rhetorlect		X				
Blended Apocalyptic Rhetorlect			X			
Blended Pcreation Rhetorlect				X		
Blended Miracle Rhetorlect					X	
Blended Priestly Rhetorlect						X

After this discussion, a final section of the essay will analyze and discuss the nature of some of the blending in early Christian miracle rhetorlect.

First is a display and brief discussion of the blending of wisdom rhetorlect with priestly, prophetic, and apocalyptic rhetorlect in 2 Peter 1:5–11. Christian wisdom rhetorlect is present in 2 Pet 1:5 as it features people's production of the virtues of excellence, self-control, piety, and love.

Figure 5. Wisdom Rhetorlect in 2 Peter 1:5–8.

⁵For this very reason, be earnest to supplement your faith (*pistis*) with excellence (*aretē*), excellence with knowledge (*gnōsis*), ⁶knowledge with self-control (*enkrateia*), self-control with steadfastness (*hypomone*), steadfastness with piety (*eusebeia*), ⁷piety with kinship affection (*philadelphia*), kinship affection with love (*agapē*). ⁸For when you possess these and increase in them, they will keep you from being ineffective (*argos*) and unfruitful (*akarpōs*) in the knowledge (*epignōsis*)⁴ of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The list in 2 Pet 1:5 moves in a progression from faith to love. Some of the virtues are widespread in the Greco-Roman world, like excellence, self-control, piety, and kinship affection (Neyrey 1993: 154). The list is framed with the Christian virtues of faith at the beginning and love at the end. This framing gives the list its dialectical, religious quality in the Mediterranean world. In contrast to this list, Seneca, *Ep.* 85:2 begins with prudence (*prudens*) and ends with being happy (*beatus*), while Cicero, *Leg.* 1.7.22 begins with foresight (*providum*) and ends with “full of reason and prudence” (*plenum rationis et consilii*). It is characteristic of early Christian wisdom rhetorlect to present a sequence that either begins with faith and ends with love (Rom 5:1–5; 1 Cor 13:13) or begins with love and ends with faith (Eph 4:2–5). Instead of including hope (*elpis*), which often is in early Christian lists that feature faith and love,⁵ 2 Pet 1:5–8 includes steadfastness, like 2 Thess 1:4. Early Christian wisdom rhetorlect in 2 Pet 1:5–8, then, manifests itself in a triadic framework of faith, steadfastness, and love, into which it inserts knowledge,

⁴ Neyrey (1993: 150) translates this “for the acknowledgment.”

⁵ Rom 5:1–5; 1 Cor 13:13; Eph 4:2–5; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8; Rom 12:6–12; Eph 1:15–18; Col 1:4–5.

excellence, self-control, piety, and kinship affection. This list presents a new framework for well-known and widespread Mediterranean virtues, blending them into a “Christian” rhetorlect that, on the one hand, sounds familiar and, on the other hand, emphasizes the key Christian topoi of faith and love at the beginning and the end.

2 Pet 1:9–10 introduce prophetic and priestly rhetorlect into the wisdom rhetorlect of 1:5–8.

Figure 6. Triple-Blended Wisdom Rhetorlect in 2 Peter 1:9–10.

Wisdom/Prophetic/Priestly	⁹ For anyone who lacks these things is short-sighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call (<i>klēsis</i>) and election (<i>eklogē</i>), for if you do this, you will never stumble.
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2 Pet 1:9–10 continue in the mode of wisdom rhetorlect, with 1:9 instructing its hearer/reader with an additional rationale (“for”) and 1:10 following with a conclusion (“therefore”). Vs. 9, however, features language characteristic of prophetic discourse when it speaks of blindness⁶ that causes shortsightedness. This prophetic discourse blends with priestly discourse when it refers to the cleansing of past sins, “which probably refers to a ritual such as baptism or some other *mikwoth* or washing rite” (Neyrey 1993: 154). 2 Pet 1:10 continues with prophetic rhetorlect when it exhorts the hearers to confirm their call and election.⁷ After the exhortation, vs. 10 presents a rationale that uses language of stumbling like Philo uses to describe the result of deception (*Leg. All.* 3.66) (Neyrey 1993: 162). Vs. 10, then, continues a blend of prophetic and wisdom rhetorlect that could bring the thought sequence to an end.

Instead of ending with a blend of wisdom, prophetic, and priestly rhetorlect, 2 Pet 1:11 presents a rationale containing argumentation of early Christian apocalyptic rhetorlect.

Figure 7. Blended Wisdom Rhetorlect in 2 Peter 1:11.

