

SOCIORHETORICAL INTERPRETATION OF MIRACLE DISCOURSE IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

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This paper presupposes a view, which has resulted from sociorhetorical analysis of the New Testament, that six major kinds of cultural discourse blend with each other in first-century Christian discourse: wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, precreation, priestly, and miracle.¹ Sociorhetorical interpreters refer to each different mode of discourse as a rhetorolect, which is a contraction of the phrase *rhetorical dialect*.² The presupposition is that each early Christian rhetorolect emerged in relation to multiple social and cultural spaces, functioned in dynamic ways in multiple public settings, and responded in appealing ways, both then and now, to multiple kinds of evil in the world. Early Christians blended the six rhetorolects in multiple ways.³ The potential for each rhetorolect to function in multiple

1. Vernon K. Robbins, "Socio-rhetorical Interpretation," in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (ed. David E. Aune; West Sussex, U.K.: Blackwell, 2010), 192–219; idem, *The Invention of Christian Discourse* (vol. 1; Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo, 2009); idem, "Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts* (ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker; ESEC 8; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002), 27–65; see idem, "The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse," *Scriptura* 59 (1996): 353–62, <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/dialect.cfm>.

2. See Robbins, "Dialectical Nature," 356: "A rhetorolect is a form of language variety or discourse identifiable on the basis of a distinctive configuration of themes, topics, reasonings, and argumentations." See also Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby, "A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qurʾān and the Bible," in *Bible and Qurʾān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality* (ed. John C. Reeves; SBLSymS 24; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 31–32 (23–42).

3. For conceptual blending, see Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic,

ways equipped early Christians with a wide range of speech and argumentation that focused on Jesus as God's Messiah and on the Holy Spirit as an active agent in the world.

The books in the New Testament exhibit many skills and strategies of speaking and arguing that early Christians achieved during the first century. There may have been additional skills that the present-day interpreter is unable to hear as a result of both the absence of evidence and challenges in the data that have survived. However, interpreting the discourse in the New Testament in relation to discourse prior to and during the first century, and in relation to discourse that emerged during the second through the seventh centuries,⁴ can present a vantage point for analyzing and interpreting assertions and arguments that were valued in Christian discourse alongside assertions and arguments of other people in the Mediterranean world.

Miracle rhetorlect features unusual enactment of the power of God in the created realm of the universe. This essay will demonstrate that God's enactment of unusual power in the Synoptic Gospels focuses almost exclusively on personal bodies of individual people. There are at least four exceptions to this: (1) Jesus' cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:12–14, 20–25 ||

2003); Todd V. Oakley, "Conceptual Blending, Narrative Discourse, and Rhetoric," *Cognitive Linguistics* 9.4 (1988): 321–60; idem, "The Human Rhetorical Potential," *Written Communication* 16.1 (1999): 93–128; Vernon K. Robbins, "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination," in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science* (ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro; BIS 89; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 161–95; Robert von Thaden, "Fleeing *Porneia*: 1 Corinthians 6:12–7:7 and the Reconfiguration of Traditions" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2007).

4. I am interested in taking the analysis and discussion of the six rhetorlects down through the seventh century, which includes the emergence of Islam in the context of seventh-century Jewish and Christian traditions. From a sociorhetorical perspective, multiple modes of discourse powerfully blend in the Qur'an as it speaks as the authoritative agent of the actions and attributes of God, Holy Spirit, and prophetic revelation in the world. See Vernon K. Robbins, "Lukan and Johannine Tradition in the Qur'an: A Story of *Auslegungsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte*," in *Moving Beyond New Testament Theology? Essays in Conversation with Heikki Räisänen* (ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 88; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 336–68; Gordon D. Newby, "Quranic Texture: A Review of Vernon Robbins' *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* and *Exploring the Texture of Texts*," *JSNT* 70 (1998), 93–100; Robbins and Newby, "A Prolegomenon," 23–42.

Matt 21:18–22); (2) the appearance of a star at Jesus' birth (Matt 2:10); (3) the three-hour period when God either causes or allows darkness to cover the earth before Jesus' death (Mark 15:33 || Matt 27:45 || Luke 23:44–45a); and (4) the splitting of the curtain of the temple at the time of Jesus' death (Mark 15:38 || Matt 27:51 || Luke 23:45). This essay contains a discussion of these exceptions after analysis of the manifestations of God's power that focus on the bodies of individual people.

Wendy Cotter's excellent collection helps us to see the widespread presence of miracle discourse in Mediterranean antiquity.⁵ Moving from her collection to the New Testament, it is remarkable how much focus on the miraculous there is in early Christian discourse. A substantive amount of miracle rhetorolect in the New Testament is inductive narration—description of circumstances in which Jesus, and subsequently his followers, miraculously heal people through direct encounter, or through the power of their word, clothing, or an object from them (like a handkerchief or a shadow). These are, however, confined to five books in the New Testament—the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.⁶ One of the major tasks of rhetorical investigation must be to analyze and interpret the manner in which inductive narration of miraculous healing is nurtured into argumentative discourse that serves many different purposes within Christianity.⁷ As miracle rhetorolect moves beyond description into a

5. Wendy J. Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook for the Study of New Testament Miracle Stories* (London: Routledge, 1999).

6. Wendy Cotter has delimited her approach in a subsequent book, *The Christ of the Miracle Stories: Portrait through Encounter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010). This book presents a very interesting analysis and interpretation of eight miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels as anecdotes that feature one or more petitioners who, in her view, rudely and brusquely confront Jesus with their wishes. From her perspective, Jesus' compassionate response to the petitioners, rather than abrupt dismissal of them, exhibits, in Plutarch's words, the "soul" of Jesus in the form of various philosophical, biographical virtues. Cotter's approach, in line with other current studies that show the relation of New Testament literature to Mediterranean moral philosophy, is in essence an extension of nineteenth-century interests in presenting Christianity as a philosophical movement rather than as a multiply nuanced religious movement in the context of a wide variety of religious activities and perceptions in the Mediterranean world during the first century C.E.

7. For an alternative, but very important, rhetorical approach to miracle discourse, see Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," *ANRW* 25.2:1212–18; idem, *Einführung in die Formgeschichte* (UTB 1444; Tübingen: Taschenbuch, 1987), 76–84; idem, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Heidelberg: Quelle

mode of early Christian argumentative discourse, a major question will be how miracle rhetorlect blends with prophetic, apocalyptic, priestly, and wisdom rhetorlect in the Synoptic tradition.⁸ This essay, therefore, moves from analysis of inductive narration of miracle events to inferential, argumentative miracle discourse in the Synoptic Gospels. As early Christian miracle discourse becomes explicitly argumentative, a guiding question will be the manner in which inferences from prophetic, apocalyptic, priestly, and wisdom rhetorlect blend with miracle rhetorlect to produce a dynamic, multidimensional mode of thinking that plays an important role in the formulation of the full-bodied discourse that emerged among Christians during the first centuries of their existence in the Mediterranean world.

1. EPIDEICTIC NARRATION OF JESUS' HEALINGS

A significant amount of miracle discourse in the Synoptic Gospels builds on the rhetorical dynamics of inductive narration.⁹ This means that narration proceeds from Cases (Jesus encountering a person whose body somehow needs restoration) to Results (the restoration of the body of the person), without containing argumentative rationales that introduce substantive deductive reasoning or argumentation. The most obvious

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& Meyer, 1984), 305ff. For exceptional social analysis of early Christian miracle discourse, see Gerd Theissen, *Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (ed. John Riches; trans. Francis McDonagh; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); idem, "Jesus as Healer: The Miracles of Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (ed. Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz; London: SCM, 1998), 281–315. For a specifically social-scientific interpretation of the healing stories, see John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000). Also see the sociorhetorical approach in Elaine M. Wainwright, *Women Healing/Healing Women: The Genderization of Healing in Early Christianity* (Oakville, Conn.: Equinox, 2006).

8. No precreation rhetorlect blends with miracle rhetorlect in the Synoptic Gospels.

9. For a discussion of inductive, deductive, and abductive argumentation in the Gospels, see Vernon K. Robbins, "Enthymemic Texture in the Gospel of Thomas," in *1998 Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 343–66, <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/enthymeme.cfm>; idem, "From Enthymeme to Theology in Luke 11:1–13," in *Sea Voyages and Beyond: Emerging Strategies in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (ESEC 15; Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo, 2010), 349–71.

public function of this kind of miracle rhetorolect is epideictic: a display of actions, values, and attitudes that affirm or reaffirm some point of view in the present.

The account of Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law in Mark 1:29–31 || Matt 8:14–15 || Luke 4:38–39 is strictly epideictic in nature. In a direct and simple manner, Jesus enters the house of Simon¹⁰ and heals Simon's mother-in-law, who is afflicted with a fever. In Mark 1:29–31, the disciples tell Jesus about the woman, and he simply goes to her, takes her hand, and lifts her up. At this point, the fever leaves her, and she serves the five men. In Matt 8:14–15, Jesus comes to the house of Peter alone, sees the woman, touches her hand, and the fever leaves her. At this point, she gets up and serves Jesus. In Luke 4:38–39, when Jesus comes to the house of Simon, "they"¹¹ make a request to him concerning the woman. Standing above her, Jesus rebukes the fever,¹² it leaves her, and immediately she arises and serves them. None of the accounts presents the direct speech of anyone. In other words, the narration presents every instance of speech simply as an action, rather than a moment when the narratee attributes particular words to someone.

Wilhelm Wuellner taught us, basing his insights on ancient rhetorical treatises and Curtius's interpretation of them, that rhetorical discourse elaborates topoi in two ways: (1) amplificatory-descriptive and (2) argumentative-enthymematic.¹³ From a rhetorical perspective, this means that discourse contains both rhetography (narration that creates pictures) and rhetology (assertions that create reasoning).¹⁴ The story of Jesus' heal-

10. Matt 8:14 refers to Simon as Peter; Mark 1:29 adds "and Andrew, with James and John."

11. Presumably, members of the household or the crowd from Capernaum.

12. In Luke 4:39 Jesus treats the fever like a demon, rebuking it: see John G. Cook, "In Defense of Ambiguity: Is There a Hidden Demon in Mark 1.29-31?" *NTS* 43 (1997): 184–208; Wainwright, *Women Healing/Healing Women*, 172–75.

13. Wilhelm H. Wuellner, "Toposforschung und Torahinterpretation bei Paulus und Jesus," *NTS* 24 (1977/1978): 467: "eine zweifache Funktion: eine argumentativ-enthymematische und eine amplifikatorisch-darstellerische Funktion." See also Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 110–11. See the less explicitly rhetorical approach to "motifs" in F. Gerald Downing, "Words as Deeds and Deeds as Words," *BibInt* 3 (1995): 129–43.

14. Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament* (ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson; Studies in Rhetoric and Religion 8; Waco, Tex.: Baylor

ing of Peter's mother-in-law presents pictorial narration (rhetography) of the topos of "healing an afflicted body." This topos is central to miracle discourse in the Synoptic Gospels. The account of the healing does not elaborate the topos with rhetology (argumentative-enthymeme). Rather, it presents elaborated pictorial narration of the topos of healing an afflicted body in a manner that is argumentatively inductive. The story presents a Case (Jesus takes the woman's hand and lifts her up, touches her hand, or rebukes the fever) and a Result (the woman is healed and serves someone). The story itself presents no Rule (premise) that explains the empowerment of Jesus to heal like this.¹⁵ The narration is straightforwardly epideictic, implying a positive view (praise) of Jesus and his actions. Stories regularly evoke one or more Rule for a listener through inference, since this is the nature of inductive narration. Rather than presenting inferential reasoning, however, the final comments in the story simply encourage the listener to focus on the Result of the healing, including the woman's action, which is made possible by the healing.

As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have made clear, epideictic discourse naturally evokes deliberative effects (decisions to act in ways that benefit society).¹⁶ The woman's serving of the people in the house may be understood to infer a social principle (a Rule) that people who receive healing traditionally reciprocate with appropriate benefits.¹⁷ By itself, however, this story does not emphasize the woman's action as a deliberative

University Press, 2008), 81–106; idem, "Enthymeme and Picture in the Gospel of Thomas," in *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of Thomas* (ed. Jon Ma. Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 175–207.

15. Each of the Gospels contains narrational comments, narrational depiction of events and actions, and attributed speech (either direct or indirect) that either evoke or state one or more Rules (premises) for Jesus' ability to heal in this manner. For inductive reasoning in early Christian texts, see Vernon K. Robbins, "Enthymemic Texture in the Gospel of Thomas"; idem, "From Enthymeme to Theology in Luke 11:1–13," in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (ed. R. P. Thompson and T. E. Phillips; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 191–214, <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/theology.cfm>.

16. Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (trans. J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 47–51.

17. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 100–101.

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moment.¹⁸ Rather, the story encourages a positive response to the Result of the action of Jesus, which is displayed in the ability of the healed woman to rise and honorably perform activities of hospitality in her household.¹⁹ It is also important to notice that there is no mention of faith in the story. The story proceeds simply through a process in which disciples take Jesus to a sick woman, Jesus heals her, and the healing of the woman allows her to resume her usual activities in her household.

Sometimes a miracle story contains attributed speech, yet this speech simply carries the story forward narrationally without introducing argumentative speech that creates a logical argument. Jesus' healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22–26 (cf. John 9:1–7) contains attributed dialogue that moves the narration forward in an inductive manner from Cases to Results:

Case: People brought a blind man to Jesus asking Jesus to touch him (v. 22).

Result/Case: Jesus led the blind man by the hand out of the village, spit on his eyelids, laid his hands on him, and asked him what he saw (v. 23).

Result/Case: Opening his eyes, the blind man said he saw men like trees walking (v. 24).

Result/Case: Again Jesus laid his hands on the man's eyes, and the blind man looked intently (v. 25ab).

Result/Case: The blind man's sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly (v. 25cd).

Result: Jesus sent the healed man to his home saying, "Do not even enter the village" (v. 26).

While this story contains an important double healing that must not prolong us here, it proceeds in a straightforward, inductive manner from Cases to Results. The final Result includes an unexpected phenomenon.

18. In the context of specific arguments about the value of "serving," however, this story will naturally function in a supportive manner; Wainwright, *Women Healing/Healing Women*, 106–12, 143–46, 172–75.

19. See Bruce J. Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 70: "Serving those in the house after being healed indicates that the mother-in-law's place in the family has been restored"; see also pp. 181, 311.

Why does Jesus tell the man not to enter the village? This is an enthymematic moment that, along with other commands by Jesus to demons or healed people, has given rise to theories concerning “messianic secrecy” or “healing secrecy” in the Gospels.²⁰ In the context of the other miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels, most interpreters have thought this command concerns the identity of Jesus. When early Christian miracle summaries and stories contain attributed speech, the primary focus of that speech is regularly on the identity of Jesus. In this instance, the statement at the end is not clearly a statement about the identity of Jesus, though it may be understood and interpreted in this way. Rather, it is an enigmatic statement that the healed man should go directly to his home without entering the village. In addition to having no focused narration on the identity of Jesus, there is also no presence of the topos of “faith” in the story.

Jesus’ healing of a deaf and dumb man in Mark 7:31–37 (no parallels) contains a charge to people similar to the charge in Mark 8:26 to the blind man whom Jesus healed. When Jesus returns from the region of Tyre to the Sea of Galilee, through Sidon and the Decapolis, people bring a man to Jesus who is deaf and has an impediment of speech, and they ask Jesus to lay his hand on the man (vv. 31–32). Jesus takes him aside privately, puts his fingers in the man’s ears, spits and touches the man’s tongue, looks up into heaven, sighs, and says, “Eph’phatha,” which means “Be opened” (vv. 33–34). The Result of these actions is that the man’s ears are opened, his tongue is released, and he speaks plainly (v. 35). At this point:

Case: Jesus told “them” to tell no one.

Contrary Result: but the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.

Result/Case: And they were astonished beyond measure,

Result/Rule: saying, “He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak” (vv. 36–37).

20. William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Cambridge: Clarke, 1971); H. J. Ebeling, *Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Botschaft des Marcus-Evangelisten* (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1939); G. Minette de Tillesse, *Le secret messianique dans l’Évangile de Marc* (Paris: Cerf, 1968); Heikki Räisänen, *The “Messianic Secret” in Mark* (trans. C. Tuckett; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990); Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

The narration leaves unstated that Jesus and the healed man go back to the people who have brought the man, but it is clear that they do so. In addition, the narration does not explain why Jesus takes the man to a private place to heal him, and why Jesus tells the people not to tell anyone once they come back. The narration presents a Result that the people are astonished beyond measure (*hyperperissōs exeplēssonto*: v. 37). This Result functions as a Case that produces a Result of speaking. The speaking then presents a Rule that explains why the people cannot refrain from speaking: The focus of their speech is not on the healed man. The focus is on Jesus, who has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak! In all of this, there is no question concerning who Jesus is, no one draws an inference about powers within Jesus or about Jesus' relation to God, and there is no mention of faith. Rather, there is a direct epideictic focus on Jesus, whom they praise as a person who is able to do these things so well. There is, however, a very interesting sequence of action by Jesus: "Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'" This sequence calls attention to a relationship between Jesus and "heaven" as he heals. What is this relationship? How does this relationship work in the context of Jesus' miraculous healings? The story does not say. Rather, the story emphasizes the manner in which people are amazed at what Jesus is able to do, and the people speak openly to one another about it.

