Beginnings and Developments in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation

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Emerging in the 1970s, socio-rhetorical interpretation received its name in 1984 with an integration of rhetorical, anthropological, and social-psychological insights in a study of the Gospel of Mark. During the 1980s, ancient *Progymnasmata* manuals guided the development of rhetorical strategies to interpret argumentation in first century Christian and Greco-Roman literature. During the 1990s, investigation of inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture and sacred texture moved the approach into an interpretive analytic. Currently, incorporation of conceptual blending and critical spatiality theory is guiding interpretation of six rhetorolects in early Christian discourse: wisdom, prophetic, miracle, precreation, priestly and apocalyptic.

I. Introduction

Socio-rhetorical interpretation is a multi-dimensional approach to texts[1] guided by a multi-dimensional hermeneutic.[2] Rather than being one more method for interpreting

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[1] For publications by V.K. Robbins, see http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/pubs.cfm. See the two foundational books for socio-rhetorical interpretation: V. K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996) 108-18 and *idem, Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996) 58-63. For a programmatic description of the goals, *idem*, 'The Present and Future of Rhetorical Analysis', *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 24-52; http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/future.cfm. For the socio-rhetorical Web site: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRI/index.cfm.

[2] For essays discussing the hermeneutics of socio-rhetorical interpretation, see: V. K. Robbins, 'Socio-Rhetorical Hermeneutics and Commentary', *EPI TO AYTO. Essays in honour of Petr Pokorny on his sixty-fifth birthday* (ed. J. Mrazek, S. Brodsky, and R. Dvorakova; Praha-Trebenice: Mlyn Publishers, 1998) 284-97; http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/commentary.cfm; *idem,* 'The Rhetorical

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texts, socio-rhetorical interpretation is an interpretive analytic – an approach that evaluates and reorients its strategies as it engages in multi-faceted dialogue with the texts and other phenomena that come within its purview.[3] This means that it invites methods and methodological results into the environment of its activities, but those methods and results are always under scrutiny. Using insights from sociolinguistics, semiotics, rhetoric, ethnography, literary studies, social sciences, and ideological studies, socio-rhetorical interpretation enacts an interactive interpretive analytic that juxtaposes and interrelates phenomena by drawing and redrawing boundaries of analysis and interpretation.[4] The approach uses a transmodern philosophical position of relationism to interrelate ancient, modern and post-modern systems of thought with one another.[5]

Socio-rhetorical interpretation began to emerge after 1975, with a goal of integrating rhetorical and anthropological modes of interpretation.[6] An additional, feature

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Full-Turn in Biblical Interpretation: Reconfiguring Rhetorical-Political Analysis', *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 48-60; *idem,* 'Where is Wuellner's Anti-Hermeneutical Hermeneutic Taking Us? From Scheiermacher to Thistleton and Beyond', *Rhetorics and Hermeneutics: Wilhelm Wuellner and His Influence* (ed. J. D. Hester and D. Hester; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2004).

[3] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 11-13; *idem*, 'The Present and Future', 25-33.

[4] For interactionist analysis and interpretation; see E. T. Lawson and R. N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition & Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 22-31.

[5] V. K. Robbins*,* 'The Rhetorical Full-Turn in Biblical Interpretation and Its Relevance for Feminist Hermeneutics'*, Her Master's* Tools? (ed. C. Vander Stichele and T. Penner; Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship Series; Atlanta: SBL and Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[6] D. B. Gowler, 'The Development of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism', V. K. Robbins, *New Boundaries in Old Territory: Forms and Social Rhetoric in Mark* (ed. D. B. Gowler; Emory Studies in Early Christianity 3; New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994) 1-35. Cf. V. K. Robbins, 'Introduction', *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (pbk. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) xix-xliv. Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/books/teacher-introduction.cfm.

of socio-rhetorical interpretation is its special interest in the orality of texts.[7] Bernard Brandon Scott and Margaret E. Dean have developed this aspect of the approach into a special area of investigation with its own strategies of analysis and interpretation.[8] During the 1990s, socio-rhetorical criticism featured analysis and interpretation of multiple textures of texts.[9] Five textures have been central to the interpretive activity: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.[10] A wide range of socio-rhetorical studies using textural strategies emerged during the 1990s. The seven 'Pepperdine' rhetoric conferences, initiated and nurtured by Thomas H. Olbricht, played an important role for advances in rhetorical biblical study from 1992 to 2002,[11] and socio-rhetorical interpretation has benefited and grown in the

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[7] V. K. Robbins, 'Foxes, Birds, Burials & Furrows', in B. L. Mack and V. K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1989) 70-74; *idem*, 'Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and Pre-Gospel Traditions: A New Approach', *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism* (ed. C. Focant; BETL 110; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993) 116-31; *idem*, *Tapestry*, 106-8, 121-4, *idem*, *Exploring*, 40-62; *idem*, 'Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response', *Semeia* 65 (1994) 75-91.