Wisdom/Apocalyptic	¹¹ For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.
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If 2 Pet 1:11 continued in a prophetic mode, it would refer to the believer’s inheritance in the kingdom of God. Instead, it promises a specifically Christian apocalyptic outcome: entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those who live according to the wisdom listed in 1:5–8, will not simply be happy, full of reason and prudence, or guided by love, but they will become participants in the glorious, eternal kingdom of God’s heavenly Messiah Jesus. The concept of Christ’s eternal kingdom is new to apocalyptic in the Mediterranean world, featuring a special emphasis of Christian apocalyptic rhetorlect. The rhetorical argumentation in 2 Pet 1:5–11 reaches its climactic point not in the goals of wisdom, priestly, or prophetic rhetorlect either separately or blended together. Rather, the argumentation creates a sequence that blends early Christian wisdom, priestly, and prophetic rhetorlect into early Christian apocalyptic rhetorlect. The end result is multiple-scope blending (Fauconnier and Turner: 279–98) that reconfigures widespread Greco-Roman wisdom discourse into a highly complex conceptual system of Christian reasoning, argumentation, and exhortation. The goal of these verses is to produce human bodies filled with “knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The aim of exhortation and argumentation is to set the hearer’s sights on virtues that move beyond the goals of the moral philosophers in the Mediterranean world toward goals articulated by early Christian wisdom, prophetic, priestly, and apocalyptic discourse. No one discourse, however, is sufficient to articulate the goals the early Christians envision. Blending these discourses together in their own particular “dialectical” manner, early Christians presented a system of reasoning and believing that moved hearers beyond the conceptual systems of the moral philosophers into a religious system of belief focused on the eternal kingdom of God’s heavenly Messiah Jesus.

⁶ Isa 42:7, 16, 18, 19; 43:8; 59:10; cf. 29:18; 35:5; 61:1 (LXX).

⁷ See *kaleō* and *eklekto* in LXX Isaiah and Jeremiah.

4. *Precreation Blends with Apocalyptic and Priestly Rhetorolect in Col 1:15–20*

Next we come to blended precreation rhetorolect in early Christian discourse. Christian precreation rhetorolect features God's eternal divinity working through Christ's primordial nature. Col 1:15–20 blends precreation rhetorolect with apocalyptic and priestly rhetorolect as the discourse unfolds. Col 1:15–17 presents a view of "the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3, cf. 1:1–2, 4), God's beloved Son (1:13), before the creation of the world. In this primordial environment, God is invisible. If an interpreter brackets the statement about "thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers" in 1:16, these two verses evoke a precreation frame that is so powerful that no other frame tends to come into view.

Figure 8. Precreation Rhetorolect in Col 1:15–17.

¹⁵He is the image (*eikōn*) of the invisible (*aratos*) God, the firstborn (*prōtotokos*) of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things in the heavens and on earth were created, things visible (*orata*) and invisible (*arata*) [...], all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before (*pro*) all things, and in him all things hold together.

Col 1:15 makes two assertions about God's Son in relation to the invisible God. First, there is a statement that concerns seeing. God's Son is not invisible like God, but is "the image" of the invisible God. Seeing is a central focus of wisdom discourse. But the seeing in 1:15 is not focused on the created world: the sun, moon, and stars in their orbits; the animals in their ordered activities; and the days, weeks, months, and seasons that order time in the realm of human experience. Rather, the seeing is a seeing in the mind: an act of "imagining" Christ as an "image" of something invisible. The verses do not describe what primordial Christ, the image of "invisible" primordial being, actually looks like. "The author is not interested in any mythological elaboration of what is 'before' time. God is not subject to human categories of time" (Kuschel 1992: 334). The presence of Christ in non-time with invisible God is a way of talking about the priority of Christ over all things except invisible, eternal God.

Second, there is in 1:15 a statement that appears to be temporal, an assertion about Christ in relation to time. Christ is the firstborn of all creation. The word "firstborn" (*prōtotokos*) would seem to imply that

Christ was a created being, the first being "born" like other created beings. This means that "firstborn" here refers to "a process within God, a 'before' in God himself, before the world was created" (Kuschel 1992: 334). Around 323 C.E., Arius argued, using this and other scripture to support his view that:

The one without beginning established the Son as the beginning of all creatures... He [the Son] possesses nothing proper (*idios*) to God, in the real sense of propriety, for he is not equal to God, nor yet is he of the same substance (*homousios*)... there exists a Trinity in unequal glories, for there subsistencies (*hypostases*) are not mixed with each other... The Father is other than the Son in substance (*kat' ousian*) because he is without beginning (Arius, *Thalia* in Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* 15; quoted in Ayres 2004: 55).

In response to this assertion, "the church fathers interpreted the 'born' (*tokos*) in the sense of 'begotten' (as a begetting within God) and the 'first' (*proto*) in the sense of a temporal 'before' (*pro*)" (Ayres 2004: 55). This meant that the Son was not actually "created" by God but came forth within God prior to the creation of the world (Dunn 1989: 189). Col 1:16 introduces an emphasis that all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, were created in, through, and for the "firstborn image" of the invisible God. Then Col 1:17 asserts that this image of God is before all things and all things hold together in him. This precreation imagery focuses on the Son as the mediator of all things in such a manner that he is not only superior to all things but also the inner linking network that holds all things together. Such a focus within precreation imagery appears to be a blend of early Christian precreation and wisdom rhetorolect. This blend integrates the concept of a primordial "image Son" with the concept of an ordered and interconnected world that exhibits the wisdom through which God created the world (cf. Sir 43:26; Lohse 1971: 52).

In early Christian wisdom rhetorolect, God's wisdom is available to humans both through careful observation of how God's created world works and through teaching by God's Son when he was on earth. Early Christian wisdom rhetorolect focuses on the "visible" powers in heavens: sun, moon, and stars; the animals in their ordered activities; and the days, weeks, months, and seasons that order time in the realm of human experience. The wisdom evoked in Col 1:15–17 is beyond this "ordinary" wisdom that is based on things that are visible in God's created world. The wisdom in Col 1:15–17 is "precreation wisdom,"

wisdom that comes only through “seeing with the mind’s eye” into the primordial realm of God’s invisible, divine being that lies outside the created order. Only “precreation” discourse has the capacity to evoke such a conceptual frame within the mind and to fill this frame with “precreation” information.