Sometimes in the Synoptic Gospels, summaries of Jesus' healings that do not contain attributed speech show movement toward argumentation about how Jesus is able to perform his miraculous deeds. Mark 6:53–56 || Matt 14:34–36 presents a summary of Jesus' healing that contains only narration. The action in the summary begins with a Rule that "the people recognized" Jesus (Mark 6:54 || Matt 14:35). This Rule explains why people bring sick people on pallets to Jesus (Mark 6:55 || Matt 14:35), lay the sick in market places, and ask Jesus if they might touch even the fringe of his garment (Mark 6:56 || Matt 14:36). The Result of the action of the people (the Case based on the Rule) is that "as many as touched it were made well" (Mark 6:56 || Matt 14:36). For purposes of rhetorical analysis and interpretation, it is necessary to observe three aspects of the narration. First, "people" are the agents who recognize Jesus' identity as a healer. Second, the people's recognition (*epignontes*: Mark 6:54 || Matt 14:35) of Jesus simply evokes a premise that Jesus was a person who could heal afflicted bodies, rather than necessarily evoking any deeper "knowing" (*oida*: cf. Mark 1:34) of who Jesus is and why he can heal. Third, the action of asking

Jesus if they can simply touch the fringe of his garment evokes a premise that healing power is so present in Jesus' body that simply touching the outer edge of his garment can effect healing. Overall, the topos of the identity of Jesus may evoke a question: How could healing power be so present within Jesus' body? The narration, however, does not enter this conceptual arena. Rather, the narration focuses simply on presenting Jesus as a person within whom healing power is so present that simply touching the fringe of his garment can bring healing to an afflicted body. In some ways, this is early Christian miracle rhetorict "at its highest point." The focus is strictly on Jesus as a healer, on people's recognition of Jesus' healing power, and on people's access to this power simply by touching the outer border of his garment. Again, there is no statement about faith in the narration. Rather, people come to Jesus, touch the hem of his garment, and are healed simply on the basis of people's recognition that it is possible to be healed in this way.

In contrast to Mark 6:53–56 || Matt 14:34–36, the miracle summary in Matt 15:29–31 exhibits an initial step in "narrational inference" concerning the means by which Jesus is able to heal. When Jesus goes up on the mountain and sits down, great crowds come to him, "bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb, and many others; and they put them at his feet" (vv. 29–30). In this instance the description of the action of the crowds implies a Rule evoked by Jesus' previous actions of healing in the story. The implied Rule is something like: "because they knew Jesus could and would heal them." The Case produces the expected Result: Jesus heals them (v. 29). This Result becomes a Case that produces yet another Result. The crowd marvels when they see the dumb speaking, the maimed healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. This produces the Result that "they glorified the God of Israel" (v. 31):

Case: People brought sick people to Jesus.

[**Implied Rule:** Because they knew he could and would heal them.]

Result/Case: Jesus healed them.

Result/Case: The crowd marveled when they saw the sick people healed.

Result: The crowd glorified the God of Israel.

Again, the sequence does not express a Rule (premise) for the initial Cases and Results. In this instance, however, the action of the people at the beginning implies a Rule that the people know Jesus can heal, and the

final Result introduces the hearer to an inference that the God of Israel is somehow involved in Jesus' ability to heal. Perhaps the people conventionally express gratitude to God for special blessings that come to their lives, perhaps they think God is actually the one who has healed people in the context of Jesus' activity (a Rule), or perhaps they think the God of Israel has endowed Jesus with special powers to heal people (a slightly alternative Rule). The narration clearly moves beyond Jesus as a primary focus to the God of Israel, but the manner in which the people blend the conceptual network of the God of Israel and the conceptual domain of Jesus as healer is undefined.

The shift from Jesus to God in Matt 15:29–31 (which perhaps also hovers over Jesus' look to heaven in Mark 7:34) is an important moment in early Christian narration of miracle stories, since it introduces the conceptual network of the God of Israel in addition to a domain of reasoning about Jesus as a healer. Following direct principles of inductive reasoning, the people should glorify Jesus in verse 31. From the perspective of conceptual-blending (or "conceptual-integration") theory, the move in the narration beyond Jesus the healer to the God of Israel introduces a "double-scope network" of reasoning.²¹ One network is the relation of people to Jesus as a healer. The other network is the relation of Jesus and the people to the God of Israel. The issue now is the manner in which a hearer may blend the two networks. Will a hearer simply be grateful to God that there is a person on earth like Jesus who is able to heal? Do the people presuppose that Jesus is using God's power, rather than his own powers, to heal? Do the people think healing occurs by means of God's healing powers traveling through Jesus' body, something like the powers of the Lord God of Israel that were present in and around the tabernacle or the ark of the covenant? Or do people think Jesus is more of a prophetic agent than a personal embodiment of the powers of God, in the mode of the prophet Elijah, Elisha, or Moses? In other words, perhaps the people think God's power directly heals people, but Jesus is an "agent of God" who provides the occasions for God to heal. In any case, the people's praising of God rather than Jesus is "an enthymematic moment."²² An enthymematic

21. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 131–35, 179–83, 274–75, 340–45, 353–60, 389–92.

22. The understanding of enthymeme that guides this essay can be found in Richard L. Lanigan, "From Enthymeme to Abduction: The Classical Law of Logic and the Postmodern Rule of Rhetoric," in *Recovering Pragmatism's Voice: The Classical Tradi-*

moment regularly invites multiple possibilities of reasoning available in the culture. Inviting hearers to draw their own conclusion can be a powerful way of leading people into one's own point of view. In cultural situations where well-known topoi are near at hand, a narrator's presentation of Rules that evoke a particular conceptual network without giving specific answers may evoke a cultural frame of reasoning that a majority of people recognize and happily select as the means to understand and interpret the event. In this instance, the narration introduces the conceptual network of the God of Israel. Again, however, there is no mention of faith in the narration of the story.

2. PROPHETIC RHETOROLECT ENERGIZES EARLY CHRISTIAN MIRACLE NARRATION

In early Christian discourse, prophetic rhetorolect energizes miracle rhetorolect in various ways. When Luke 7:11–17 narrates the account of Jesus' raising of the son of the widow of Nain, it moves beyond a pictorial narration of the topos of raising the dead to a recontextualization of Elijah's raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath (see Luke 4:26).²³ There is no focus on "faith" in the account of Elijah's raising of the widow's son; nor is there such a focus in the Lukan account of Jesus' deed. Rather, there is a focus on the identity of the agent of healing in both stories. Prior to Elijah's raising of the widow's son, the woman refers to him as "man of God" (1 Kgs 17:18). Twice in the account, Elijah prays to "O Lord, my God" (1 Kgs 17:20–21).²⁴ After the son is revived, the woman says, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth" (1 Kgs 17:24). The account does not focus on the faith of the widow, then, but on the identity of Elijah in relation to God.

In a similar manner, Luke's account of Jesus' raising of the son of the widow of Nain in 7:11–17 also does not focus on the widow's faith. Rather, it focuses on the identity of Jesus in relation to God. In contrast to the story concerning Elijah, the story concerning Jesus contains no speech by the widow. There is an assertion that the revived son spoke (v. 15), but there is no narration of the content of his speech. The content of Jesus'

tion, Rorty, and the Philosophy of Communication (ed. Lenore Langsdorf and Andrew R. Smith; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 49–70.

23. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 48–50.

24. Cf. the presence of prayer in Jas 5:14–18.

speech addresses the woman's weeping (v. 13) and effects the restoration of the young man in tandem with Jesus' touching of the bier (v. 14). The narrator asserts that Jesus' speech to the widow was motivated by "compassion" on her (v. 13: *esplangchnisthē ep' autēi*). After the revival of the young man, the narrator asserts:

Result/Case: Fear seized them all.

Result/Case: They glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!"

Result: This report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

The Elijah account raises the topic of "fear" in the exchange about the jar of meal prior to Elijah's reviving of the widow's son. Elijah tells her not to be afraid, but to act as she herself had intended with the wood and the meal, but also to make him some cake to eat (1 Kgs 17:13). When she does not allow fear to stop her actions, the oil and meal remain sufficient "according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah" (1 Kgs 17:16). The effect of Elijah's raising of her son from death, then, is "knowledge" of his identity as "a man of God," and certainty that "the word of the Lord in his mouth is truth" (1 Kgs 17:24).

Fear and certainty work somewhat differently in the Lukan account of 7:11–17. There is no statement about the widow's fear, but only her weeping. Also, there is no focus on the woman's response to Jesus' raising of her son. Rather, all the focus is on the people who see the deed. Fear seizes all of them and they glorify God (v. 16). Interpreters can dispute the exact function of the fear. Perhaps the people overcame fear and glorified God; perhaps fear was a stimulus that moved people toward glorification of God; or perhaps fear refers to awe that is simply the beginning process of glorifying God. However an interpreter might think fear functions in the account, the final Result is the people's glorification of God with speech that identifies Jesus as "a great prophet" and associates Jesus' deed with God's visitation of his people (v. 16). The "reasoning" in this discourse is clearly embedded in Septuagint discourse about prophets as agents of God who transmit God's will and engage in actions that bring God's powers into the realm of human life and activity. But there is still another Result. The content of the people's speech becomes a message that people carry throughout all of Judea and the surrounding region (v. 17). In this instance, the discourse functions as "gospel story" that spreads throughout

all of Judea and the surrounding country. Even in this story featuring fear, the identity of Jesus, and the relation of Jesus to God, however, there is no reference to anyone's faith in the context.

Matthew 12:15–19 exhibits yet another way in which prophetic rhetorolect energizes early Christian miracle discourse. Instead of putting “prophetic” phrasing on the lips of Jesus or recontextualizing a story from the biblical tradition of Elijah or Elisha, Matt 12:15–19 presents an explicit recitation of verses from prophetic biblical text. The opening and middle of the verses present a sequence of Cases and Results common to a narrational summary. In the final verses, however, the narrator attributes speech to Isaiah that presents a syllogistic argument about Jesus' relation to God:

Opening:

Case: Jesus knew that the Pharisees had met in council to destroy him.

Result/Case: Jesus withdrew from their synagogue (vv. 14–15a; cf. v. 9).

Middle:

Result/Case: Many followed him,

Result: and he healed them all, and ordered them not to make him known (vv. 15b–16).

Closing:

Rule: This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah (v. 17):

Rule: “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.

Case: I will put my Spirit upon him,

Result/Case: and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles (v. 18).

Contrary Result/Case: He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will any one hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick, till he brings justice to victory (vv. 19–20).

Result: And in his name will the Gentiles hope” (v. 21).

The Matthean narration here does not, like the Lukan narration above, simply make its own assertions about the relation of Jesus to God. Rather, Matthean narration attributes extended speech to Isaiah, who interprets

God's selection of Jesus in the mode of prophetic discourse.²⁵ Jesus has been selected by God to bring justice to the nations in the context of injustice in the world. A central part of this action of justice is Jesus' healing of people.

3. PROPHETIC AND PRIESTLY RHETOROLECT BLEND IN EARLY CHRISTIAN MIRACLE STORIES

Prophetic rhetorolect naturally blends with priestly rhetorolect when the healed person is a leper. On the one hand, the prophet Elisha oversees the cleansing of the leper Naaman in biblical tradition (2 Kgs 5:1–14), and there are no noticeable priestly dynamics in the story. The Gospel of Luke perpetuates the tradition of this cleansing in the mode of prophetic rhetorolect in Luke 4:27. In Mark 1:40–45 || Matt 8:1–4 || Luke 5:12–16, however, the priestly domain of leprosy blends with Jesus' healing of a leper in the mode of a prophetic healing.²⁶ Priestly dynamics appear at the opening of the story, when the leper kneels before Jesus (Mark 1:40), worships him (Matt 8:2), or falls on his face (Luke 5:12) as he petitions (Luke 5:12) Jesus as *kyrie* (Matt 8:2 || Luke 5:12) to cleanse him. Being "moved with compassion" (*esphlangchnistheis*: Mark 1:41), Jesus heals the leper with his prophetic word, which uses passive voice to refer to God's cleansing of the man (Mark 1:41 || Matt 8:3 || Luke 5:13).²⁷ Blending the prophetic mode with miracle rhetorolect, however, they also feature Jesus' touching the leper as he speaks to the man to heal him. When the man is immediately healed, Jesus charges him to go and show himself to a priest and make the offering Moses commanded for the completion of the priestly cleansing ritual (Mark 1:43 || Matt 8:4 || Luke 5:14).

In a related manner, Jesus' feeding of five thousand and four thousand people in the wilderness blend prophetic with priestly rhetorolect as they recount Jesus' miraculous feeding of people with small amounts of food. Precedents for Jesus' action exist both in the tradition of Moses' feeding of the Israelites with manna and quail in the wilderness, and in

25. See Robbins, "Argumentative Textures," 44–50.

26. Cf. Cotter, *Christ of the Miracle Stories*, 19–41. In her view (p. 41), this story possibly exhibits *syngnōmē* (the willingness to overlook a provocation) and certainly exhibits *praos* (meekness), compassion, and *ēpios* (gentleness).

27. Cf. LXX 2 Kgs 5:10 (*katharisthēsēi*), 13 (*katharisthēti*), and 14 (*ekatharisthē*).

the tradition of Elisha's feeding of one hundred men in 2 Kgs 4:42–44.²⁸ Mark 6:34 || Matt 14:14 emphasizes that Jesus “was moved with compassion” (*esplangchnisthē*) for the huge crowd. Mark 6:34 adds from prophetic tradition that they were like sheep without a shepherd (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Ezek 34:8; Zech 10:2). Luke 9:11 features prophetic rhetorolect with Jesus' speaking about the kingdom of God. The stories contain no reasoning about the identity of Jesus,²⁹ and they contain no statements about amazement, fear, or glorifying God at the end of the accounts. Wisdom rhetorolect stands in the background of the Markan account when Jesus begins to teach them (Mark 6:34). In contrast, the Matthean and Lukan versions emphasize miracle rhetorolect as they feature Jesus' healing people who are sick (Matt 14:14 || Luke 9:11).

On the one hand, the stories of Jesus' feeding of large groups of people function nicely alongside other miracle stories that focus on bodies in special need. On the other hand, these bodies are only in “daily” need, rather than in a state of permanent need as a result of an affliction.³⁰ A special feature of the stories is the achievement of the miracle of feeding through an action of prayer. When Jesus receives the five loaves and two fish:

Case: Taking the five loaves and the two fish, Jesus looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all (Mark 6:41 || cf. Matt 14:19 || Luke 9:16).³¹

Result: All ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men (Mark 6:42–44 || cf. Matt 14:20–21 || Luke 9:17).

28. See 2 Kgs 4:43–44: “But his servant said, ‘How can I set this before a hundred people?’ So he repeated, ‘Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, “They shall eat and have some left.”’ He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.”

29. In contrast to the Synoptic accounts, cf. John 6:14: “When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

30. Cf. Robert M. Grant, “The Problem of Miraculous Feedings in the Graeco-Roman World,” *Protocol of the Forty-Second Colloquy: 14 March 1982* (Berkeley, Calif.: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1982).

31. Cf. John 6:11, where the narrator uses the verb *eucharisteō* rather than *eulogeō*.

One notices here an action of prayer without an explicit reference to prayer. It is especially interesting that elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus teaches the disciples to pray for daily bread or bread for tomorrow (Matt 6:11 || Luke 11:3). Early Christian tradition also features prayer action in relation to bread in the stories and tradition of the Last Supper (Mark 14:22 || Matt 26:26 || Luke 22:19).³² This means that prayer is regularly present with daily food, with commemorative food, and with miraculous food.³³

The accounts of the feeding of the four thousand in Mark 8:1–10 || Matt 15:32–39 (no parallel in Luke) attribute speech to Jesus that elaborates Jesus' prophetic reasoning about his compassion for the people. The Markan version proceeds as follows:

Case: He called his disciples and said to them, "I have compassion for the crowd,

Rule: because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.

Result: If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance."³⁴

This Case/Rule/Result sequence in speech attributed to Jesus sets the stage for dialogue between Jesus and his disciples concerning how to get food for the people. When Jesus tells his disciples to get food for this large group of people, they respond with incredulity at his statement. This leads to the presentation of seven loaves and a few small fish (Mark 8:5, 7 || Matt 15:36), Jesus' action of prayer with the food, and the miraculous multiplication of the food, signified by the baskets filled with pieces after everyone has eaten.