[8] B. B. Scott and M. E. Dean, 'A Sound Map of the Sermon on the Mount', *SBLSP* 32 (1993) 672-725 = *Treasures Old and New: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies* (ed. D. Bauer and M. A. Powell; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); *idem*, 'A Sound Map of Mark 7:1-23', unpublished paper presented for the Rhetoric and New Testament Section, SBL Annual meeting, 1994; M. E. Dean, 'The Grammar of Sound in Greek Texts: Toward a Method for Mapping the Echoes of Speech in Writing', *Australian Biblical Review* 44 (1996) 53-70; *idem*, 'Elements of a Sound Map', unpublished paper presented to the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media Group, SBL, November 1996; *idem*, 'Textured Criticism', *JSNT* 70 (1998) 95-115.

[9] Robbins, *Tapestry*; *idem*, *Exploring*.

[10] See the online 'Dictionary of Socio-Rhetorical Terms':
http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRI/defns/index.cfm. Also 'Religious Textures':
http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRI/tables/RhetTable.cfm. Cf. D. B. Gowler, 'Heteroglossic Trends in Biblical Studies: Polyphonic Dialogues or Clanging Cymbals?', *Review & Expositor* 97 (2000) 443-66.

[11] *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 90; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); *Rhetoric,*

context of these conferences and the volumes that have emerged from them.[12] The SBL section on Rhetoric and the New Testament played a special role during the 1990s in nurturing socio-rhetorical interpretation of apocalyptic[13] and miracle discourse[14] in the New Testament. L. Gregory Bloomquist, the current Chair of the SBL section, has published a series of essays developing various aspects of socio-rhetorical

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Scripture & Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference (ed. S. E. Porter & T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 131; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); *Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; JSNTSup 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* [Essays from the 1998 Florence Conference] (ed. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference* (ed. A. Eriksson, T. H. Olbricht, and W. Übelacker; Emory Studies in Early Christianity 8; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002); *Rhetorics, Ethics, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse: Essays from the 2002 Heidelberg Conference* (tentative title) (ed. A. Eriksson and T. H. Olbricht; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, forthcoming).

[12] See in particular the essays in the volumes by V. K. Robbins, D. F. Watson, H. J. B. Combrink, L G. Bloomquist, A. Eriksson, G. van den Heever, M. J. Debanné, R. K. Duke, R. B. Sisson, H. W. Attridge, R. R. Jeal, R. A. Ramsaran, J. W. Marshall, T. Penner, C. van der Stichele, and F. J. Long.

[13] *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (ed. G. Carey and L. G. Bloomquist; St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1999); *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (ed. D. F. Watson; Symposium Series 14; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

[14] *The Role of Miracle Discourse in the Argumentation of the New Testament* (ed. D. F. Watson; Symposium Series; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature/Leiden: E. J. Brill, forthcoming). Also see L. G. Bloomquist, 'First Century Models of Bodily Healing and their Socio-Rhetorical Transformation in some New Testament Synoptic Gospel traditions', *Queen: a journal of rhetoric and power, Special Issue* (2002).

interpretation.[15] Duane F. Watson,[16] the former Chair of the SBL Section, and H. J. Bernard Combrink[17] have written programmatic essays on the challenges and benefits of

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[15] L. G. Bloomquist, 'Methodological Considerations in the Determination of the Social Context of Cynic Rhetorical Practice: Implications for our Present Studies of the Jesus Traditions', *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 200-31; *idem,* 'Methodological Criteria for the Determination of Apocalyptic Rhetoric: A Suggestion for the Expanded Use of Socio-Rhetorical Analysis', *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Early Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Discourse* (ed. G. Carey and L. G. Bloomquist**;** St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999) 181-203; *idem,* 'Patristic Reception of a Lukan Healing Account: A Contribution to a Socio-Rhetorical Response to Willi Braun's *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14,* SNTSMS, 85 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)', *Healing in Religion and Society, From Hippocrates to the Puritans* (Studies in Religion and Society 43; ed. S. Muir and J. K. Coyle; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999) 105-34; *idem,* 'Rhetorical Argumentation and the Culture of Apocalyptic: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Lk.21', *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference* (JSNTSup 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 173-209; *idem,* 'A Possible Direction for Providing Programmatic Correlation of Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Analysis', *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Academic Press, 2002) 61-96; *idem,* 'The Role of the Audience in the Determination of Argumentation: The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles', *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference* (ed. A. Eriksson and T. H. Olbricht; Emory Studies in Early Christianity 8; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002) 157-73; *idem,* 'The Intertexture of Lukan Apocalyptic Rhetorical Discourse', *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (ed. D. F. Watson; Society of Biblical Literature Symposium series 14; Atlanta: Scholars, 2002) 45-68; idem, 'Paul's Inclusive Language: The Ideological Texture of Romans 1', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 165-93.