Col 1:18 introduces a new frame with a counter-image of “first-born from the dead,” and this frame causes the reference to “thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers” and “for him” in 1:16 to move into the foreground.

Figure 9. Apocalyptic Rhetorolect in Col 1:16, 18.

¹⁶...whether thrones or dominions (*kyriotētos*) or principalities (*archai*) or powers (*exousiai*)—all things have been created...for him...¹⁸[...] he is the beginning, the firstborn (*prōtotokos*) from the dead, so that he might come to have (*hina genētai*) first place (*prōteuōn*) in everything.

Col 1:18 introduces the concept of “firstborn from the dead.” This phrase was nurtured into language in early Christian apocalyptic rhetorolect.⁸ As Lohse (1971: 56) asserts:

he is the “beginning” as the one who is the “first-born from the dead” (*prōtotokos ek tōn nekron*) through whom the eschatological event has been initiated. As the first one who has arisen from those who have fallen asleep, he is the first fruit (*aparchē*) who guarantees the future resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:20, 23). Thus he is the “Originator of Life” (*archēgos tēs zōēs*; Acts 3:15), the “first to rise from the dead” (*prōtos ex anastaseōs nekron*; Acts 26:33) and the “firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings on earth” (*ho prōtotokos tōn nekron kai archōn tōn basileōn tēs gēs*; Rev 1:5).

In first century Christian discourse, the apocalyptic story-line about the end of the world included God’s resurrection of Christ from the dead into heaven, Christ’s establishment of his (Christ’s) kingdom by putting all his enemies under his feet, including death (1 Cor 15:25–26), and then Christ’s handing of his kingdom over to God (1 Cor 15:24, 27–28). This imagery of the heavenly Christ’s authority, power, and rule from the heavens (1 Cor 15:24) naturally evokes an apocalyptic, rather than a precreation, understanding of the “thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers” and “for him” in Col 1:16. As Eduard Lohse

⁸ See 1 Pet 1:3–5 for the way Christ as firstborn of the dead becomes a means for new birth in believers; Elliott 2000: 331–38.

indicates, this visual language is at home in apocalyptic discourse. In 2 En 20:1, Enoch reports “and I saw there (i.e., in the seventh heaven) a very great light and fiery troops of great archangels, incorporeal forces, and dominions and orders and governments, cherubim and seraphim, thrones and many-eyed ones, nine (ten) regiments...”⁹ Early Christian apocalyptic rhetorolect brings invisible powers in the heavens into human sight through “seers” who are shown “the things in the heavens” that bring about the end time. Early Christian apocalyptic focus on the end of time emphasized the “heavenly ruling power” both of God and Christ. Some of the most natural cultural imagery for power in Mediterranean antiquity was “thrones” and “dominions” (lordly [*kyriotētes*] realms). Early Christianity added “principalities” (*archai*) from language for rulers (*archontes*), and it added authorities (*exousiai*). In the context of an emphasis on the end time, the “for him” (*eis auton*) in Col 1:16 would now focus on Christ’s ownership of all creation through his rule over it before he hands it to God at the end of time.

In Col 1:15–18, then, there are two images of Christ, and they are what W. J. T. Mitchell (1994) calls “dialectical images” that introduce “multistability.” The counterplay of precreation and apocalyptic in Col 1:15–18 is like Ludwig Wittgenstein’s “Duck-Rabbit” and Norma Scheidemann’s “My Wife and My Mother-In-Law” (Mitchell 1994: 46–47). At first some people may see the duck and the wife while others immediately see the rabbit and the mother-in-law.¹⁰ When the others mention the rabbit and the mother-in-law the first group may be able to see them also, and vice versa. Since the word *eschatos* (last), which would clearly evoke conceptuality of the end time, is not present anywhere in Colossians, many people, like the early Arians readily see a precreation frame in the context of the language that uses *pro* (1:17), *proteuō* (1:18), and *prōtotokos* (1:15, 18) in Colossians (Dunn 1989:

⁹ Lohse 1971: 51n.133. Cf. *T. Levi* 3:8: in heaven “there are thrones (*thronoi*) and powers (*exousiai*) in which they always offer praise to God”; 2 En 61:10: “...all the host of the heavens, and all the holy ones above, and the host of God, the Cherubim, Seraphim and Ophannin, and all the angels of *power*, and all the angels of *principalities*, and the Elect One, and the other *powers* on the earth (and) over water...”

¹⁰ According to Mitchell (1994: 51), a focus on one frame in a context of multistability is a result of “the mind’s eye” or one’s “mental eye.” “The Duck-Rabbit, and multistable images in general, reveal the presence of the ‘mind’s eye’ roving around this storeroom, interpreting the pictures, seeing different aspects in them. The bodily eye simply transmits information: ‘the image on the retina does not change’ (p. 282), and the identity of the observer, his ‘difference’ from viewers, is located in the mental eye: ‘physical eyes see alike, but...mental eyes reflect their own individualities’ (p. 277).”

189–90). In contrast, the presence of reference to “thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers” along with “firstborn from the dead” could immediately evoke an apocalyptic frame of meaning for some people. The natural conclusion is that “the expression ‘firstborn’ (*prōtotokos*) could be understood in a great variety of ways in the first century: as a statement about the pre-existent or about the exalted Christ, i.e. as a predicate of origin or exaltation. Both interpretations would have stood side by side without any attempt to reconcile them” (Kuschel 1992: 334).