Again, there is no reference to amazement, the identity of Jesus, or praise to the God of Israel at the conclusion of the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' miraculous feeding of five thousand and four thousand people with small amounts of food in the wilderness. As attributed speech in the accounts moves the story forward, it presents prophetic reasoning about Jesus' compassion on the people. The accounts feature prayer action by Jesus, without

32. Cf. 1 Cor 11:24.

33. Cf. John 6:11.

34. Cf. Matt 15:32.

any attribution of words of prayer to Jesus, and there is no mention of faith in the accounts either in the narration or on the lips of Jesus.

Many additional miracle stories feature the presence of priestly rhetorlect. These stories, however, feature unclean spirits or demons as the cause of the illness that Jesus encounters. It is necessary, therefore, to turn now to summaries and stories that feature unclean spirits and demons.

4. APOCALYPTIC RHETORLECT ENERGIZES EARLY CHRISTIAN MIRACLE NARRATION

Early Christian miracle discourse moves decisively beyond biblical prophetic rhetorlect when it features unclean spirits and demons in challenge-riposte with Jesus. Demons, both positive and negative, were a widespread phenomenon in Mediterranean society and culture. Jesus' miraculous exorcism of a negative demon, therefore, could simply be internal to Mediterranean miracle rhetorlect. In early Christianity, however, there are only negative demons, although there are positive and negative spirits. The perception in early Christian tradition that all demons are negative appears to be the result of the conceptual domain of Jewish apocalyptic literature and discourse. New Testament literature always refers to demons as evil and regularly blends demons conceptually with "unclean spirits."³⁵ This early Christian perception of demons as equivalent to unclean spirits has a close relation to the reasoning in passages in apocalyptic literature like 1 Enoch 8:2; 15:6–12; and Jubilees 5:2–3, 10; 7:20–21; 10:5, 8; 11:4; 50:5. It appears that most stories in the Synoptic Gospels that refer to demons and unclean spirits do so as a result of the conceptual domain of apocalyptic rhetorlect in the background.

The narrational summary of Jesus' miracles in Luke 6:17–19, in contrast to the summaries discussed in the previous sections, exhibits the presence of unclean spirits. When Jesus comes down from the mountain with his twelve "apostles" (v. 13), he stands on a level place (v. 17). The pictorial narration describes Jesus as surrounded by a crowd of his disciples and a huge throng of people who have come both to hear him and to be healed of their diseases (v. 17). This Case immediately evokes a Result that "those who were troubled [*enochloumenoi*] with unclean spirits were

35. Vernon K. Robbins, "The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the Gospel of Mark," in *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (ed. Duane F. Watson; SBLSymS 14; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 22–28.

cured” (v. 18). There is no sure way to know that the reference to unclean spirits is the result of the conceptual domain of apocalyptic literature and reasoning, but it probably is. The verb “to be troubled” (*enochleō*) was commonly used to mean simply that someone was sick (Gen 48:1; 1 Sam 19:14; 30:13). The perception that “unclean spirits” caused the sickness is probably to be attributed to the presence of apocalyptic reasoning like one sees in 1 Enoch 15:8–12 and Jubilees 10:6, 10–12. In the summary, in Luke the Result becomes a Case that evokes another Result, namely, that “all the crowd sought to touch him” (6:19). At this point the narration blends argumentation with pictorial description. Instead of the crowd’s seeking to touch Jesus simply evoking a Result that “those who touched him were healed,” it evokes a Rule/Result: “For power [*dynamis*] came forth from him and healed them all” (6:19). The sequence is as follows:

Case: Jesus was surrounded by disciples and other people who came to hear him and be healed.

Result/Case: Those troubled with unclean spirits were healed.

Result/Case: Therefore, all the crowd sought to touch him.

Rule/Result: For power came forth from him and healed them all.

A display of the sequence of reasoning reveals a Result that is presupposed in the Rule at the end of the pictorial narration. The natural movement of inductive reasoning is from Cases to Results to Rules. In this instance, the reasoning moves to the Rule that “power in Jesus” heals by coming forth from Jesus’ body. This can be either an additional or an alternative assertion to a statement about Jesus’ identity. The shift to a discussion of “power” in Jesus’ body encourages a search to understand the source of the power. Since the discourse in Luke 6:17–19 does not focus the search, multiple answers (candidate inferences)³⁶ could emerge as possibilities: from God (“heaven,” to which Jesus looks in Mark 7:34); from prophetic authority like Elijah’s and Elisha’s (which appears to be very close to “from God” in early Christian tradition); from wisdom (perhaps like Solomon’s); from Beelzebul (who rules over unclean spirits in apocalyptic rhetorolect);

36. See Dedre Gentner, Keith J. Holyoak, and Boicho N. Kokinov, eds., *The Analogical Mind: Perspectives from Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 24–25, 38–40, 50–51, 128, 219, 237–38, 289, 307, 337, 372. Cf. “inference schemas” in Seana Coulson, *Semantic Leaps: Frame-Shifting and Conceptual Blending in Meaning Construction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 177–78.

or from being John the Baptist raised from the dead. Early Christian narration containing attributed speech raises these possibilities and negotiates them in various ways. The narrational summaries without attributed speech in them do not raise these various possibilities and negotiate them.

A miracle summary featuring demons who are able to speak occurs in Mark 1:32–34, immediately after the healing of Simon's mother-in-law in the Markan account. That evening, at sundown (thus at the beginning of a new day), people bring sick and demonized people to the house; and "the whole city" gathers around the door (vv. 32–33). In response to these actions, Jesus heals those who are sick and casts out many demons (v. 34). The description of the actions of the people is so dominant that it implies the Rule "because they (the people) knew he could and would heal them." The people's action becomes the Case, and Jesus' healing of the afflicted people is the Result of the people's actions. In this instance, however, the narration becomes argumentative, presenting a Case that Jesus "would not permit the demons to speak" supported by a Rule (rationale) that "they knew him" (v. 34). The end of this narrational account, therefore, introduces a conceptual domain featuring "demons," rather than the conceptual network of "the God of Israel," like that present in Matt 15:31, discussed in the previous section.

Mark 1:34, like Matt 15:31, is enthymematic rather than explicitly argumentative, because it evokes social and cultural reasoning without specifically focusing on it. Who do the demons think Jesus is? How do the demons know who Jesus is? Why are demons able to know who Jesus is when people seem not to know? How did Jesus know that the demons knew who he was? Why doesn't Jesus want the people to hear what the demons say about Jesus? If the demons know who Jesus is, Jesus should want people to hear their "testimony" to him, shouldn't he? Like the story of Jesus' healing of people on the mountain in Matt 15:29–31, this story embeds enthymematic discourse in pictorial narration. In this instance, however, the argumentation focuses on challenge-riposte between Jesus and demons rather than some kind of relationship between Jesus and the God of Israel.³⁷ But who are demons, that they can speak to Jesus and Jesus can speak to them?

37. Malina, *New Testament World*, 34–44; Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 80–82.

The portrayal of the demons in this summary surely introduces the conceptual domain of apocalyptic reasoning when it introduces the topos of “knowing” the identity of Jesus. This “knowledge” of Jesus is likely to be part of a conceptual system in which Jesus is aligned with divine powers on the side of the God of Israel versus demonic powers like those described in 1 Enoch and Jubilees. The narration does not state who the demons “know” Jesus to be. A still more advanced step of argumentation would be for the (reliable) narrator to “reveal” to the narratee who Jesus is. This additional argumentative step will appear in summaries discussed below. When we come to them, it will be obvious that they move beyond the basic enthymematic reasoning present in Mark 1:32–34, which simply points to a conceptual domain of apocalyptic reasoning in the background as it portrays demons in challenge-riposte with Jesus without asserting who the demons “know” Jesus to be.

From a rhetorical perspective, then, Mark 1:32–34 embeds an enthymematic moment concerning the identity of Jesus in pictorial narration that blends apocalyptic conceptuality with the topos of healing an afflicted body. This moment points to the conceptual domain of early Christian apocalyptic rhetorolect without asserting who the demons “know” Jesus to be. There is only narration in Mark 1:32–34, with no attributed speech. Like other passages discussed above, people recognize that Jesus is a healer. In contrast to Matt 15:31, which introduces a double-scope network of reasoning about “the God of Israel” in the context of Jesus’ healings, Mark 1:32–34 presents a double-scope network that features “agents of affliction” in the personage of “demons” from the domain of apocalyptic reasoning over against Jesus as an “agent of healing.” The narration in Mark 1:32–34 does not mention God nor does it mention faith. Instead, it presents demons who “know” the identity of Jesus and are able to speak so that people can hear them. One can readily anticipate that the two double-scope networks of (1) Jesus and the God of Israel and (2) Jesus and demons could blend together in various ways to form multiple-scope networks of reasoning.³⁸ The presence of the conceptual network of the God of Israel, on the one hand, could invite various ways of reasoning about the relation of both Jesus and God to the people in the setting of the miraculous healings. The presence of the conceptual domain

38. For multiple-scope networks, see Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 279–98.

of apocalyptic, on the other hand, may not only introduce demons as personal agents of affliction, but it may also introduce different relationships between God and Jesus, between God and the people, and among God, Jesus, and yet other agents of evil (like Satan or Beelzebul) in the context of miraculous deeds that occur in the context of Jesus' activities.

Sometimes in the Synoptic Gospels, attributed speech in miracle discourse focuses on Jesus' identity in a context where unclean spirits/demons assert that they know who Jesus is. In other words, in certain instances, Synoptic Gospel discourse moves beyond pictorial narration which simply asserts that demons knew who Jesus was to a presentation of what the demons asserted. Mark 3:7–12 intertwines attributed speech (v. 11) that evokes a Rule that the unclean spirits knew who Jesus was (cf. 1:34) with a series of intermingled Case/Result sequences and a Rule about the possibility that the crowd might crush him (v. 9):

1. **Case:** Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea,
Result: and a great multitude from Galilee followed (v. 7).
2. **Case:** People from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Sidon a great multitude heard all that he did,
Result: and they came to him (vv.7–8).
3. **Case:** Jesus healed many,
Result/Case: so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him (v. 10).
Result: He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him,
Rule: because of the crowd, lest they should crush him (v. 9).
4. **Case:** Whenever the unclean spirits beheld him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God" (v. 11).
Result: And he strictly ordered them not to make him known (v. 12).

The attributed speech in this narrational summary focuses directly on the identity of Jesus. The narrator does not interpret the speech of the demons in any way. Rather, the narration leaves the narratee to decide exactly what the title "Son of God" implies. The answer clearly lies in the conceptual network of "the God of Israel." Somehow Jesus is aligned with the God

of Israel against unclean spirits. The unclean spirits even fall down before Jesus in a posture that may imply the presence of priestly rhetorolect. Unclean spirits are not simply obedient to his command, as wisdom and prophetic rhetorolect assert. Rather, the unclean spirits adopt a position of honoring Jesus in a manner characteristic of worship.

The most fully developed story focusing on the identity of Jesus and containing no reference to faith is the account of the Gerasene Demonic in Mark 5:1–20 and its parallels in Matt 8:28–34 || Luke 8:26–39. The account in Mark and Luke contains three reasons or explanations that support assertions in the story. The Matthean account multiplies the demonic person to two people and presents the story without the three reasons or explanations. The approach here will focus on the Markan and Lukan accounts, which contain the supporting reasons or explanations.

The opening-middle-closing texture of the Markan and Lukan accounts of the Gerasene demoniac features Jesus and the demoniac in the opening and closing (Mark 5:1–13, 18–20; Luke 8:26–33, 38–39) and swineherds in the middle (Mark 5:14–17; Luke 8:34–37). In this context, the narrational texture of the accounts alternates between picturesque action (Mark 5:1–6, 13–18; Luke 8:26–27, 29, 32–38) and challenge-riposte dialogue (Mark 5:7–12; Luke 8:28, 30) as it progresses toward speech by Jesus at the end that produces a good form of speech in the healed man (Mark 5:19–20; Luke 8:39).³⁹

The Markan account presents three explanations or reasons in the first half of the story (5:1–9) that explain the man's dwelling among the tombs (vv. 4–5), the demoniac's challenging of Jesus by crying out his name as "Jesus, Son of the Most High God" (v. 8), and the name "Legion" for the demon in the man (v. 9). In the last half (vv. 10–20), the Markan account presents a chain of Cases and Results:

1. **Case:** Jesus gave permission to the unclean spirits to enter the swine;
2. **Result/Case:** the unclean spirits entered the swine and the herd rushed down the hill and drowned in the sea (v. 13).
3. **Result/Case:** The swineherders ran off and told the people in the surrounding city and country;

39. For progressive and narrational texture, see Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 9–19.

4. **Result/Case:** the people came to see what had happened (v. 14).
5. **Result/Case:** the people saw the healed demoniac;
6. **Result/Case:** the people became afraid (v. 15).
7. **Result/Case:** The people who had seen the event reported it to the people who came (v. 16).
8. **Result/Case:** everyone began to ask Jesus to leave their neighborhood (v. 17).
9. **Result/Case:** As Jesus began to leave, the healed man begged to go along with Jesus (v. 18).
10. **Result/Case:** Jesus refused the man and told him to go home and tell them what the Lord has done for him (v. 19).
11. **Result/Case:** The man went throughout the Decapolis and proclaimed what Jesus did for him;
12. **Result:** all the people were amazed (v. 20).

The Lukan account presents the same features with slight variations.⁴⁰

The overall rhetorical effect of this story, of course, is a depiction of Jesus with tremendous power to confront violent unclean spirits directly and to enact a means to destroy them. As in the narrational summary above, the man with the unclean spirit adopts a position of worshiping Jesus (Mark 5:6; Luke 8:28). The three explanations or reasons give argumentative support to the dramatic pictorial narration of the violence and help to create a sharp contrast between the presence of violence from the beginning through the healing process (Mark 5:1–14; Luke 8:26–34) and the portrayal of the man “sitting, clothed and in his right mind” after the healing (Mark 5:15; Luke 8:35). The first part of the story features the identity of Jesus as “Son of the Most High God” and the identity of the man as “Legion,” since he had many demons in him. Throughout all of this, we remind ourselves again, there is no mention of faith or belief. Perhaps the most noticeable rhetorical shift occurs at the end of the story: (a) Jesus tells the man to proclaim how much God has done for him; (b) the man goes forth and tells people how much Jesus did for him. The inductive rhetorical force of the story lies in the possessed man’s identification of Jesus’ relation to God prior to his healing (Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28) and his

40. Perhaps most important, the Lukan account groups the three explanations or reasons together in the dialogue between Jesus and the demoniac (8:29–30).

redirection of Jesus' command at the end of the story so the credit for the healing focuses on Jesus rather than God (Mark 5:19–20; Luke 8:39).

5. APOCALYPTIC RHETOROLECT BLENDS WITH PROPHETIC RHETOROLECT IN SYNOPTIC MIRACLE STORIES

In certain instances, early Christian discourse blends prophetic rhetorolect with apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorolect. This occurs in Matt 8:16–17:

Case: That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons;

Result: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick (v. 16).

Rule: This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (v. 17).

In this instance, the narration in verse 17 attributes authoritative testimony about Jesus' identity to the prophet Isaiah. In Matthew's account, Isaiah, rather than demons or people who observe the miraculous events, explains the identity of Jesus. This is a direct alternative to Mark 1:34, where the narrative asserts that the demons knew who Jesus was. Matthew, in contrast to Mark, authoritatively grounds Jesus' healing activity in prophetic rhetorolect through the voice of “Isaiah the prophet.” In other words, rather than bringing into the foreground the apocalyptic conceptual domain where agents of affliction confront Jesus as the agent of healing, this Matthean discourse pushes apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorolect into the background to feature prophetic rhetorolect. The result is to move the discourse toward the conceptual arena of the God of Israel and away from a conceptual arena that focuses on unclean spirits, demons, and possibly other agents of evil in the world.

Luke 4:40–41 presents yet another alternative to Mark 1:32–34 and Matt 8:16–17. The Lukan summary allows the demons to identify Jesus, but then the narrator interprets what the demons' identification means:

Case: Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him;

Result/Case: and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them (v. 40).

Result/Case: And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!”

Contrary Result: But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak,

Rule: because they knew that he was the Messiah (v. 41).

In this Lukan summary, speech attributed to the demons identifies Jesus as the Son of God. The narrator then interprets the speech of the demons as evidence that they knew Jesus was the Messiah. This Lukan discourse, then, directs the demons’ identification of Jesus as the Son of God toward prophetic rhetorlect that features the coming of an anointed one who will oversee God’s kingdom on earth. In this instance, the narrator allows the demons to speak but then “speaks over” the demons with a statement that brings prophetic rhetorlect into the foreground as the summary closes.

The two miracle summaries discussed above show how early Christian discourse could blend apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorlect with the conceptual domain of the kingdom, to whom the God of Israel sent the prophets to confront people and give promises for renewal. As early Christians blended apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorlect with prophetic rhetorlect, they introduced a specially honed form of wisdom rhetorlect as a “debate arena.”⁴¹ This “wisdom” arena replaced confrontation between Jesus and unclean spirits or demons with debate between Jesus and scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests about the nature, propriety, and authority to heal. It is important, then, to turn to miracle summaries and stories that blend early Christian wisdom rhetorlect with prophetically and apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorlect.

6. WISDOM RHETORLECT BLENDS WITH APOCALYPTIC, PROPHETIC, AND PRIESTLY RHETORLECT IN SYNOPTIC MIRACLE STORIES

We have seen above how early Christian discourse blends prophetic, priestly, and apocalyptic rhetorlect with miracle rhetorlect. In early Christian discourse, “multiply blended” miracle discourse functions as an “emergent blend structure”⁴² in which early Christian wisdom rhetorlect

41. I am grateful to L. Gregory Bloomquist for insight into debate arenas in the rhetorlects.

42. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 42–50.

creates ever-widening networks of reasoning about Jesus as a miracle worker. In some instances, wisdom rhetorolect only stands implicitly in the background. The miracle summary in Matt 4:23–25 presents Jesus as going throughout Galilee teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and sickness among the people (a Case: v. 23). This sentence blends wisdom, prophetic, and miracle discourse as it opens a summary of Jesus' activity. When the narration describes Jesus as teaching, it evokes wisdom rhetorolect. When it describes Jesus as proclaiming the kingdom, it evokes prophetic rhetorolect. This passage, then, blends wisdom, prophetic, and miracle rhetorolect as it presents Jesus as a teacher, a prophet, and a healer. When Jesus teaches, speaks prophetically, and heals, his fame spreads throughout all Syria (the Result: v. 24a). This Result (Jesus' fame spreading) in turn becomes a Case that evokes a Result: they bring to him all the sick, those who were afflicted by various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics (v. 24b). Again this Result becomes a Case that evokes yet another Result: Jesus cures them (v. 24c). Still once again, this Result becomes a Case that evokes a Result. In this instance, however, the result is that great crowds follow Jesus from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan (v. 25).

The shift in the final Result suggests a sequence of persuasion that moves from being attracted to Jesus because he can heal to being persuaded that Jesus is a person worth following so that one may see all he does and says. The "following" in the closing of the sequence calls special attention to the opening, where Jesus is not only a healer but also a teacher and a prophet.⁴³ When Jesus teaches in synagogues, preaches about the kingdom, and heals people of every kind of affliction, "the God of Israel" is implicitly in the background of Jesus' speech and actions. But the blending and the background occur implicitly, rather than explicitly, in this narration, and it occurs without the aid of attributed speech. Every reason or rationale in the narration is a Case rather than a Rule, as is characteristic of inductive miracle rhetorolect. In other words, it presents no Rule like, "because God's power was in Jesus to heal" or "because Jesus was God's Son." Argumentation lies in a linear progression of narrational picturing (rhetography) that contains no discursive argumentation (rhetology).

43. For opening-middle-closing texture, see Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 19–21; idem, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 50–53.

Jesus' fame spreads because of his teaching, preaching, and healing (a Case); people bring sick people to Jesus because his fame spreads (a Case), and large crowds of people follow Jesus because he teaches, preaches, and heals sick people. Conceptually, the people's following of Jesus in the closing is likely to be as highly influenced by Jesus' teaching and prophetic speaking as by his miraculous cure of afflicted people. The narration, however, emphasizes actions by Jesus, and this produces inductive, rather than deductive, argumentation. All of the activities blend together and produce a result of large crowds following Jesus.

In the narrational presentation of Jesus as teacher, prophet, and healer in Matt 4:23–25, there is no specific reference to God, no portrayal of demons in challenge-riposte with Jesus, and no reference to faith. The conceptual network of “the God of Israel” clearly seems to stand in the background both of Jesus’ “teaching in their synagogues” and of Jesus’ “preaching the gospel of the kingdom.” Apocalyptic rhetorict probably stands implicitly in the background with the reference to “demonized people” in verse 24. Thus the pictorial narration presents a blend of wisdom, prophetic, miracle, and perhaps apocalyptic domains of meaning in early Christian discourse. In all of this, however, the “argumentation” occurs strictly through rhetography, picturing of the people bringing sick people to Jesus and following him. The narration does not move beyond “picturing” the people (rhetography) into “inner reasoning” by the people, by Jesus, or by the narrator (rhetology). The narration simply shows a picture of the people bringing sick people to Jesus and then following him, rather than presenting one or more argumentative reasons, like “because they had faith,” for their following of Jesus.

Matt 20:29–34, which features two blind men who are healed by Jesus, ends with a Result that the men follow Jesus. The story has a close relation to Mark 10:46–52 || Luke 18:35–43, which feature only one blind man, except that the topos of “faith” is not present in the Matthean story. Jesus speaks only once in the story, asking the men, “What do you want me to do for you?” (v. 32). In contrast, the men speak three times. The first two times, the men cry out, “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!” (vv. 30–31).⁴⁴ The third time they speak, they say, “Lord, let our eyes be opened” (v. 33). The rest of the story is narration:

44. Some manuscripts either put “Lord” first or omit “Lord” from the first cry in v. 30.

Result/Case: Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes.

Result/Case: Immediately they regained their sight.

Result: And they followed him (v. 34).

This story ends without any statement about the identity of Jesus, about the means by which the miracle occurred, about God, or about faith. The final Result is that the two men follow Jesus. The story does not, however, feature only narration. The blind men introduce the topoi of “mercy” and “Son of David” through their repetitive speech, and the narration afterward introduces the topos of Jesus’ “compassion.” The healing of blindness, which is a repeated emphasis in Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 18, points to a background of prophetic rhetorolect for Jesus’ miracle activity in this story. The constellation of “mercy,” “Son of David,” and Jesus’ “being moved with compassion” may also point in this same direction, though there is not space here to test this presupposition. The successful exchange of information in Jesus’ question and the answer of the blind men points implicitly, but not profoundly, to wisdom rhetorolect. The end result of this blend of miracle, prophetic, and possibly wisdom rhetorolect is that the two men follow Jesus, which is likely to imply some level of discipleship.

The discipleship that may be implied at the end of the two stories above becomes explicit in Luke 5:1–11. In this story, Simon, James, and John become disciples of Jesus after experiencing a miraculous catch of fish as a result of Jesus’ intervention into their daily activity. There is no direct focus on the transformation of an afflicted body in this story. An overall focus on “redeeming” a body so it functions dynamically in God’s world, however, is clearly present in the story. An important feature of the story is the sequence involving Peter’s response to the miracle of the large catch of fish:

Result/Case: But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying,

Result: “Go away from me, Lord,

Case: for I am a sinful man” (v. 8).

Rule: For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon (vv. 9–10a).

Result/Case: Then Jesus said to Simon,

Contrary Result: “Do not be afraid;

Contrary Case: from now on you will be catching people” (v. 10b).

Result: When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him (v. 11).

This story, like the others above, contains no reference to faith. Rather, it features “immediate confession” of unworthiness by Simon. Jesus responds to Simon’s action, which emerges out of laudable attributes of character, with an appeal to Simon not to be afraid and a pronouncement that from now on he will be catching people. Jesus’ pronouncement to Peter functions like a healing statement. Peter is changed from a person whose body is dominated with sin and fear into a person who “leaves everything and follows Jesus.” In this story, then, discipleship is the result of a miraculous transformation of a person with laudable attributes of character in a context of miracle and open confessional statement. Simon’s confession of sin introduces a dimension of priestly rhetorolect into a miracle story in which the final result of discipleship points to wisdom rhetorolect. This blending of miracle, priestly, and wisdom rhetorolect ends with a focus on people who move into a special relationship to Jesus, rather than a focus on Jesus’ identity, on the God of Israel, or on “faith” as something that made the events in the story occur.

Luke 7:18–23 || Matt 11:2–6 (Q), in contrast to Matt 4:23–25, contains a sequence of attributed statements that refer to Jesus’ performance of miraculous healings. In this instance, wisdom rhetorolect moves into the foreground of the presentation as a result of people bringing an inquiry to Jesus and Jesus’ response to the inquiry. In other instances we will see below, wisdom rhetorolect features people entering into debate with Jesus rather than simply asking him a question. Luke 7:18–23 blends wisdom and prophetic rhetorolect as disciples of John come to Jesus asking about his identity. Jesus’ answer dynamically blends miracle and prophetic rhetorolect as it presents a series of Cases without stating any clearly defined inference on the basis of them.

Case: John the Baptist heard⁴⁵ that Jesus was performing miraculous deeds.

Result/Case: John told his disciples to go to Jesus and say,

[Rule] “Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?”
(Luke 7:19 || Matt 11:3).

45. From his disciples: Luke 7:18 (Matthew leaves the source unspecified); while he was in prison: Matt 11:2 (Luke leaves the place unspecified).

Result/Case: John's disciples went to Jesus and asked him this question, in a context where Jesus was curing many people of diseases, plagues, evil spirits, and blindness (Luke 7:21).

Result/Case: Jesus said, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me" (Luke 7:22–23 || Matt 11:4–6).

The opening features miracle rhetorolect in narrational form. Having received information about Jesus' miracle activity, John tells his disciples to ask Jesus about a topic concerning prophetic rhetorolect. Thus the opening seeks an answer about Jesus' miraculous deeds in a rhetorolect that features God as one who selects, calls, and sends people to perform functions related to God's kingdom on earth. Jesus answers the question of John's disciples with a series of Cases of miraculous deeds that ends with "preaching good news to the poor," which is a prophetic activity. The discourse has the rhetorical effect of having Jesus agree, through the medium of a rehearsal of Cases, with the Rule (premise) that "he is the one to come." The moment is, however, enthymematic. The narration does not explicitly state the Rule. Rather, it places the "potential" Rule in the form of a question on the lips of John's disciples.

The Hebrew Bible attributes to Isaiah most of the speech that Luke 7:22–23 || Matt 11:4–6 attributes to Jesus in this passage: the blind receive their sight (Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 18); the lame walk (35:6); the deaf hear (29:18; 35:5; 42:18); the dead are raised (26:19); and the poor have good news brought to them (61:1). Matthew and Luke (Q) do not attribute this speech to Isaiah, however, but to Jesus. In other words, Jesus answers a question concerning his identity with a series of Cases that thoroughly blends miracle rhetorolect with prophetic speech from Isaiah. About the only Case Jesus' speech could include from Isaiah, which it does not, is "making the dumb speak" (Isa 35:6). Jesus' speech adds an item that the Hebrew Bible attributes to Elisha rather than to Isaiah: "the lepers are cleansed" (2 Kgs 5:1–14). It is also important that "the dead are raised" is supported by a Case attributed to Elijah in 1 Kgs 17:17–24 in addition to the statement in Isa 26:19. Thus this early Christian prophetic-miracle rhetorolect is related both to tradition about Isaiah and tradition about Elijah and Elisha.

As Matthean and Lukan discourse blend miracle and prophetic rhetorolect enthymematically, they produce early Christian wisdom

rhetorolect. The topic of Jesus' identity becomes a matter of early Christian wisdom as disciples of John ask Jesus a question that he answers with reference to actions that blend the conceptual domains of miracle and prophetic rhetorolect together. Jesus' blessing at the end of his statement further evokes the discourse of a prophet as it encourages the hearer not to reject either the message that is heard or the person to whom the message is attributed.

The presence of wisdom rhetorolect in Luke 7:18–23 is clear from the questions toward which the passage points but leaves unanswered. Is Jesus saying he is “the prophet” who is to come? Is Jesus saying he is someone greater than the prophets? Is there a better term than “prophet” for him? In this passage, Jesus is an authoritative witness “to himself” through his rehearsal and enactment of Cases. He noticeably leaves the Rule (the premise concerning who he is) unstated, however, and thus he leaves his answer in a rhetorically enthymematic form. The hearer must “infer” who Jesus is on the basis of Cases (inductive speech). But the topic of Jesus' identity has been “nurtured” with inner reasoning by a series of questions and answers. In contrast to other passages discussed above, the scene is set up as a question-and-answer sequence, which introduces the topic of Jesus' identity as an issue in early Christian wisdom rhetorolect. Once again, in a context where Jesus' identity is at issue, there is no explicit discussion of “faith.” There is, however, an explicit issue of who one “thinks” or perhaps “believes” Jesus to be. This implicit “conviction” or “belief” is not focused primarily on receiving the benefits of Jesus' actions, as miracle rhetorolect tends to be, but on a question-and-answer sequence that explores the identity of Jesus. Thus it moves beyond the narrational base of miracle rhetorolect into the sphere of “inner reasoning” characteristic of wisdom rhetorolect.

Matthew 11:20–24 and Luke 10:11b–16 refer to miracles in a context of the prophetic topos of repentance. Yet wisdom rhetorolect also plays a role in Jesus' speech. Rather than viewing this material from the perspective of Q material, it will be discussed here from the perspective of Matthew and Luke respectively. Matt 11:20–24 opens with editorial comment:

Case: Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done,

Rule: because they did not repent (v. 20).

The prophetic topos of “repentance,” introduced as a rationale for Jesus' “reproach” (*oneidizein*) of the cities, sets the stage for Jesus' statements

that follow. Adopting the form of “Woe” pronouncement, Jesus says that Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum will receive curses rather than blessings from God, because they did not repent in the context of mighty works done in their midst. In contrast, Tyre and Sidon (Gentile cities) would have repented long ago. Prophetic rhetorolect blends with apocalyptic rhetorolect as Jesus asks Capernaum:

Case: Will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.

Rule: For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Case: But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you (vv. 23–24).

The reasoning in this passage is that Jesus’ performance of deeds of power should result in people’s repentance. The presupposition is that if people repent in the context of the miraculous deeds, they will be blessed. If they do not, they will be cursed. The concept of curse moves to an apocalyptic picture of the day of judgment, when people will either be exalted to heaven or cast down to Hades. Thus Jesus’ sayings blend miracle rhetorolect with prophetic and apocalyptic rhetorolect. This blend of miracle, prophetic, and apocalyptic rhetorolect, then, moves beyond the topos of “taking offense [*skandalisthēi*] at Jesus” (Luke 7: 23 || Matt 11:6) to “repenting” (*metenoēsan*) in the context of Jesus’ deeds of power. While being scandalized keeps the focus on Jesus as a miracle worker, repenting moves the focus to movement “within the inner mind” of the person who observes the miraculous deeds. The topos of repentance, then, stands at the interface of prophetic and wisdom rhetorolect. Matthew 11:20–24 blends miracle, prophetic, and apocalyptic rhetorolect in a manner than moves inwardly in its cognition, rather than outwardly to the identity of Jesus, to God, or to demons and their network of power. Indeed, Matt 11:25–30 continues with the topic of “things hidden from the wise and intelligent” but revealed to infants. In Matt 11:20–24, then, we see a movement of miracle rhetorolect toward “inner processes” of redemption and renewal that create an “emergent structure” that invites wisdom rhetorolect dynamically into miracle rhetorolect.

Luke 10:11b–16 also blends miracle, prophetic, and apocalyptic rhetorolect, but in a slightly different way from Matt 11:20–24. Luke 10:11b, occurring in the midst of Jesus’ instructions to the Seventy, presents Jesus asserting:

Case: You know (*ginōskete*) this: the kingdom of God has come near.

Result: I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town [that does not welcome you: 10:10].

These verses introduce a blend of wisdom, prophetic, and apocalyptic rhetorolect prior to the statement that refers to Jesus' deeds of power in 10:13. Thus they establish the blended frame into which Jesus' further statements blends miracle rhetorolect:

Case: Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!

Rule: For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

Case: But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you (Luke 10:13–14).

In this instance, the assertion that Jesus' deeds of power should have resulted in repentance occurs only once, in the middle of Jesus' statement, rather than in narration at the beginning and then in speech of Jesus, as it does in Matt 11:20–21. The single reference to Jesus' deeds of power in Luke 10:13 contributes to a movement through prophetic, apocalyptic, and miracle rhetorolect to wisdom rhetorolect focused on the topos of "rejection":

Case: Whoever listens to you listens to me,

Contrary Case: and whoever rejects you rejects me,

Contrary Result: and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.

This tripartite saying of Jesus is, on the one hand, clearly early Christian wisdom rhetorolect. In the context of "knowing" that the kingdom of God has come near (10:11), Jesus transmits to the Seventy wisdom regarding being listened to and rejected. On the other hand, this wisdom blends the realms of discipleship, Christology, and theology. "Disciples" who accept Jesus' exhortation to "Go on your way" (10:3) will be listened to by some and rejected by others (10:16). Jesus teaches these "disciples" that people's acceptance or rejection of them is also an acceptance or rejection of Jesus as prophet, apocalyptic seer, and miracle worker. The final statement in the

saying, however, moves beyond the Seventy and Jesus to the conceptual network of God's activity. The God of Israel, who brings the kingdom of God near and who calls and empowers Jesus to heal and to speak prophetic and apocalyptic wisdom, is the one whom people ultimately reject, if they reject those whom Jesus sends out as "laborers into his harvest" (10:2). This is early Christian wisdom, which contains prophetic, apocalyptic, and miracle rhetorolect thoroughly blended into its reasoning and its content. In this context, then, early Christian discourse is dynamically transforming miracle rhetorolect into wisdom rhetorolect through the media of early Christian prophetic and apocalyptic rhetorolect.