Within time, however, “dominant culture” (Robbins 1996a: 168–74; 1996b: 86–89) interpretation has come to insist that apocalyptic conceptuality controls the reasoning in Col 1:15–20. In modern times it has become conventional to argue that “firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15) is properly understood as “an exalted predicate” rather than a reference to a process of begetting within God prior to the creation of the world. As Karl-Josef Kuschel puts it: “the statement about Christ as ‘firstborn of all creation’ is meant to be understood in terms of a thoroughgoing eschatology... [E]schatology is the motive force and the interpretation of protology” (Kuschel 1992: 335). He elaborates this position by arguing that there is

no need to develop the thought of the text by making the *prōto* [of *prōtotokos*] into a *pro*; only in this way is there no need to make the second part of the word, the *tokos*, independent, “in that it is meant to imply begetting within God.” By contrast, an interpretation of the “firstborn” as a predicate of exaltation makes it unnecessary to divide the word into its components. (Kuschel 1992: 334–35.)

Thus, modern interpreters regularly remove the multistability within the two images by making eschatology (apocalyptic) the dominant frame. A primary result of this dominant culture interpretation is to make the concept of “firstborn before all creation” metaphorical: “‘(like a) firstborn (over) all creation’ rather than ‘firstborn before all creation’” (Kuschel 1992: 335). This interpretation essentially changes the wording of the text, but a widespread group of interpreters accept the interpretation, because their goal is to establish “stability” in New Testament language. “Metastability” is unacceptable, in their view, in the context of “scientific” (*wissenschaftliche*) interpretation of New Testament discourse.

There may, in fact, be a third frame of meaning at work in Col 1:15–20. Some of the wording in Col 1:18–20 appears to be early Chris-

tian priestly rhetorlect, a conceptual frame that introduces Christ as a mediator who enacts beneficial exchange between God and humans.

Figure 10. Priestly Rhetorlect in Col 1:18–20.

¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; [...]. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Col 1:18–20 blend theology and Christology with ecclesiology. The ecclesiology in this passage does not emerge out of early Christian wisdom rhetorlect that uses imagery about the body that a young child can understand (cf. 1 Cor 12:1–31). Rather, it blends “philosophical” wisdom language about the cosmos with hierarchical priestly language. The priestly language in Col 1:18–20 is sacrificial, asserting that “peace” occurs “through the blood” of the Son’s cross. As Kuschel states, “For the author... Christ’s blood is not spilt by dispute and violence which cries out for vengeance. For him, Christ’s blood (in analogy to the Old Testament sacrifices) is blood which ‘makes peace’” (Kuschel 1992: 336). Interpreters often miss how this priestly frame may become an additional (perhaps competitive) conceptual “map” for the passage. Once the priestly frame comes into view, the form of the entire passage as a “hymn to Christ” gains in importance. As Lohse asserts: the “interpretive phrase: through the blood of his cross (*dia tou haimatos tou staurou autou*)... gives a new direction to the train of thought. A ‘theology of glory,’ which might view the consummation as already achieved, is corrected by the ‘theology of the cross’ (cf. 2:14f.). Peace has not been established in an other-worldly drama but rather in the death of Jesus Christ” (Lohse 1971: 60). While interpreters regularly recognize early Christian priestly rhetorlect in the language about the blood of the cross, they often do not correlate this conceptuality with the hierarchical nature of the church as it is described in Col 1:18.

The presence of the priestly frame introduces a conceptual hierarchy, with God at the top, humans at the bottom, and the priest and the material substance of the cosmos in a position of mediation between God and humans. The priest functions as the mediator who oversees beneficial exchange between God and humans by receiving material substances of the cosmos from humans and manipulating these substances appropriately in relation to the divine. This leads to a special relation of the priest to the material substances of the cosmos. During

the Hellenistic period, two things of great importance set the stage for early Christian priestly rhetorlect about Christ's death on the cross in relation to the cosmos. First, various philosophical and religious writings, from Plato to Iranian Pahlavi literature, wrote about the cosmos as a living body in which the sky, the heaven, or Zeus is the head and the lower parts of the body are the earth (Lohse 1971: 53–55). Second, the precious material substances of the vestment of the high priest are “cosmologized.”¹¹ In other words, the high priest becomes the “cosmological mediator” between humans and God in language that has an uncanny relation to Col 1:15–20. In the words of Philo of Alexandria:

... the high priest should have in evidence upon him an image (*eikona*) of the all (*tou pantos*), that so by constantly contemplating it he should render his own life worthy of the sum of all things, secondly that in performing his holy office he should have the whole universe (*pas ho kosmos*) as his fellow-ministrant (*syllaitourgēi*). And very right and fit it is that he who is consecrated to the Father of the world (*to ton hierōmenon tōi tou kosmou patri*) should take with him also that Father's son (*ton huion*), the all (*to pan*), for the service of the Creator and Begetter (*gegenēkotos*). (Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.96; trans. Colson and Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library)