A significant number of miracle stories features "controversy" that pits the wisdom of Jesus against a range of people who take issue with his healing activity. One of the major issues is Jesus' performance of healings on the sabbath. These stories feature Jesus' wisdom as negotiating larger issues of life than "what is lawful" in the minds of Pharisees, lawyers, and chief priests. Jesus never responds to these issues of "lawfulness" by citing words from Torah. Rather, he responds with "wise sayings" that turn what otherwise might be "legal" discourse into a public "battle of wits." While Jesus always wins the argument, the narration indicates that he will not, in the end, escape the political "plans" against him. Thus, wisdom rhetorolect in these stories blends with prophetic rhetorolect in a manner that negotiates Jesus' rejection by political authorities as a judgment against those authorities rather than against Jesus himself.

The healing of the blind and lame in the temple in Matt 21:14–16 introduces controversy over Jesus' identity.⁴⁶ Again, faith is not a topic in this context:

Case: And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple,

Result/Case: and he healed them (v. 14).

Result/Case: But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant (v. 15);

Result/Case: and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?"

Result: And Jesus said to them, "Yes;

46. Cf. the focus on Jesus' identity in the healing of the lame man in John 5:1–18.

Rule: have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise?’” (v. 16).

In this instance, the controversy is embedded in narration that describes the reaction of people to Jesus’ healing of the blind and lame people who came to Jesus in the temple. Attribution to children of praise of Jesus in the name of the Son of David introduces wisdom rhetorolect, which is grounded in the transmission of wisdom from parents to children. The topos of the children’s speech, however, is internal to prophetic rhetorolect. When the chief priests and scribes confront Jesus about the children’s praise of him as Son of David, he answers that he is aware of the content of their praise and articulates a premise (Rule) for the children’s speech. Jesus’ response to the chief priests and scribes recontextualizes the LXX form of Ps 8:2. There is no comment either in the narration or in Jesus’ statement that attributes the statement to David. Rather, in the mode that appears in the Q account (Luke 7:18–23 || Matt 11:2–6) of Jesus’ response to John’s disciples, which was discussed above, words traditionally attributed to a personage in the Hebrew Bible are attributed to Jesus himself. The “Davidic” response defines newborn and suckling babies as those who (on the basis of un-adult-erated wisdom) speak perfect praise. Priestly rhetorolect stands in the background of the story with the presence of Jesus in the temple and with the speech of the chief priests and their scribes. Wisdom and prophetic rhetorolect blend with miracle rhetorolect as children praise Jesus in relation to the kingdom of Israel, and Jesus defends the “praise” of the children with words from the psalms of David. The story exhibits a sharp divide between the “priestly” wisdom of the chief priests and scribes and the “prophetic miracle” wisdom of Jesus. “Children,” in their wisdom, respond with “perfect praise” of Jesus when he heals the blind and lame who come into the temple. Jesus replies to chief priests and scribes with a statement that defines them as either unaware or having forgotten how the psalms of David, the one who established Jerusalem as the place for God’s temple, praise the speech that comes out of the mouths of newborn and suckling babies. When chief priests and scribes object to Jesus’ performance of miraculous deeds of healing in the temple, they exhibit, according to the story, an absence of wisdom that children possess “naturally” from the time of their birth.

Yet another form of “wisdom” encounter occurs in Mark 3:1–6 || Matt 12:9–14 || Luke 6:6–11. In this story, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand in a synagogue. Jesus’ characteristic activity in synagogues is teach-

ing, as Luke 6:6 indicates (cf. Mark 1:21; 6:1 par.). In the context of his teaching, Jesus heals the man. When Pharisees (and “scribes” in Luke 6:7) object that Jesus is doing something “unlawful” by healing on the sabbath, priestly rhetorolect blends with wisdom rhetorolect as a result of a focus on sacred time. Instead of responding with something written in Torah, Jesus responds with “his own” wisdom: “Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to kill/destroy?” (Mark 3:4 || Luke 6:9). Matthew 12:11–12 features Jesus’ response as: “Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep!” Jesus does not enter into a legal debate based on what is written in the Torah. Rather, he responds with an insight based on “wisdom,” people’s “intelligent” actions in daily life. Like the story immediately above, this story ends with ominous conflict between the “wisdom” spoken by leaders in the context of a synagogue and the “wisdom” spoken by the one who performs miraculous deeds of healing, even on the sabbath.

Another version of the controversy between the wisdom of leaders of synagogues and the wisdom of Jesus who heals occurs in Luke 13:10–17. Again Jesus heals in a synagogue on the sabbath, but this time he heals a woman who had been bent over for eighteen years:

Case: And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your infirmity” (v. 12).

Result/Case: And he laid his hands upon her,

Result/Case: and immediately she was made straight,

Result: and she praised God (v. 13).

As in the stories above, there is no emphasis on faith. Also, there is no query about Jesus’ identity. Rather, as soon as the woman is healed, she praises God. But this is not the end of the story. The ruler of the synagogue presents a contrary Result, which launches a controversy dialogue about healing on the sabbath:

Contrary Result/Case: But the ruler of the synagogue,

Rule: indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath,

Case: said to the people,

Rule: “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day” (v. 14).

Result/Case: Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites!

Case: Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? (v. 15).

Result: And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” (v. 16).

Result: As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame;

Contrary Result: and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him (v. 17).

The ruler of the synagogue accuses Jesus of acting improperly on the sabbath, reciting the premise (Rule) that all healing must be done on the six days when people work, and not on the sabbath. Jesus does not counter the ruler’s premise with another premise (Rule). In other words, Jesus does not counter a deductive argument with an opposite deductive argument. Also, Jesus does not cite a verse from Torah to counter the “wisdom” of the ruler of the synagogue. Rather, Jesus presents a Case of the activities of leaders of the Jewish people with their own ox or ass on the sabbath, and he draws an inductive conclusion (Result) from it. Then the narration interprets the effect of Jesus’ response as “shame” for “all of Jesus’ adversaries” in a context where “all the people” were celebrating all the things Jesus was doing. Malina and Rohrbaugh call attention to the manner in which Jesus identifies the woman as a legitimate member of the community—a daughter of Abraham (v. 16)—and restores her to her group. When the people respond positively to Jesus’ restoration of the woman to the community in a public context where the ruler of the synagogue challenges Jesus’ honor, the ruler suffers “a serious loss of face.”⁴⁷ Again, there is no focus on faith in this story. The implicit controversy concerns Jesus’ identity: Who is Jesus that he has the authority to perform deeds on the sabbath that are not considered appropriate by other religious authorities? Neither Jesus nor the people formulate an explicit premise (Rule) for Jesus’ authority to do this. Rather, Jesus presents an inductive argument based on the activities of Jewish leaders with oxen and donkeys, and the people respond positively to it. Once again, wisdom rhetorolect becomes

47. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 363.

dominant in Jesus' speech, resulting in serious conflict between a leader of sacred place and time in the tradition of Israel.

Luke 14:1–6 exhibits yet another example of the function of early Christian wisdom rhetorolect in stories that feature controversy over Jesus' healing on the sabbath rather than a focus on Jesus' identity. In this instance, Jesus himself initiates a controversy with lawyers and Pharisees in the house of a ruler of the Pharisees and heals a man with dropsy as a public challenge to the premise (Rule) he presupposes they hold for judging the appropriateness of healing a person on the sabbath:

Case: And Jesus spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying,

Rule: "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?" (v. 3).

Result: But they were silent.

Case with the Healed Man: Then he took him and healed him, and let him go (v. 4).

Case with the lawyers and Pharisees: And he said to them,

Case: "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on a sabbath day?" (v. 5).

Result: And they could not reply to this (v. 6).

In this instance Jesus initiates a controversy by stating a premise (Rule) that he is sure the lawyers and Pharisees will consider authoritative, then healing a man with dropsy on the sabbath. The narration depicts the lawyers and Pharisees as unwilling to speak throughout the entire episode. In the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, Jesus issues a public challenge to lawyers and Pharisees that puts them in a position where the narration depicts them as either unable to speak successfully or unwilling to risk speaking in this public setting for fear of loss of face. Willi Braun has presented a detailed sociorhetorical analysis of the healing and its elaboration in Luke 14:1–24.⁴⁸ The overall controversy addresses the issue of social exclusivism at meals among the elite in Mediterranean society and inclusive fellowship among early Christian movement groups.⁴⁹ The Lukan episode negotiates the controversy with skillful wisdom rhetorolect that challenges the exclusion of the lame, maimed, and blind from one's religious community.

48. Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (SNTSMS 85; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

49. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 367–68.

Again, neither the healing nor the wisdom discourse following it raises the topic of faith.

Early Christian wisdom rhetorolect functions in a somewhat different way in the account of the possessed man in the Capernaum synagogue in Mark 1:21–28 || Luke 4:31–37 (no Matthew account).⁵⁰ The story begins with Jesus' teaching in the synagogue and the people's amazement at the authority of his teaching (Mark 1:21–22 || Luke 4:31). Then it turns abruptly to a possessed man who cries out to Jesus, "Why are you bothering us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24 || Luke 4:34).⁵¹ The title "the Holy One of God," by which Jesus is identified in this confrontation, is language at home in the conceptual domain of the prophetic miracle worker Elisha.⁵² The Result of the public identification of Jesus in this manner leads to the following sequence:

Result/Case: Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" (Mark 1:25 || Luke 4:35a).

Result/Case: And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him (Mark 1:26 || cf. Luke 4:35b).

Result/Case: They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another,

Rule: "What is this? A new teaching with authority!

Case: He commands even the unclean spirits,

Result: and they obey him" (Mark 1:27 || cf. Luke 4:36).

Result: At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee (Mark 1:28 || cf. Luke 4:37).

The opening focus on Jesus' teaching and the question about the authority of Jesus' words to command unclean spirits in the closing blend Jesus' healing of the man with wisdom rhetorolect. In turn, the identification of Jesus as "the Holy One of God" blends prophetic rhetorolect with the wisdom and miracle rhetorolect in the story. The presence of the unclean spirits probably indicates the presence of apocalyptic rhetorolect in the background. There is no reference to faith in the account. Rather,

50. Cf. Matt 4:13; 7:28–29.

51. Luke 4:34 begins the attributed speech of the man with "Let us alone" (*ea*).

52. See 2 Kgs 4:9: "She said to her husband, 'Look, I am sure that this man who regularly passes our way is a holy man of God.'"

the story blends wisdom, miracle, prophetic, and apocalyptic rhetorlect as it focuses on the identity of Jesus and the source of his authority (and power) in the context of unclean spirits/demons.

The most fully developed “wisdom” discussion of Jesus’ performance of miraculous deeds occurs in response to an assertion that Jesus casts out demons by the prince of demons, whom the tradition names as Beelzebul. There is, on the one hand, the account of the healing of the dumb man in Matt 9:32–34, which simply introduces the controversy without developing the topic with wisdom rhetorlect. The story focuses on the identity of Jesus and the source of his power, without emphasis on faith:

Case: As they were going away, behold, a dumb demoniac was brought to him (v. 32).

Result/Case: And when the demon had been cast out,

Result: the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, “Never was anything like this seen in Israel” (v. 33).

Contrary Result: But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the ruler [*archonti*] of demons” (v. 34).

This story ends simply with a statement by the Pharisees that disagrees with the statement of the crowds. Instead of blending Jesus’ activity with the story of Israel, which includes the God of Israel and God’s prophets, the Pharisees blend Jesus’ healing activity with apocalyptic rhetorlect. As we have seen above, early Christian discourse could blend its apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorlect in two basic ways. First, it could blend it with prophetic and wisdom rhetorlect in such a manner that Jesus’ “word” has authority “to command even the unclean spirits and they obey.” Second, it could blend it with a form of priestly rhetorlect that features Jesus as “the Son of God” or “Son of the Most High God,” before whom unclean spirits fall down and worship. The story in Matt 9:32–34 intercepts both traditions of blending by introducing “an agent of evil” who is “the ruler” of demons. It is noticeable that no one in Matt 9:32–34 mentions God or uses the title Son of God. Pushing the conceptual network of the God of Israel into the background with a reference simply to “Israel,” the story brings the apocalyptic conceptual domain of “demons” into the foreground through a repetitive texture that refers to the dumb man as “demonized” (v. 32), asserts that Jesus successfully cast out the demon (v. 33), then features the Pharisees asserting that he casts out demons by the ruler of demons (v. 34). The repetitive texture of the story displaces the “multiple” ways early

Christians blended apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorolect with a blend that focuses on a “ruler” of demons and aligns Jesus with that ruler, since he has such overwhelming power over them.

Early Christians used wisdom rhetorolect to address the “controversy” about the possibility that Jesus was aligned with the ruler of demons. Mark 3:22–30 and Luke 11:14–23 || Matt 12:22–30 (Q) present alternative versions of the “wisdom controversy.”⁵³ It is important to notice that none of the discussions mention the topos of faith. Rather, the focus is on the identity of Jesus and the source of his power. For purposes of space, it is necessary to limit the discussion here to the version in Matt 12:22–37:

Case: Then they brought to him a demoniac who was blind and mute (v. 22a);

Result/Case: and he cured him, so that the one who had been mute could speak and see (v. 22b).

Result/Rule: All the crowds were amazed and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” (v. 23)

Countercase: But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts out the demons” (v. 24).

Argument from Analogies for the Implausibility of the Pharisees’ Definition: He knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? (vv. 25–26).

Argument from Quality in Common: If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges (v. 27).

Counterdefinition: But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you (v. 28).

Restatement of the Counterdefinition by Analogy: Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property, without

53. Vernon K. Robbins, “Rhetorical Composition and the Beelzebul Controversy,” in *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (ed. Burton L. Mack and Vernon K Robbins; Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 161–93; idem, “Beelzebul Controversy in Mark and Luke: Rhetorical and Social Analysis,” *Forum* 7.3–4 (1991): 261–77.

first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered (v. 29).

Inference: Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters (v. 30).

Argument concerning Gravity: Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven (v. 31).

Statement of the Law: Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come (v. 32).

Diairesis through Analogy: Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit (v. 33).

Conclusion:

Direct Address: You brood of vipers! (v. 34a).

Quaestio: How can you speak good things, when you are evil? (v. 34b).

Rationale: For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person brings good things out of a good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure (vv. 34c–35).

Judgment with Rationale: I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (vv. 36–37).⁵⁴

One can easily see that the argumentative mode of wisdom rhetorlect has become dominant, in contrast to the inductive narrational mode of miracle rhetorlect. It is informative, however, to see how “picturesque” the argumentation is. Rhetography continually grounds the rhetology in a mode of argumentation that “seeks analogies” in multiple experiential domains.⁵⁵

54. Robbins, “Rhetorical Composition and the Beelzebul Controversy,” 178–85.

55. See Elizabeth E. Shively, “The Story Matters: Solving the Problem of the Parables in Mark 3:22–30,” in *Between Author and Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation* (ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 122–44.