To this Philo adds that “the high priest of the Jews makes prayers and gives thanks not only on behalf of the whole human race but also for the parts of nature, earth, water, air, fire” (1.97). Then in *Spec. Leg.* 2.192 “Philo describes Tishri as the ‘feast of trumpets’ and says that it signifies the ending of wars and thanksgiving to ‘God, the peace-maker and peacekeeper, Who destroys factions both in cities and in the various parts of the universe’” (Hay 2000: 64). In Hellenistic Judaism, then, the Mediterranean focus on the cosmos as a living body blends in a special way with the priest in the context of sacrificial worship. While the focus in Col 1:20 on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son who made “peace through the blood of his cross” is Greek language spoken as a noticeable “rhetorical dialect” during the first century, the conceptual blending of the priest, and especially the high priest, with the cosmos as a living body with a head and lower body parts is significantly present in Mediterranean culture. Thus, it is likely that triple-domain blending is occurring when the Son as the “head” of the body, the church, rec-

onciles all things to himself and makes peace through his blood on the cross in this context. With this language the Son is not only primordial image and eschatological ruler but also cosmological priest who enacts beneficial exchange between God and all created things, including the heavens, the earth, and humans.

Thus, the overall discourse of Col 1:15–20 introduces three cultural frames: precreation, apocalyptic, and priestly. While the presence of the multistability of precreation and apocalyptic is well-known and recognized in New Testament scholarship, the presence of the priestly frame is significantly contested. Ernst Käsemann focuses on the “specifically Christian” nature of the statements “of the church” (*tēs ekklēσίας*, v. 18a) and “through the blood of his cross” (*dia tou haimatos tou staurou autou*, v. 20) to differentiate the message of the hymn from “the supra-historical, metaphysical drama of the Gnostic redeemer” (Hay 2000: 45). In a context of interpreting Käsemann's approach, Lohse asserts that “the term ‘to reconcile’ (*apokatallaxai*, v. 20) does not allude, even remotely, to a connection with Jewish conceptions of sacrifices and of the great Day of Atonement...” (Hay 2000: 46). When interpreters are concerned to distinguish between “truly Christian” and gnostic or Arian points of view in the discourse, they may not only push the precreation frame into the background with an emphasis on the apocalyptic frame of meaning for the discourse, but they may virtually ignore or directly dismiss the priestly frame in the hymn.

Thus, in the context of precreation imagery in Col 1:16–17, graphic visual language about thrones (*thronoi*), dominions (*kyriotētes*), principalities (*archai*), and powers (*exousiai*) introduces graphic visual language that, in modern times, regularly brings apocalyptic discourse into a position of dominance over the reasoning in the discourse.¹² While the language of “firstborn” is a common term in each domain that establishes a “cross-domain correlation” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 245) between precreation imagery and apocalyptic imagery, still interpreters may insist that the apocalyptic imagery is dominant. In the context of the

¹¹ See the beginnings of this tradition in the vestments of the Aaronic priests in Exod 28.

¹² Cf. 1 Cor 8:5: “Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords...” It is noticeable that characteristic apocalyptic language, namely *apokalyptō* (to reveal) and *apokalypsis* (revelation) never occur in Colossians. Rather, *phaneroō* (to manifest: 1:26; 3:4[2]; 4:4) and mystery (*mysterion*: 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3), language that is highly characteristic of precreation rhetorlect occurs in Colossians.

multistability of the precreation-apocalyptic blend, the cosmological-priestly blend in 1:18–20 introduces a significantly new direction to the train of thought. It is possible, however, that interpreters may remain so focused on one dominant constellation of imagery in the passage that they will ignore, or explicitly dismiss, the priestly frame in 1:18–20. One of the reasons interpreters are able to do this is the topos of power, which functions as a bridging topos among all three domains: Christ's power to create all things, rule over all powers in the heavens and on earth, and make peace through his blood on the cross. Since power is so central to apocalyptic discourse, it can be natural to allow the apocalyptic frame to rule over the other frames, much like God's and Christ's rule puts all things in submission to it.

Multiple blendings of early Christian rhetoracts created a vibrant, interactive system of Christian discourse by the end of the first century C.E. This system of discourse was able to address issues and topics concerning individual human bodies, households, villages, synagogues, cities, temples, kingdoms, empires, the created world, and even God's primordial realm. The ability of this discourse to address microcosmic details about individual bodies on earth as well as macrocosmic details about God's primordial realm prepared Christianity not only to function in a context where it became the official religion of the Roman Empire but also to function potentially in multiple contexts in any culture anywhere in the world. This discourse was able to do this, because it was interactive with topoi that address issues, concerns, emotions, insights, knowledge, and mysteries that cover a spectrum reaching from mundane daily activities to the widest reaches of God's unknown realm of being. To be sure, there are many topics and issues first century Christian discourse did not address. Nevertheless, the spectrum was so wide-reaching that it successfully launched a new culture of discourse in the Mediterranean world that expanded and became continually more nuanced and complex throughout twenty centuries in the history of the world.