Matthew 12:22–37 begins with apocalyptically energized miracle narration (v. 22), to which crowds respond by blending a mode of prophetic rhetorlect that focuses on Jesus as “Son of David” (v. 23). Pharisees counter the response of the crowd with apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorlect that focuses on “Beelzebul, the ruler of demons” (vv. 24). Jesus responds with analogies from the domains of prophetic rhetorlect (kingdom) and wisdom rhetorlect (city and house) to describe Beelzebul in terms of “Satan divided against himself” (vv. 25–26). Then Jesus returns to miracle rhetorlect by comparing himself with an exorcist with “exorcists among the Pharisees” (v. 27). After this, Jesus introduces “the Spirit of God” as the counterforce against demons and blends the activity of this “spirit” with the topos of “the kingdom of God,” which is central to prophetic rhetorlect (v. 28). Then Jesus returns to the topos of “house,” which is central to wisdom rhetorlect but focuses on the house as a “storehouse” guarded by a strong man (v. 29). This move turns “the house of wisdom” into “a central storehouse” containing goods that people attempt to plunder for their own benefit. Moving into the realm of wisdom rhetorlect, Jesus draws an inference that people are either “with” him or “against” him (v. 30) and defines a stance against him as “blasphemy against the Spirit” that will not be forgiven, which is a topos of priestly rhetorlect energized by apocalyptic conceptuality (v. 31). At this point, Jesus introduces yet another personage from the conceptual domain of apocalyptic rhetorlect, the Son of Man. Instead of featuring the Son of man as God’s “highest agent” of apocalyptic judgment, however, Jesus speaks of him as lower in rank than “the Holy Spirit.” One can speak against the Son of Man and be forgiven, but any statement against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable (v. 31). At this point, the argumentation attributed to Jesus makes an unusual move in the arena of apocalyptically energized miracle discourse. In contrast to “miracle narration,” which regularly features Jesus as “the Son of [the Most High] God” against the demons, Jesus’ wisdom argumentation features “the Holy Spirit” or “the Spirit of God” (vv. 28, 31–32) as the ultimate power against the demons. In this way Jesus’ argumentation, in response to the domain employed by his opponents, moves deeply into the domain of apocalyptic rhetorlect. Jesus’ statements counter the charge of alignment with Beelzebul with a counterargument that raises the status of “the power” within Jesus (which could come forth) to “the Holy Spirit” or “the Spirit of God,” which is the ultimate power against demons, unclean spirits, evil spirits, and all other spirits that cause dumbness, deafness, epilepsy, and other kinds of ail-

ments. After the introduction of the Holy Spirit as the ultimate power against the demons, the argumentation returns to analogies characteristic of wisdom rhetorolect: (1) people are either like good fruit-bearing trees or bad fruit-bearing trees (v. 33); (2) people who speak evil things are snakes (v. 34a); and (3) words come out of the heart of a person like good or bad things come out of a treasure box (vv. 34b–35). Then the argumentation returns to apocalyptic rhetorolect as it features people who speak careless words as being condemned on the day of judgment (vv. 36–37).

In summary, Matt 12:22–37 features wisdom rhetorolect from the mouth of Jesus that negotiates apocalyptically energized miracle rhetorolect in such a manner that it identifies all apocalyptic “agents of evil” in the personages of demons, Beelzebul, and Satan as against “agents of God” in the personages of the Son of David, the Spirit of God, the Son of Man, and the Holy Spirit. No “miracle story,” which keeps inductive narration as its rhetorical base, negotiates all of these personages in this manner. Only “wisdom argumentation,” which negotiates questions, assertions, rationales, analogies, opposites, contraries, and authoritative judgments, is able to introduce this many “agents” of power into the discussion and define their activity in relation to God and to forces of evil.

As has been mentioned throughout this section, it is important to notice that none of the stories and summaries of Jesus’ healings discussed above contains a reference to faith. Yet one can see how faith could become an important topos in early Christian narration of miracle discourse. If large numbers of people bring people to Jesus to be healed, then it can be reasoned that those people believe there is a good chance Jesus will be able to heal them. In other words, a series of stories about people bringing sick persons to Jesus can evoke the inference (Rule) that these people believed Jesus could heal them. Yet, as we have seen above, there are a significant number of summaries and stories in the Synoptic Gospels that do not mention faith as an explicit topos. Rather, they focus on Jesus as a healer, and they raise various possibilities about Jesus’ relation to the God of Israel and to demons without giving specific answers concerning what those relationships might be. The focus of the narration, then, is epideictic: praise of Jesus and the God of Israel in contexts that sometimes blame demons or unclean spirits for people’s afflictions. This miracle narration blends with apocalyptic, prophetic, and wisdom rhetorolect as the discourse provides various alternatives for identifying who Jesus is.

7. MIRACLE STORIES EMPHASIZING FAITH

In the midst of the narrational summaries and stories featuring the miraculous deeds of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, there are twelve stories that introduce the topos of “faith” (*pistis*) or “lack of faith” (*apistia*). Multiple versions of two of the stories refer to faith or lack of faith only in a narrational comment.⁵⁶ The remaining ten stories feature the topos of faith on the lips of Jesus, and sometimes faith is described as “great” or “little.”⁵⁷ This paper concludes that the topos of faith blends wisdom rhetorlect with miracle rhetorlect in an especially dynamic manner in early Christian discourse. Faith resides in the inner recesses of the heart, mind, and body, where tradition conventionally places wisdom. Early Christian discourse programmatically reconfigures Mediterranean miracle discourse into wisdom discourse, and the topos of faith is a primary means by which this reconfiguration occurs. In the process, miracle discourse becomes sapiential faith discourse. This means that early Christian miracle discourse becomes wisdom discourse of a very particular kind in Mediterranean culture and society.

7.1. FAITH IN NARRATION

Two of the twelve miracle stories that mention faith or lack of faith present the topos in narration only, and not in speech attributed to Jesus. In Mark 2:1–12 || Matt 9:1–8 || Luke 5:17–26, Jesus interprets the exceptional effort of the people who bring the paralytic to Jesus—namely, their lowering of him through the roof when they could not get through the door—as faith.⁵⁸ This occurs in narration that asserts that Jesus, “seeing their faith” (*idōn*),

56. All three versions of the story where four men dig a hole in the roof of a house to let a paralytic down to Jesus (Mark 2:1–12 || Matt 9:1–8 || Luke 5:17–26) assert that Jesus “saw the faith” of the men, and there are two versions of Jesus’ rejection at Nazareth (Mark 6:1–6 || Matt 13:53–58) that make a narrational assertion about “lack of faith” in a context where Jesus does not perform any “powerful deeds” (*dynameis*).

57. One of the stories is in Q tradition (Luke 7:1–10 || Matt 8:5–13); one is only in Luke (17:11–19); and one is only in Matthew (9:27–31). Five more are in triple tradition, and two are in Mark-Matthew tradition with no mention of faith in the Markan version and no parallel in Luke.

58. See Cotter, *Christ of the Miracle Stories*, 79–105. In her view (101–5), this story exhibits Jesus’ *philanthrōpia*, *praos*, and *epieikia* (an understanding of the desperation of the needy that goes beyond any other consideration).

makes his pronouncement of healing. The narration, then, presents Jesus as interpreting actions of four men that all people can see in terms of faith that he “sees” in the inner recesses of their hearts and minds. In sociorhetorical terms, this action by Jesus blends wisdom rhetorolect with miracle rhetorolect. The Matthean account is particularly interesting for rhetorical analysis and interpretation, since it contrasts the faith Jesus sees in the four men with the “enthymemes” (inner reasonings) he sees in the scribes (9:2, 4). The contrast helps to define the location of faith in the place where people reason. In Matt 9:4, after the narrational assertion about Jesus “seeing [*idōn*] their *enthymemes* [*enthymēseis*],” Jesus asks the scribes why they “*enthymeme* [*enthymēsthe*] evil in their hearts.”⁵⁹ This sequence counterbalances good reasoning, namely, faith that moves people toward Jesus for healing, against bad reasoning, namely, “enthymemes,” supporting the proposition that Jesus blasphemes when he forgives sins. Jesus’ statements about faith and *enthymeme* move the discourse decisively into the domain of early Christian wisdom rhetorolect, which is grounded in God’s creation of the world as “good” (Gen 1) and in the ability of humans to distinguish between good and evil (Gen 3). But this story does more than blend miracle and wisdom rhetorolect. It blends miracle, wisdom, priestly, and perhaps apocalyptic rhetorolect when it identifies Jesus as “the Son of man who has authority on earth to forgive sins.” Also, narration in Luke 5:17 specifically evokes the network of God’s activity when it asserts that “the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal.” Miracle and wisdom rhetorolect, then, create an “emergent blend structure”⁶⁰ in which multiple conceptual domains and networks dynamically interact with, blend with, and reconfigure one another.

In the context of the multiple blending in the story of the healing of the paralytic, the endings of the different versions are particularly interesting. All three versions include “glorifying [*doxazein*] God” at the end of their accounts. The Markan version ends with an assertion that all were amazed (*existasthai*) and glorified God, saying, “We have never before seen anything like this!” (2:12). Here the people refer to God in relation to the overall event of the healing of the paralytic in a context of forgiveness of sins. The Matthean version blends the people’s glorifying of God with

59. Matthew also uses the verb *enthymēomai* in 1:20, when Joseph *enthymemes* that he will divorce Mary quietly, and in 12:25, where Jesus knows the *enthymemes* of the Pharisees about Jesus’ casting out of demons.

60. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 42–50.

“being afraid” as they reflect on God’s giving of “such authority to humans” (*anthrōpōis*: 9:8). Here, then, fear and praise blend together as people direct their attention to God as the source of authority in humans both to forgive sins and to heal. The Lukan version both expands and reconfigures conceptual domains and networks as it shows a sequence that begins with the healed man’s “glorifying of God” in his home and continues with all being seized (*elaben*) with amazement (*ekstasis*), glorifying God, being filled with fear, and saying, “We have seen a paradox [*paradoxa*] today” (5:26). Each version, in its own way, exhibits “inner processes of reasoning” that evoke multiple *topoi* in a “double-scope network” focused on Jesus as a miracle worker and God as one who empowers and authorizes certain humans on earth. While the Markan version shows the people responding to “the whole event,” the Matthean version focuses attention on God’s giving of authority to humans both to forgive and to heal, and the Lukan version introduces the concept of “paradox” to describe the conceptual challenge the story presents to people who try to understand the dynamics of the story. Wisdom rhetorolect therefore blends dynamically with miracle, priestly, and perhaps apocalyptic rhetorolect both throughout and at the end of this story in its multiple versions in the Synoptic Gospels.

Another story that features the concept of faith in narration is Mark 6:1–6 || Matt 13:53–58. In this story, however, the *topos* is “lack of faith” (*apistia*) rather than “faith” (*pistis*). The beginning of the story features Jesus teaching in his hometown synagogue. (Mark 6:2 adds that it was on the Sabbath.) The story blends wisdom with miracle rhetorolect when the people wonder out loud,

Rule: “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him?”

Case: What deeds of power are done by his hands!

Case: Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?”

Result: And they took offense (*eskandalizonto*) at him (Mark 6:2–3; cf. Matt 13:54–57).

Here the people in Jesus’ hometown respond in exactly the way Jesus asks people not to respond in Luke 7:23 || Matt 11:6. When people are scandalized by Jesus, they fulfill the dynamics of prophetic rhetorolect that Jesus introduces when he says, “A prophet is not without honor except in

his homeland, among his kinfolk, and in his home” (Mark 6:4).⁶¹ In the Markan version, blending of wisdom, prophetic, and miracle rhetorolect features Jesus’ inability (Mark 6:5) to do any “miracle” (*dynamis*) in the context of the people’s rejection of him in Nazareth. He does, however, lay his hands on a few people and heal (*therapeuō*) them. Matthew 13:57 avoids a statement that Jesus was unable to perform miracles in a context where no faith is present, asserting in contrast to Mark that Jesus “did not do many miracles there.” Markan narration in 6:6 asserts that Jesus, in the context of his inability to do any “miracle” (*dynamis*) there, “marveled” (*ethaumazen*) at their lack of faith (*apistian*). It is important to note that the Markan account does not say that Jesus was unable to perform any *dynamis* there “because” of the people’s lack of faith, though the narration may be interpreted to imply this. Luke 4:16–30, which appears to be Luke’s version of the account, features the people’s rejection of Jesus, but it never features the topos of faith.

There are only two instances in miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels, then, where faith or lack of faith is a topos in narration. In the story of the paralytic in Mark 2:1–12 || Matt 9:1–8 || Luke 5:17–26, wisdom, priestly, and perhaps apocalyptic rhetorolect blend together with miracle rhetorolect to create a dynamic emergent structure in early Christian discourse that focuses on people’s reasoning about things in a manner that implies that faith is good reasoning. Narration in the story of Jesus’ rejection at Nazareth works in a somewhat different way as it introduces lack of faith into discourse that blends wisdom, miracle, and prophetic rhetorolect dynamically with one another. In this instance, the prophetic topos of rejection creates a context in which the narration correlates either Jesus’ “inability to perform any miracles” or simply his “not doing any miracles” with “lack of faith.” The end result is a strengthening of the topos of faith through the presence of its opposite, lack of faith, in early Christian miracle discourse.

7.2. JESUS SAYS THEIR FAITH “MADE THEM WELL”

Three of the ten miracle stories that mention faith or lack of faith in speech attributed to Jesus present Jesus asserting to people that their faith has made them well. All three versions of the healing of the woman with the

61. Cf. Matt 13:57; Luke 4:24; John 4:44.

flow (Mark 5:24b–34 || Matt 9:19–22 || Luke 8:42b–48) contain only one occurrence of the word faith, and in all instances the word occurs in Jesus' statement, "Your faith has made you well [*sesōken*]." In this story, "faith" seems to refer to the confidence of the woman that there was power in Jesus that could and would come forth from Jesus and heal her disease. As I indicated in 1987, "Her motivation could be understood either as 'simplemindedness or silliness' (*euēthia*), 'boldness' (*tolmān/tolmein*), 'faith' (*pistis*), 'hope' (*elpis*), 'courage' (*andreia*), 'despair' (*apognōsis*), or some other state of mind or action."⁶² In all versions, however, Jesus interprets the inner reasoning that motivated her as faith, and he asserts that this faith has made her well.

Rather than blending various rhetorolects together, this story locates Jesus' miracle activity in a context where physicians in the Mediterranean world regularly offer healing. The dynamic blending occurs in Jesus' interpreting of the reasoning of the woman, which he identifies as faith. Jesus asserts that this "faith reasoning" has motivated her to act in a manner that caused her healing to occur. Here again, then, we see a miracle story that portrays Jesus interpreting the inner reasoning of a person, in this instance the afflicted person herself, as faith. The end result, again, is a dynamic blending of miracle and wisdom rhetorolect.

Another story in which Jesus states that a person's faith has made him or her well is only in Luke. Luke 17:11–19 contains an account of Jesus' healing of ten lepers. As a group, they call Jesus by name, address him as Master (*epistata*), and ask him to have mercy on them. He tells them to go and show themselves to the priests, and as they go they are cleansed (v. 14). Thus the story blends miracle and priestly rhetorolect, and, as we also know from above, the healing of leprosy evokes prophetic rhetorolect in relation to Elisha. One of the lepers, a Samaritan, when he sees that he has been healed, turns back, praising God with a loud voice (v. 15), falling on his face at Jesus' feet, and giving Jesus thanks (v. 16). After Jesus rhetorically asks if ten were not cleansed and where the other nine are, and if no one has returned to praise God except this foreigner, he says, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well" (v. 19). Faith is associated in this story with appropriate embodying of action of inferiority in relation

62. Vernon K. Robbins, "The Woman who Touched Jesus' Garment: Socio-rhetorical Analysis of the Synoptic Accounts," *NTS* 33 (1987): 506 (502–15); repr. in *New Boundaries in Old Territory: Form and Social Rhetoric in Mark* (ESEC 3; New York: Lang, 1994), 191 (185–200).

to Jesus. Also, the story associates faith with praising God. An interesting question the story leaves unresolved is the means by which the other nine lepers were healed. Were the others healed, even though they did not have faith? Should one presuppose that the other nine enacted faith in their cry to Jesus to have mercy on them (v. 13)? The story leaves these questions unanswered. The focus is on a foreigner who praises God, prostrates himself at Jesus' feet, and thanks Jesus (vv. 15–16). Jesus defines this priestly activity and honoring of Jesus as faith, and Jesus asserts that this faith made him well.

The third story featuring an assertion by Jesus to the healed person that his faith made him well serves to introduce interpreters to ways in which Matthean miracle stories are particularly distinctive among the Synoptic Gospels. Overall, Matthean miracle stories feature more speech by Jesus than in Markan and Lukan miracle stories.⁶³ In the instance of the third story, the healing of the blind man in Mark 10:46–52 || Luke 18:35–43, Matthew presents a very special circumstance. The Matthean story with the closest relation to the Markan and Lukan version, Matt 20:29–34, does not feature Jesus saying anything about faith. Another story about the healing of two blind men, in Matt 9:27–31, however, so prominently features Jesus speaking about faith in relation to healing that it will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

The healing of the blind man (named Bartimaeus only in Mark) in Mark 10:46–52 || Luke 18:35–43 and the two blind men in Matt 20:29–34 feature a double cry to Jesus for mercy in a context where people are trying to stop their crying out.⁶⁴ Both times the blind men address Jesus as Son of David. In response to their cry, Jesus asks what he or they want him to do. The answer is to receive sight. In Mark, Jesus responds to the blind man:

Case: “Go,

Rule: your faith has made you well.”

Result/Case: And immediately he received his sight

Result: and began to follow him on the way (v. 52).

63. H. J. Held, “Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (ed. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held; trans. Percy Scott; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 165–299.

64. See Cotter, *Christ of the Miracle Stories*, 42–75. In her view, this story exhibits not only Jesus' *philanthrōpia*, *praos*, and *epieikia*, but also the boldness of Bartimaeus (74–75).

In this story, faith is persistence that brings the blind beggar face-to-face with Jesus, where he can tell Jesus he wants him to heal him. This story also presents a phenomenon discussed in a previous section, where people who experience Jesus' deeds of power "follow" him.