5. *Frames and Characters in Early Christian Miracle Discourse*

Once an interpreter sees that rhetoracts blend dynamically in early Christian discourse, the question emerges how one may use Fauconnier and Turner's synthetic discussion of Conceptual Integration Theory to begin to display some of the inner processes of blending in this

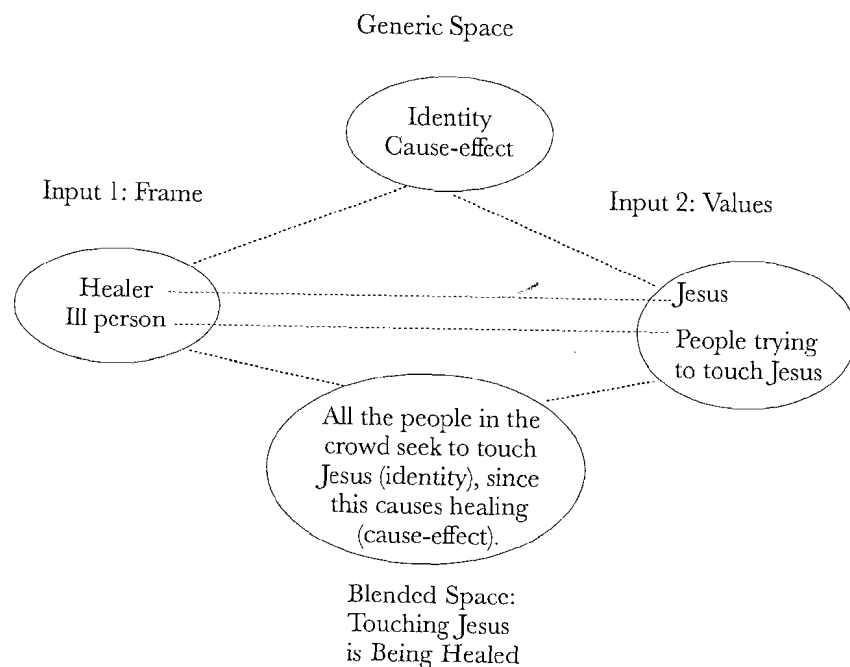
discourse. Here we can do no more than raise certain issues and point toward a few phenomena to begin a discussion.

One of the issues that immediately surfaces is Fauconnier and Turner's discussion of the relation of frames to character in blending processes within each rhetoract and in processes whereby rhetoracts blend with one another. On the one hand, earlier statements in this essay have identified rhetoracts as cultural frames. Fauconnier and Turner describe a frame in the context of explaining a simplex network. According to them, "An especially simple kind of integration network is one in which human cultural and biological history has provided an effective frame that applies to certain kinds of elements as values, and that frame is in one input space and some of those kinds of elements are in the other input space" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 120). For an example, they use the "readily available frame of human kinship," which is "*the family*, which includes roles for father, mother, child, and so on" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 120). For our example, we would like to use the readily available frame of miracle rhetoract, which includes a person who is ill, a healer, and often someone who enables the ill person to receive a miraculous healing from the healer. In contrast to the family frame, which "prototypically applies to human beings" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 120), the miracle frame regularly juxtaposes human beings and a personage (perhaps somehow "partially divine") who has access to special powers to perform miraculous deeds, i.e. deeds of power (*dynamis*). If there is an integration network with one mental space containing only this frame, and another space containing a special personage, Jesus, and people trying to touch him for healing, then a simplex network is present. Luke 6:19 is an example: "And all in the crowd were trying to touch him [Jesus], for power came out from him and healed all of them."

When we conceive of Jesus as healer of people who touch him, we have created a blend in which some of the structure of the miracle frame is integrated with the elements Jesus and people touching him. This, according to Fauconnier and Turner, is a simplex network. There is a cross-space mapping between the input spaces that is a "frame-to-values connection" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 120). In this instance the role healer connects to the value Jesus and the role ill person who is healed connects to the value "people trying to touch him." Our initial attempt to display this is in Figure 11.

According to Fauconnier and Turner: "In a simplex network, the relevant part of the frame in one input is projected with its roles, and

Figure 11. Miracle Rhetorolect: Healing



The elements are projected from the other input as values of those roles within the blend. The blend integrates the frame and the values in the simplest way" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 120). The sentence asserting that "All in the crowd were trying to touch Jesus, because power came out from him and healed them all" prompts the blend that Jesus is the healer of people in the crowd: "X (Jesus) is the Y (healer) of Z (people in the crowd)."

An initial challenge for socio-rhetorical interpreters attempting to display the blending of early Christian rhetorolects with one another will be to identify the nature of the simplex networks internal to each rhetorolect. When Fauconnier and Turner introduce the family frame, they use an example that features father and daughter. There are, of course, many more roles in the family frame. One immediately thinks of mother and son. But how many more roles might there be? Surely mother-in-law (Mark 1:30), father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, grandfather, and grandmother will also be roles in the family frame. Could there also be others, like tutor or servant? In other words, if a frame is "readily available," how does one negotiate roles that may be

readily available in the family frame in the first century Mediterranean world that may not be readily available in the 21st century family in, e.g., American "Western" or African culture.

Moving back to miracle rhetorolect, will an initial challenge be to identify all the roles in first century Mediterranean healings, like those who bring ill people to a healer, those who mediate with a healer so that an ill person is healed without ever coming into contact with Jesus, etc.? Will a second challenge be to identify miracle working of all kinds, in which healing is only one frame, but there are also other frames like stilling storms, feeding small amounts of food to large crowds of people, walking on water, cursing a fig tree, etc.? How, then, does one negotiate "frames" in an analysis of early Christian rhetorolects in particular, and in early Christian discourse more generally?