Luke 18:42–43 omits "Go" and "on the way" from the Markan ending, and has *parachrēma* rather than *euthys* for "immediately." With these changes, the Lukan ending presents the three items of (1) "your faith has made you well"; (2) immediately he received his sight; and (3) he began to follow. But Luke 18:43 presents a sequence of action that shows a tendency in Lukan miracle stories we have seen above. In addition to the man's "following" of Jesus at the end of the story:

Case: he glorified God.

Result: And when the people saw it, they gave praise to God (v. 43).

As we have seen above, Lukan miracle stories often feature "public witness" in the form of glorification of God. Also, we saw a sequence of glorification of God in the Lukan version of the healing of the paralytic in Luke 5:17–26. In the Lukan version of the healing of the blind man there is a "chain reaction" at the end, where the healed person's glorification of God causes others to praise God. Thus early Christian miracle rhetorlect not only generates a special kind of wisdom rhetorlect but also nurtures a special kind of priestly rhetorlect in locations outside of sacred places and sacred times. On the road, in a house, or virtually anywhere at any time, early Christians could break forth into "worship" speech characteristic of priestly rhetorlect. This means that miracle rhetorlect also helps to nurture a special kind of priestly rhetorlect, highly blended with wisdom rhetorlect, in the Mediterranean world.

Surprisingly, as mentioned above, Matt 20:34 does not feature Jesus saying anything about faith. Instead, moved with compassion, Jesus touches the eyelids of the men, immediately they see, and they follow Jesus. This is a surprise, because an overall tendency of Matthean storytelling is to add statements by Jesus about faith, which leads us to the miracle stories in the next section.

7.3. MATTHEW FEATURES "LET IT BE" AND "GREAT IS YOUR FAITH"

There are three Matthean miracle stories that feature Jesus saying some version of "Let it be done to you according to your faith." Each of these has

a distinctive place in the context of miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels. The first one is Matt 9:27–31, which is another version of Jesus' healing of two blind men in Matthew that contains only a few similarities with the Markan and Lukan versions of the healing of the blind man discussed above. In Matt 9:27–31, two blind men cry out only once to Jesus as Son of David (rather than twice, as in all other versions). Then they enter a house, and the following exchange takes place:

Rule: Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

Case: They said to him, “Yes, Lord.”

Result/Case: Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be done to you.”

Result/Case: And their eyes were opened.

Result/Case: And Jesus sternly charged them, “See that no one knows it.”

Result: But they went away and spread his fame through all that district (9:28–34).

In this story one sees the overall tendency for wisdom rhetorlect to be expanded in Matthean miracle stories, and for the topos of faith to play a role in that expansion. In this story, Jesus' speech introduces the verb “to believe” (*pisteuein*) when he asks the men if they believe he is able to heal them. Their affirmative response followed by Jesus' statement, “According to your faith let it be done to you,” establishes a specific logic of reasoning about faith and healing in the speech of Jesus, which becomes central to early Christian miracle-wisdom rhetorlect. The nature of Jesus' statement as wisdom is evident in Jesus' additional statement that they should let no one “know” (*ginōsketō*: v. 30). What happens to the men in this story becomes “knowledge” that can be transmitted to others. Despite what Jesus says, in verse 31 the men go out and “spread” (*diephēmisan*) this knowledge throughout the whole district. One of the characteristics of miracle rhetorlect is that people cannot resist narrating it to others, even if Jesus tells them not to! This “faith knowledge” must be told to others when it produces healing. Again, the underlying rhetoric of miracle rhetorlect is storytelling, which is “inductive” argumentation. Rehearsal of a series of stories of healing, however, produces “reasoning” about the stories that transforms miracle rhetorlect into a special kind of wisdom rhetorlect in early Christian discourse.

The second story featuring Jesus saying “Let it be done” on the basis of his perception that faith is present in the afflicted person is Matthew’s version of the healing of the daughter of the Syrophenician/Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21–28 || Mark 7:24–31).⁶⁵ The account of the story in Mark 7:24–31 has no reference to faith. Jesus’ identity is an issue in the story as it begins with his entering a house, because he does not want anyone to know he is there (v. 24). When the Syrophenician woman begs Jesus to cast a demon out of her daughter (v. 26), Jesus responds with:

Case: “Let the children be fed first,

Rule: because it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the little dogs.” When she answers,

Contrary Rule: “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs,” Jesus says,

Contrary Case: “Go, the demon has left your daughter.”

Wisdom rhetorolect blends with miracle rhetorolect in the exchange between Jesus and the Syrophenician woman. This is the only story in the New Testament where someone’s dispute with Jesus results in Jesus’ changing his mind. This means that the woman’s speech is exceptionally good wisdom. The presence of the substantive wisdom in the woman results in the healing of the woman’s daughter. Wisdom rhetorolect becomes the catalyst that activates the healing miracle, and the daughter is healed simply through “the word” of Jesus. Thus, both the woman’s dialogue with Jesus and Jesus’ word of healing blend wisdom rhetorolect dynamically with miracle rhetorolect in the story. But this Markan version never mentions faith.

The account of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21–28, which is parallel to Mark 7:24–31, also features wisdom rhetorolect blended with miracle rhetorolect. The Matthean version, however, portrays Jesus referring specifically to faith and saying “Let it be done” on the basis of faith, and it also nurtures early Christian priestly rhetorolect. At first the woman shouts at Jesus, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon” (v. 22). The ritualized nature of this approach introduces priestly rhetorolect blended with the prophetic topos of the

65. See Cotter, *Christ of the Miracle Stories*, 137–60. In her view, this story exhibits Jesus’ *ēpios* in the form of a readiness to listen (160).

Son of David. When Jesus does not answer her and the disciples urge Jesus to send her away, because she keeps shouting at them, Jesus tells her: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (v. 24). When the woman comes to Jesus, kneels before him, and says, “Lord, help me” (v. 25), Jesus responds with a version of the Markan saying about throwing children’s food to the dogs that does not contain the statement, “Let the children first be satisfied,” but adds that the crumbs fall from the table of “their masters.” After this exchange Jesus answers:

Rule: “O woman, great is your faith!

Case: Let it be done for you as you want.”

Result: And her daughter was healed instantly (v. 28).

This version of the story features Jesus’ defining the wisdom of the woman as “faith” and evaluating the “skill” of her faith wisdom as “great.” In this story, Jesus “grades” the woman’s faith much like a teacher grades a student’s wisdom. The woman receives an A! But Jesus does not say, “How great is your wisdom!” Rather, he says, “Great is your faith!” Here, then, is yet another level of logic in early Christian miracle wisdom: the greater the faith, the more likely that healing will occur. On the basis of her high level of wisdom, Jesus gives her a high grade on her faith and grants the woman her wish for a miraculous healing.

The third healing story featuring “Let it be” on the basis of faith is the Matthean version of the Q healing story in Luke 7:1–10 || Matt 8:5–13, which features the centurion at Capernaum.⁶⁶ In this story, the narration focuses on the faith of a Roman centurion (Luke 7:2 || Matt 8:5), namely, a Gentile living in a city inhabited primarily by Jewish people. In the Matthean version, the sick male in the centurion’s household could be his son or a servant (*pais*: Matt 8:6, 8, 13), while in the Lukan version, he is clearly a slave (*doulos*: Luke 7:2–3, 10 || *pais*: Luke 10:7). The material common to Luke and Matthew features an appeal by the centurion either in person (Matt 8:5) or through emissaries (Luke 7:3, 6) that signals substantive honor of Jesus. The centurion uses the language of “sufficiency” (*hikanos*: Luke 7:6 || Matt 8:8) to compare himself as one “insufficient” in relation to Jesus. In the context of this insufficiency, the

66. See Cotter, *The Christ of the Miracle Stories*, 106–34. In her view, this story exhibits Jesus’ *eipieikia* (understanding) and compassion without any resentment or prejudice (134).

centurion communicates to Jesus that he should simply “say the word,” and healing will occur. Jesus interprets as faith the centurion’s request from a position of social insufficiency and of confidence that Jesus is able to function as a broker or patron of healing. This is a reorientation of faith in the tradition of Israelite belief, since faith was a special characteristic of Israel’s relationship to God rather than a characteristic of members of “the nations.” The centurion is careful not to issue a challenge to Jesus as an equal. Rather, he communicates to Jesus that even though he himself is a broker with authority, he readily accepts a position of client to Jesus as a broker or patron (Luke 7:6–8 || Matt 8:8–9).⁶⁷ Toward the end of the story, Jesus asserts that he “has never found such faith even in Israel” (Luke 7:9 || Matt 8:10). Beyond these observations, it is necessary to discuss each version of the story on its own terms.

In the Lukan account of the healing of the centurion’s slave (7:1–10), Jesus and the centurion never come face-to-face with one another. Narration at the beginning of the story tells about a centurion who had a slave who was about to die, whom he valued highly (vv. 1–2). Hearing about Jesus, he sent “elders of the Jews” to him to ask him to come and heal his servant (v. 3). There is no dialogue between the elders and Jesus. Rather, they simply come to Jesus and appeal earnestly to him by saying:

Case: “He is worthy [*axios*] to have you do this for him,

Rule: for he loves [*agapāi*] our nation,

Case: and he built us our synagogue” (v. 5).

Result/Case: And Jesus went with them.

In the Lukan version of the story, the elders’ beseeching of Jesus does not necessarily presuppose that they believe Jesus can heal the slave. The centurion has sent them, and they have been willing to go. Their faith or lack of faith never becomes a topos in the story, except through the ironic dimension that Jesus has never found faith “even in Israel” (of which they are members) like the faith of the centurion. The remarks of the Jewish elders focus entirely on the virtues of the Gentile centurion. He is “worthy,” since he embodies “love” for the people and nation of Israel, which he has exhibited as a patron who has built a synagogue for them. The Jewish elders in the story gratefully accept their position as clients of

67. *Ibid.*, 74–76, 326–29.

the centurion, and they reciprocate generously by communicating their praise of their patron to Jesus. Jesus goes with the elders as a result of their description of the centurion, but when Jesus is not far from the house the centurion sends “friends” to speak for him. They address Jesus as *kyrie*, tell him not to bother, since he (the centurion) is not sufficient for Jesus to come under his roof and does not consider himself worthy to come to Jesus. Jesus should simply “say the word” and his servant will be healed, since the centurion is also a man set under authority, with soldiers under him, and the soldiers go and come when he tells them, and his slave also does what he tells him (vv. 6–8). At this point Jesus turns to the crowd following him and says he has not found such faith even in Israel (v. 9). The story ends with narration asserting that when those who were sent returned the slave was in good health (v. 10).

According to Malina and Rohrbaugh, when Jesus is getting closer to the house, the centurion sends out “friends” and “signals to Jesus ... that he does not intend to make Jesus a client..., but considers him a superior.”⁶⁸ In this account, the faith of the centurion is clearly embedded in his laudable virtues, which are based primarily on his knowledge of who is superior to whom. There is no prophetic or apocalyptic rhetorolect in the Lukan version. Also, there is no dialogue between Jesus and the centurion. Rather, wisdom rhetorolect blends with miracle rhetorolect through “emissaries” who carry information from the centurion to Jesus. Jesus speaks only once in the story, asserting that the centurion has more faith than anyone he has found in Israel. As David B. Gowler writes: “The narrator juxtaposes two people with different but analogous social roles: Both are in positions of authority, whether in the Roman Empire or God’s empire. The centurion acknowledges and Jesus demonstrates the supremacy of God’s empire. God’s empire can accomplish what the Roman Empire can only claim to accomplish.”⁶⁹

In contrast to the Lukan version, Matt 8:5–13 begins as a dialogue between Jesus and the centurion. Coming to Jesus, the centurion describes the ill person as a paralytic who is lying at home in distress (vv. 5–6). Jesus tells the centurion he will come and cure him (v. 7). The centurion

68. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 329.

69. David B. Gowler, “Text, Culture, and Ideology in Luke 7:1–10: A Dialogic Reading,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 97.

responds with a long statement that begins by addressing Jesus as *kyrie* and continues by stating that the centurion is insufficient for Jesus to come under his roof and by asserting that soldiers under him go and come when he tells them and his servant also does what he tells him to do (vv. 8–9). At this point, Jesus marvels and tells those who are following him that he has never found such faith in Israel, that many will come from east and west to recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (vv. 10–12). Then Jesus tells the centurion, “Go, as you believe, let it be done to you,” and the servant (or child) was healed that very hour. This version blends miracle, wisdom, prophetic, and apocalyptic rhetorolect in a sequence in which Jesus and the centurion respond to each other and Jesus refers twice to the faith of the man, first in relation to “Israel” (v. 10) and second in the context of his command to “let it be done” (v. 13). In accord with the tendency in Matthew to emphasize the role of faith in healing, the Matthean version of the healing of the centurion’s son features faith in the middle and the closing of the story and contributes to a logic in early Christian discourse that healing occurs in people in direct relation to the presence of faith in them.

7.4. QUALIFYING FAITH, OPPOSING IT TO DOUBT, AND NURTURING WORSHIP

The four remaining miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels that refer to faith show how multiplicity in the tradition creates an environment where faith can be qualified as “little” rather than “great,” where faith that is very little can do incredible things, where faith can be understood as opposite to doubt, and where faith can lead to prayer and worship.

The first remarkable instance of this multiplicity is present in Mark 9:14–29 || Matt 17:14–20 || Luke 9:37–43a, which features the father of an epileptic boy with a spirit that makes him unable to speak.⁷⁰ The Markan account features Jesus introducing the topic of “lack of faith” early in the story in verse 19; it features a syllogistic exchange about faith and what is possible in verses 22–24; then it concludes in verses 28–29 with a discussion between Jesus and the disciples about how it is possible to cast out

70. See Cotter, *Christ of the Miracle Stories*, 161–91. In her view, this story exhibits Jesus’ *philanthrōpia*, *eipieikia* (“understanding”), and *meekness* (189–91).

such a spirit. This sequence of attributed speech creates repetitive texture in the story that features four occurrences of a term for faith or lack of faith, and five occurrences of a term discussing “what is possible”:

Jesus: “You *faithless* generation!” (v. 19).

Father: “If it is *possible* for you to do anything...” (v. 22).

Jesus: “If it is *possible* for you! All things are *possible* for one who *has faith* (v. 23).

Father: “*I have faith; help my lack of faith*” (v. 24).

Disciples: “Why was it not *possible* for us to cast it out?” (v. 28).

Jesus: “It is not *possible* for this kind to go out except by prayer” (v. 29).

In this story, Jesus introduces the topos of lack of faith in his response to the father’s account of how he brought his son to Jesus’ disciples for them to cast out the spirit that makes him unable to speak. Jesus’ response is: “O faithless generation!” After the spirit convulses the boy in the presence of Jesus, Jesus creates a context for the father to narrate what the spirit regularly does to the boy. As the father is finishing the story, he says to Jesus, “If it is possible for you to do anything, be moved with compassion and help us” (v. 22). This produces an immediate response from Jesus about “what is possible” and creates a context in which Jesus introduces a dictum that was vigorously discussed among philosophers and widely attributed to Christians in the Mediterranean world: “All things are possible with God.”⁷¹ The exchange between Jesus and the father creates syllogistic reasoning about healing on the basis of faith: Since all things are possible for him who believes (major premise) and the father believes (minor premise), the father’s son can be healed on the basis of the father’s belief (conclusion). The Markan version embeds this syllogism (vv. 22–24) between Jesus’ opening reference to a “faithless generation” (v. 19) and the closing discussion, where Jesus asserts that it is possible only through prayer for this kind of spirit to come out (vv. 28–29). The irony of the story, of course, is that the narration does not portray Jesus using prayer to cast the spirit out. Yet this story presents a link between prayer and Jesus’ deeds of power that Jesus embellishes in Mark 11:22–24, which will be discussed below.

71. See Robert M. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1952).

The Markan exchange between Jesus and the father is neither in the Matthean nor Lukan account. The Lukan account of 9:37–43a, which is very short in comparison with the Markan account, also emphasizes the “faithless and perverse generation” that cannot heal (v. 41), and, in characteristic Lukan fashion, at the end of the account emphasizes that “all were astounded at the greatness of God” (v. 43). The Matthean account of 17:14–20 also features Jesus’ assertion about the “faithless and perverse generation” that cannot produce healing (v. 17). Then, in characteristic Matthean fashion, Jesus tells the disciples they could not cast the spirit out because of their “little faith” (v. 20). This leads to special syllogistic reasoning in the Matthean account that becomes well known in Christian discourse:

Case: “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed,
Result/Case: you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’
Result/Case: and it will move;
Rule: and nothing will be impossible for you” (v. 20).

In contrast to the Markan and Lukan accounts, the Matthean account ends in a brief wisdom discourse by Jesus about miracles. It is noticeable that this discourse does not talk about miracles of healing, which are the dominant focus of miracle rhetorlect in early Christian discourse. Talk about moving a mountain actually seems out of place in the context of the miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels, since such a deed of power would appear to be a sign, like the Pharisees would like to see and which Jesus refuses to perform in Mark 8:11–12.⁷² Nevertheless, we will see below that Jesus’ discussion about faith’s moving a mountain occurs in other contexts as well in the Synoptic Gospels.