Another issue in blending is the relation of frames to character. After extended analysis and discussion of frames in simplex, mirror, single-scope, and double-scope networks, Fauconnier and Turner discuss "Identity and Character" in chapter twelve (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 249–67). In this chapter, Fauconnier and Turner assert that identity and character are "an equally important aspect of the way we think," alongside our ability to think with frames (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 251). Character is so transportable across different frames, and frames so transportable across different characters, that "we are able to extract regularities over different behaviors by the same person to build up a generic space for that person— a personal character" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 251–52). Also, "we are able to extract regularities over different behaviors by many people to build up a generic space for a kind of behavior" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 252). These appear to be important issues to identify, analyze, and interpret in the context of "rhetorolect interpretation."

Let us return to Luke 6:19 and include the preceding verse with it:

¹⁸They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

According to Luke 6:18, people have come both to hear Jesus and to be healed of their diseases. There are, then, two frames and two character-types at work in these two verses. The two frames are wisdom and miracle rhetorolect, and the two character-types are teacher (sage) and healer.

Now a series of questions immediately emerges. Is one frame somehow dominant over the other in this sequence? Verse 19 only emphasizes healing. Luke 6:20–49, however, introduce a long “sermon on the plain” by Jesus, in which there is no reference to healing. Or is there reference to healing in Luke 6:20–49? Is the presence of the poor in the kingdom of God a form of healing blended with wisdom (6:20)? Is the filling of the hungry and the laughter of the weeping a form of healing blended with wisdom (6:21)? Are the actions of loving your enemies, doing good to those who hate you, blessing those who curse you, praying for those who abuse you, offering the other cheek, giving your coat as well as your shirt, and giving to every one who begs (6:27–30) all instances of wisdom rhetorlect blended with miracle rhetorlect? In other words, are these examples of “healed minds” producing “healed actions”?

In terms of frames, the issue will concern the blending of the frames of wisdom and miracle rhetorlect. Put in terms of character, does the blending become more complex? It is quite clear at the outset that the character types apply to Jesus, who functions both as teacher and healer. What about those who are healed? Do healed people become agents of a blend of teaching and healing? In other words, if healed people are restored to fully functioning human beings, what kind of beings are they perceived to be? Have they been changed in any way from the kind of person they were before they became ill, or have they simply been restored to that previous person? Or is the “previous person” completely unimportant in relation to the “new picture” of the person? Is the new person a blend not only of the frame but also of character? In other words, do the healed people somehow become teachers and healers? If not, why not? Can frames but not characters blend in those who are healed? One thinks immediately about disciples, where not only the frames but also the characters appear to blend, so that disciples are sent out as apostles both to teach and to heal.

The relation of frame to character, then, appears to be a highly important issue in analysis and interpretation of conceptual blending in early Christian discourse. At one point, Fauconnier and Turner list five character types: saint, diplomat, hooker (prostitute), mediator, and conqueror. Then they say: “Construing *prostitute* as just a general frame, we can investigate character by asking how such a character would perform in that frame.” Then they ask how “Mother Teresa, Margaret Thatcher, Cleopatra, or Bill Clinton would operate within the prostitute frame.” They observe that Mother Teresa’s character (saint)

might reveal itself in acceptance of “the sacrifice with fortitude, by never complaining, by trusting God.” But “the frame cannot impinge upon her character, for ‘To the pure, all things pure.’ Therefore, character will prevent her from ever becoming a prostitute (p. 253). In the case of Mary Magdalene, they suggest, there is a requirement of a change in character from prostitute to saint (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 253). This is a very important discussion for early Christian discourse. The six rhetorlects I have introduced suggest that Jesus somehow fills both the frames and the roles internal to wisdom, apocalyptic, precreation, prophetic, miracle, and priestly rhetorlect. But how does Jesus operate within each frame? Then how do his followers operate within each frame? Let us think a little more about this in respect to the roles of Jesus in early Christian discourse.

One of the key aspects of early Christian discourse is its presentation of Jesus as a character who is transportable over many different frames and activities. The transportability has certain limits, but the nature of the different frames is truly remarkable, since a significant number of the frames have counterfactual relationships to one another. There are frames that present Jesus with seemingly unlimited power, juxtaposed with frames that present Jesus with power so limited that people are able to kill him and bury him. There are frames that limit Jesus to a human personage born on earth, and frames that present Jesus as a cosmic being who existed “before all other things were created.” There are frames that limit Jesus to a human personage who “loves even his enemies,” and frames that present Jesus as destroying people on earth with a two-edged sword that comes out of his mouth. There are frames that present Jesus as “a friend of prostitutes and tax-collectors,” and there are frames that present Jesus as the perfect, holy high priest in the heavens. On the one hand, the rhetorlects blend Jesus with six major “character types”: sage; prophet; end-time seer and judge; eternal being; miracle worker; and priest. On the other hand, the rhetorlects blend Jesus with six major cultural frames: wisdom; prophetic; apocalyptic; precreation; miracle; and priestly. In and of itself, then, early Christian discourse focuses on Jesus in highly complex, creative, and counterintuitive ways. How should interpreters negotiate the relation of frames to character in socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation of the dynamic blending of the rhetorlects in relation to Jesus in early Christian discourse?

The next question, then, concerns followers of Jesus. How do followers of Jesus operate within the six frames of wisdom, prophetic,

apocalyptic, precreation, miracle, and priestly rhetorlect? Here there may be some surprises. It would appear, at first blush, to be counter-intuitive for followers of Jesus to operate in a precreation frame. God obviously existed before the creation of the world. Christians make the amazing assertion that Jesus existed with God prior to the creation of the world. Believers, however, certainly could not exist before the creation of the world, could they? Well, perhaps they did, but can we be sure? Ephesians 2:10 says: "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life." I do not feel competent at this point to analyze and display the complex conceptual blending in this verse. Nor is there space to go into all the details that are involved here. So I will be content with a few observations and questions. The beginning of the verse emphasizes that the believer is God's workmanship, what God has made us (*poiēma*). But then the verse features an unusual concept of being "created in Christ Jesus." Many scholars have observed the unusual nature simply of being "in Christ" (*en christōi*), and some have tried to explain the concept in relation to participation of an initiate in a god who plays a central role in a mystery religion. This verse moves a step beyond this concept by asserting that a believer has been "created in Christ Jesus." What kind of a concept of creation is this? How are believers created in Christ Jesus and when are they created in Christ Jesus?

The presence of the verb "prepared beforehand" (*proētoimasen*) opens the possibility of believers having been created in Christ before the creation of the world. Thus, precreation rhetorlect may be an important frame in the blend. Perhaps, however, the term precreation is too temporally constructed to describe the blend. Perhaps the point is creation in "God's non-time," namely in "eternity," which lies beyond temporal boundaries. In this instance, the "beforehand preparation" is really a way of referring to something that is present eternally in "the mind" of God, which is "beforehand" for all human beings but in no way is structured by time. In other words, the unusual verb to "pre-prepare" is a way to try to speak about something that existed always, outside the boundaries of time, in God's "plans" for creation. Creation, then, started time, but this does not mean that God or Christ are somehow limited to created time. God created believers in Christ beyond the boundaries of time. In this way, believers operate in God and Christ's "precreation" time, which does not exist only before time but always.

But perhaps this is not what the verse says. Another important part of Ephesians 2:10 is the prepositional phrase "for good works" (*epi*

ergois agathois), which points to the goal of wisdom rhetorlect. The verse appears to emphasize that it is "good works" that God prepared beforehand. So, perhaps the emphasis on "beforehand" does not apply to "being created in Christ," which occurs later in time, but to "for good works" which always existed in the "plans" of God for creation. So perhaps precreation rhetorlect only provides a frame that blends with God in this verse, but the frame does not blend either with Christ Jesus, since the creation in Christ occurs after creation, or believers "who walk in the good works" God has prepared beforehand.

I have introduced Ephesians 2:10 and precreation rhetorlect to illustrate that one must be prepared for highly counterintuitive blendings in early Christian discourse. There might be ways, however, we could analyze, display, and interpret how the rhetorlects work in relation to God, to Jesus, and to believers.

Another interesting moment in Fauconnier and Turner's discussion of identity and character arises when they discuss redemption, restoring honor, vengeance, vendetta, and curse. They assert that, from a frame point of view, these cultural categories are "mirror networks": a person succeeds in the later situation (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 259). In the blend, the earlier and later situation "become one, and the character (if not the behavior) of the protagonist comes from the later input, thus providing in the blend and in the generic space a stable and good character from which the earlier input space is merely an unfortunate deviation" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 259). Perhaps the blend of wisdom and healing discussed above in Luke 6 could be approached with this insight. Being healed is a type of redemption, where the earlier event of being ill blends with the later event of being healed. The later event only has meaning with respect to the earlier event, but the later event determines the meaning of both events. Perhaps most, if not all, of the guiding cultural categories in the rhetorlects are mirror blends of this sort with respect to believers. For wisdom rhetorlect, the presence of wisdom that enables a person to produce good fruits of righteousness has meaning only in relation to an early event when a person did not have this wisdom. For apocalyptic rhetorlect, the presence of a holy or unholy life that either gives a person access to heaven or assigns a person to destruction has meaning in relation to an earlier event when a person received holiness or did not receive it. What would this tell us about Christianity if a majority of its cultural categories were "mirror networks"?

6. Conclusion

This essay has proposed that early Christian discourse achieves special dynamics and creativity through extensive processes of embodied conceptual blending. Six major early Christian rhetorolects function as rich cultural frames for early Christian discourse: wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, precreation, miracle, and priestly. Each rhetorolect either blends or competes with other rhetorolects either individually or in combination with one or more of the others. A special challenge of the blending in early Christian discourse concerns the processes of blending in each rhetorolect and processes by which rhetorolects blend and compete with each other. One of the major issues in these processes is the relation of frames to identity/character. How do frames and character work in conceptual blending with respect to God, to Jesus, and to believers? The character Jesus is highly transportable throughout the six rhetorolects, albeit in some instances in highly counterintuitive ways. One of the tasks must be to exhibit how Jesus operates in each of these cultural frames, and perhaps in other frames as well. But another major question is how both God and believers operate in the six major cultural frames. It appears that believers operate in highly similar ways to Jesus in certain frames. Do believers operate in some frames in highly different ways than Jesus? If so, how do they operate in different ways and why do they seem to operate in these different ways? Likewise, do believers operate in some frames in ways highly similar to God? Or do believers usually act in ways highly different from God? How many surprises are there for how believers operate in certain frames? Some ways that seem highly counterintuitive may, in fact, be quite well developed conceptually already during the first century. This essay suggests that we have much work ahead of us. Perhaps, however, this work can show us some things we could not even think about before, or perhaps could not think about in fruitful ways. If this essay helps us to take even some small steps forward in our understanding of the remarkable creativity underlying early Christian discourse, it will have been worth the effort.

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