In contrast to the placement of the statement about faith like a grain of a mustard seed at the end of the Matthean version of the healing of the epileptic boy (Matt 17:20), the Gospel of Luke features the saying in a context that has nothing to do with miraculous deeds of power. After Jesus discusses “occasions for stumbling” with the disciples in Luke 17:1–4, the apostles say, “Increase [add to] our faith!” Jesus says in response:

72. Vernon K. Robbins, “*Dynameis and Semeia in Mark*,” *BR* 18 (1973): 1–16.

Case: “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed,

Result/Case: You could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’

Result: and it would obey you” (17:5–6).

Jesus’ speech presents miracle reasoning in a characteristic Case/Result manner based on inductive narration. Instead of telling a story about such an instance, however, Jesus puts the Case/Result sequence in the form of conditional wisdom: “If..., [then] ...” In Luke, then, Jesus’ discussion of faith as a grain of mustard seed is wisdom discourse with miracle content, without any story of a miraculous deed in its context. This is a notable example of early Christian miracle rhetorolect transformed into wisdom rhetorolect.

A second and third story in the Synoptic Gospels show other dimensions of multiplicity that emerge in early Christian miracle rhetorolect. We saw above in the Matthean version of the healing of the Canaanite woman’s daughter how Jesus could evaluate faith as “great.” In other stories in Matthew, Jesus evaluates faith as “small” (*oligē*). Jesus’ evaluation of faith as lesser than it should be does not occur in stories in which he heals bodies. Rather, it occurs in stories that somehow feature a “threat” to the body that is not an affliction but some other kind of crisis. In the story of the stilling of the storm in Mark 4:35–41, after Jesus rebukes and stills the wind, he says to the disciples: “Why are you cowards? Do you not yet have faith?” (v. 40).⁷³ In a similar manner, Luke 8:25 features Jesus as saying, “Where is your faith?” The Matthean version, in contrast to the Markan and Lukan versions, places Jesus’ response about faith early in the story. When the disciples awaken Jesus by saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” Jesus says to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” (8:26). In the Matthean version, then, Jesus defines fear in a context of danger as “little faith.” Again faith is located in the place of reasoning in humans, but in this instance fear confuses or disturbs the reasoning in a manner that makes it weak or “small” reasoning. As the topos of faith blends with miracle rhetorolect, then, it acquires characteristics of wisdom in the Mediterranean world and enters a sphere where it can be evaluated as “small” or

73. See Cotter, *Christ of the Miracle Stories*, 195–232. In her view, this story exhibits Jesus’ acceptance, compassion, understanding, and “meekness” (232).

“great,” like one could encounter in a saying like, “Great was the wisdom of Solomon,” or, perhaps, “Small was the wisdom of Croesus.”

Yet another instance of Jesus’ evaluation of faith as “little” occurs in the Matthean version of walking on water.⁷⁴ The topos of faith is not present in the Markan version (6:45–52), but there is a narrational comment at the end of the story that blends the miracle rhetorolect in the story with wisdom rhetorolect. When the disciples see Jesus walking on the sea and are terrified, Jesus says, “Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid” (v. 50). At this point, Jesus gets into the boat and the wind ceases (v. 51). Then there is the narrational comment: “And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened” (vv. 51–52). This final narrational comment blends wisdom rhetorolect with the miracle rhetorolect in the story. Fear and astonishment in the disciples, in a context of danger to their bodies, blends with wisdom rhetorolect when the narration relates fear and astonishment to other deeds of power the disciples have seen Jesus perform. There is a responsibility, then, in early Christian discourse for followers of Jesus to “understand” miracle rhetorolect. If followers do not understand it—namely, if they do not blend wisdom rhetorolect with it—there is something notably insufficient about their discipleship.

The Matthean version of Jesus’ walking on water (14:22–33) explicitly brings the topos of faith into the story. Verse 29 adds to the story a moment when Peter gets out of the boat to walk to Jesus. When Peter sees the wind and is afraid, he begins to sink and cries out, “Lord, save me” (v. 30). Jesus reaches out his hand, catches him, and says, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt [*edistasas*]?” In this version, then, Jesus evaluates Peter’s fear both as “little faith” and as “doubt.” The terminology of doubt adds a dimension to this wisdom rhetorolect that is not present in any other story discussed above. In addition to the presence or absence of faith (“faith” or “lack of faith”) and the size of faith as “great” or “small,” early Christian discourse develops a concept of “forceful nonfaith” (“doubt”). This form of doubt is not “against faith.” Rather, in this context it is “strong fear” based on what would conventionally be considered to be “good wisdom.” A person who does not perceive a strong wind on the sea to be dangerous could appropriately be described as “foolish.” Fishermen know

74. See Cotter, *Christ of the Miracle Stories*, 233–52. In her view, this story exhibits Jesus’ “meekness” (*praos*) in respecting the limitations of his disciples and helping them (252).

this danger and are appropriately afraid of it. But there is more at stake in the Matthean version of Jesus' walking on water. In an imitative manner, Peter tries to walk on water like Jesus does. At first, from the perspective of the story, he is successful. But then, noticing the strong wind he becomes frightened and begins to sink (v. 30). At this point Peter cries out, "Lord, save me!" which is reminiscent of the cry of afflicted people to Jesus when they want him to heal them. The logic of the narration is that Peter's fear of the strong wind puts him in a position similar to people who have been afflicted by something that causes their body to malfunction, and they need Jesus to restore their body so it will function properly. Jesus immediately reaches out his hand (v. 31), just like he does in stories where he heals people or raises them from death. Instead of saying, "Your faith has saved you," however, he says, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Here is another important moment in early Christian discourse. The stories of Jesus' healing miracles do not try to show a "moment" when a person became afflicted. Rather, they show afflicted people, and they may narrate the story in a manner that "blames" the affliction on demons or unclean spirits, or perhaps on sin. In the Matthean version of walking on water, the story shows how a person can move into an "affliction" of "little faith" through "doubt" that arises in a context of fear. In this context, little faith caused by doubt has the nature of an affliction that needs to be cured, and Jesus is the one ready at hand to cure the "disease." Jesus' action of taking Peter by the hand and pronouncing his affliction to be little faith caused by doubt functions like a healing action and word. Jesus' "naming" of the affliction in the context of his taking of Peter's hand functions like Jesus' confrontation of an unclean spirit or demon in a healing story. Instead of Peter's being healed so he can walk again, as one might see at the end of a story in which a lame man is healed, Jesus and Peter successfully get into the boat together and the wind ceases, like it does in the stilling of the storm, when Jesus "rebukes the winds and the sea" (Matt 8:26). Then the closing of the story blends priestly rhetorolect dynamically with miracle rhetorolect as those in the boat "worship" Jesus, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matt 14:33). The structure of this story, interpreted through the blending of rhetorolects in early Christian discourse, shows how Peter became "afflicted" by little faith caused by doubt in a context of threat to his body that produced fear. The presence of Jesus saves Peter from this affliction as Jesus takes him by the hand, names his affliction as little faith, and questions him in a manner that moves his mind to the source that caused his affliction, namely, doubt. The end result is worship of Jesus as

Son of God by those in the boat. Once again we see a dynamic blending of miracle and wisdom rhetorolect that generates early Christian priestly rhetorolect at the close of the story. Early Christian miracle stories not only become wisdom stories. They also become stories of early Christian worship.

The final story in the Synoptic Gospels that shows how multiplicity emerges in early Christian miracle rhetorolect is Jesus' cursing of the fig tree in Mark 11:12–14, 20–25 || Matt 21:18–22. In this story, God's power destroys life in a plant, in a context of Jesus' prophetic assault on practices in the Jerusalem temple. Jesus curses the fig tree, because it has no fruit to feed his hungry body (Mark 11:12–14 || Matt 21:18–19). This establishes a context for Jesus' criticism that the temple is not a house where people can come to pray (Mark 11:17 || Matt 21:13),⁷⁵ which in turn establishes a context where faith, doubt, and prayer become *topoi* in prophetically energized wisdom rhetorolect that discusses miracle. In response to Peter's observation that the fig tree had withered, Jesus says:

Rule: "Have faith in God.

Case: Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass,

Result: it will be done for you.

So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer,

Case: believe that you have received it,

Result: and it will be yours" (11:22–24).

Jesus' wisdom discourse after the miracle of the withering of the fig tree sets forth a remarkable argument about the power of "faith in God" to perform miraculous deeds. In the Markan version, Jesus does not address the withering of the fig tree. Rather, he speaks about "throwing a mountain into the sea," which is the example that Jesus addresses at the end of the Matthean version of the epileptic boy who could not speak (17:20). Nor does Jesus compare faith to "a grain of mustard seed." Rather, Jesus juxtaposes faith to "doubt in one's heart," and merges faith with prayer in his assertion. The end result is a logic that asserts that "whatever" persons asks

75. This does not solve the problem with the Markan assertion that Jesus cursed the fig tree even though "it was not the season for figs" (Mark 11:13).

for in prayer, if they believe they have received it, it will be theirs (Mark 11:24). The Matthean version makes the sequence even more logical. The disciples ask Jesus, “How did the fig tree wither at once?” Jesus’ answer merges the fig tree and the mountain together: “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ it will be done. Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive” (Matt 21:21–22). At this point, then, wisdom, miracle, and priestly rhetorolect blend together in a logic of miracle working that places “a believer” in a position not only to cause a fig tree to wither but also to move a mountain! It is difficult to imagine a more dramatic transformation of miracle rhetorolect into wisdom rhetorolect. In this context, the power of “faith wisdom” has become so great that it moves dramatically beyond restoration of malfunctioning bodies, or even beyond keeping bodies from danger in contexts of crisis. With a focus on destroying or moving trees and mountains, this “faith wisdom” has been granted powers that one sees most clearly in apocalyptic rhetorolect. Have powers of God that one sees only in God’s destruction of things in apocalyptic rhetorolect blended with miracle, wisdom, and priestly rhetorolect in this “totalistic” claim about the power of faith linked with prayer? The logic is astonishing, but perhaps these verses give us some of the clues concerning how totalistic miracle logic could emerge in early Christian discourse.

8. SPECIAL MIRACLES IN RELATION TO JESUS IN SYNOPTIC MIRACLE DISCOURSE

There are a few events concerning God’s power in the Synoptic Gospels that focus on Jesus in ways that have not yet been discussed in this essay. The star that appears at Jesus’ birth, the transfiguration of Jesus in the middle of his ministry, the three-hour period when darkness covers the earth before Jesus’ death, and the splitting of the curtain of the temple at the time of Jesus’ death come immediately to mind. It is not possible to discuss these episodes in detail here, but the ones surrounding Jesus’ death at least should be briefly mentioned.

The period of darkness over the earth during the time in the Synoptic Gospels when Jesus is dying establishes the context in which God’s power of life goes out of the body of Jesus. Recognizing that God’s power of life is weakening in his own body, in Mark and Matthew Jesus cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” (Mark 15:34 || Matt 27:46), and

in Luke Jesus cries out, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). The three-hour period of darkness is, if you will, an antimiracle. It is a time when God’s power withdraws from the human realm, in contrast to times when God’s power imposes itself in an unusual manner in the human realm. The Synoptic accounts of the transfiguration of Jesus present an informative counterpart to the darkness over the earth at Jesus’ death. While on the highest point of a mountain, Jesus is transfigured into a dazzling white form (Mark 9:3 || Matt 17:2 || Luke 9:29). Matthew emphasizes that Jesus’ face “shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as light” (17:2; cf. 13:43). In addition, the cloud out of which God speaks is full of light (17:5).⁷⁶ In the transfiguration account, God’s power imposes itself fully on the body of Jesus in the form of light, in contrast to the crucifixion, where light withdraws from the cosmos as life withdraws from Jesus’ body.⁷⁷ In addition, at the moment when the power of life actually leaves the body of Jesus in Mark and Matthew, God’s power splits the curtain of the temple from top to bottom (Mark 15:38 || Matt 27:51). In Luke, Jesus gives the power of his life back to God after the light of the sun fails and the curtain of the temple is torn in two (23:44–45). Perhaps in these phenomena one can see how the focus on the body of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels presses toward resurrection of Jesus’ body, appearances after death, and ascension into heaven in the Gospel of Luke. In any case, in the Synoptic Gospels the time of Jesus’ life is so filled with miracle power that the time of his death is a time of “antimirror” that calls for resolution in a miraculous restoration of his body, somehow related to the ways in which he miraculously restored other people’s bodies.

76. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary* (trans. James Crouch; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 398.

77. Cf. John 12:23–30, where a voice from heaven says, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again” (v. 28) in response to Jesus’ explanation that the death of the Son of Man is analogous to a grain of wheat that must fall into the earth and die in order to bear fruit (12:23–24). In contrast to the Synoptics, where the transfiguration “is really the only manifestation of glory during the public ministry (Luke ix 32)... , John ... stress[es] that the divine *doxa* shone through Jesus’ miraculous signs (ii 11, xi 40, xvii 4)”: Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i–xii)* (AB 29; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 503.

9. CONCLUSION

There is a remarkable amount of miracle discourse in the Synoptic Gospels. In addition, there is a remarkable amount of miracle discourse that does not feature faith as an explicit topos. The rhetorical force of the narration either of individual miracles or of large gatherings where many people are healed is inductive in force. This means that the narratee again and again hears that people bring afflicted people to Jesus, he heals them, and people respond with questions about the identity of Jesus and the source of his power, or respond with praise and glorification of God.

It is remarkable to see how many miracle stories introduce controversy without reference to the topos of faith. In these instances again, miracle narration works inductively, moving the story forward from Case to a Result that becomes a Case that produces another Result. In the midst of this inductive narration, both attributed speech and argumentative narration produce enthymematic and argumentative discourse about topics ranging from the authority to forgive to the right to heal on the sabbath.

In the context of the inductive force of miracle discourse throughout the Synoptic Gospels, faith emerges as a specific topos in the transformation of miracle rhetorlect into early Christian wisdom rhetorlect that focuses on miracle. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus interprets a wide range of activities by people who come into his presence as faith. What ordinary people might see as extraordinary effort, special ways of honoring Jesus, remarkable courage, or keen wisdom, Jesus sees as faith. This creates a perspective on Jesus that generates multiple ways of transforming miracle rhetorlect into wisdom rhetorlect that defines faith as “great” or “little,” juxtaposes faith to lack of faith and doubt, and links prayer with faith to bring the fullness of God’s power into the realm of human life.

In rhetorical terms, miracle discourse generates its major topoi primarily in relation to human personal afflictions, ailments, and crises.⁷⁸ A major Rule underlying miracle discourse is: “All things are possible with God.”⁷⁹ Robert M. Grant’s extensive investigation of miracle discourse, which appeared in 1952, indicates that while the view that “all things are

78. Emma J. Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius* (2 vols.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945); Theissen, *Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*; idem, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity*.

79. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, 127–34.

possible for the gods” already existed in Homer’s *Odyssey* 10.306,⁸⁰ during the first century B.C.E. “the idea of power became a leading conception, especially because of the increasing concentration of power at Rome.”⁸¹ Posidonius’s system asserted that “there is nothing which God cannot do, and that without any effort.”⁸² The view that “all things are possible with God” seems close at hand in many contexts in the Synoptic Gospels.⁸³

While the major focus of miracle discourse in the Synoptic Gospels is on the bodies of afflicted persons, various portions of this discourse focus on the bodies of the disciples in danger. Luke uses this context distinctively to present discipleship as a result of miraculous transformation of individual people. In addition, however, portions of miracle discourse focus on the body of Jesus. Jesus’ ability to walk on water, and the transformation of Jesus’ body in the transfiguration accounts press toward a focus on the resurrection of Jesus by the power of God. The Synoptic Gospels feature God’s miraculous power at work in particular ways at Jesus’ death, and Matthew and Luke extend this miraculous work of God back to the birth of Jesus.

It is remarkable, given the large amount of miracle discourse in the Synoptics, how little there is throughout the rest of the New Testament, except in the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles. Analysis of miracle discourse in the Synoptic Gospels shows how early Christians used it to support multiple kinds of functions beyond simply epideictic persuasion. Rather, they used it to create an entire system of reasoning about God, about Jesus, and about the inner recesses of the hearts and minds of people. This transformation of miracle rhetorolect into wisdom rhetorolect moves even further in the Gospel of John and the writings of Paul.

80. Cf. Homer, *Od.* 4.237.

81. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, 128.

82. Cicero, *Nat. d.* 3.92 (cf. 2.77); cf. miracle discourse in the Qur’an: Robbins and Newby, “A Prolegomenon,” 33–36.

83. Mark 10:27 (par. Matt 19:26; Luke 18:27); 14:36; cf. Luke 1:37.