[16] D. F. Watson, 'Why We Need Socio-Rhetorical Commentary and What It Might Look Like', *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 129-57.

writing socio-rhetorical commentary. During 1999-2003, the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas provided the context for a Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation Seminar that met at annual meetings in South Africa, Israel, Canada, Great Britain, and Germany.[18] Progress is well under way currently for production of socio-rhetorical commentaries in a series entitled 'Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity'.[19]

II. Initial Socio-Rhetorical Studies

Socio-rhetorical interpretation began with analysis and interpretation of social and cultural dynamics in written works. The first sustained socio-rhetorical study was an analysis of the relation of the we-passages in Acts to ancient Mediterranean sea voyages.[20] As Vernon K. Robbins observed in a later study: 'This study in 1975 revealed that traveling in a boat on the sea with other people created a social environment that made it natural for some authors in antiquity to use first-person plural 'we' for literary accounts of sea voyages'.[21] This common social environment became a well-known cultural phenomenon in Mediterranean literature. In 1999, Dennis R. MacDonald published an essay in NTS emphasizing that the cultural intertexture of the sea voyages in Acts goes back to Homer's *Odyssey* and arguing that Acts reconfigures basic scenes in the widely-known Homeric tradition.[22] Other interpreters have focused so intently either on the historical intertexture of the sea voyages in Acts or on literary coherence in Acts

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[17] H. J. B. Combrink, 'The Challenges and Opportunities of a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary', *Scriptura* 79 (2002) 106-21.

[18] The meetings occurred in Pretoria, Tel Aviv, Montreal, Durham, and Bonn.

[19] See online: https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/books_RhetoricReligiousAntiquity.aspx.

[20] V. K. Robbins, 'The We-Passages in Acts and Ancient Sea Voyages', *BR* 20 (1975) 5-18; *idem,* 'By Land and By Sea: A Study in Acts 13-28', *SBLSP 15* (1976) 381-96; *idem*, 'By Land and By Sea: The We-Passages and Ancient Sea Voyages', *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*. (ed. C. H. Talbert; Perspectives in Religious Studies; Special Studies Series, No. 5; Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press and Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1978) 215-42.

[21] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher* (pbk ed.) xix.

[22] D. R. MacDonald, 'The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul', *NTS* 45 (1999) 88-107; cf. C. H. Talbert and J. H. Hayes, 'A Theology of Sea Storms in Luke-Acts', *SBLSP* 34 (1995) 321-36.

itself that they have missed the broader social and cultural intertexture of the sea voyage accounts.[23] Robbins's 1975 study was an initial interpretation of social and cultural intertexture among the sea voyages in Acts and other Mediterranean accounts of sea voyages.[24]

The second sustained socio-rhetorical analysis concerned the teaching-learning cycle in the Gospel of Mark. The first steps of this analysis appeared in studies of Jesus' calling of his disciples and of repetitive-progressive summoning in the Gospel of Mark.[25] The full-scale study of these phenomena in Mark, which appeared in 1984, appealed to the works of Kenneth Burke and the ancient rhetorical treatises entitled *progymnasmata*[26] for analysis of rhetorical repetition and progression.[27]   It also appealed to the works of

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[23] E.g., H. J. Cadbury, 'We and I Passages in Luke-Acts', *NTS* 3 (1956) 128-32; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* (AB 28A; New York: Doubleday, 1985) 35-53; *idem, Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1989) 16-22; M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 66-7; C. J. Hemer, 'First Person Narrative in Acts 27-28', *TB* 36 (1985) 79-109; S. E. Porter, 'The "We" Passages', *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 545-74; J. M. Gilchrist, 'The Historicity of Paul's Shipwreck', *JSNT* 61 (1996) 29-51; and C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 (ICCONT; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, forthcoming.

[24] For social and cultural intertexture, see Robbins, *Tapestry*, 108-18; *idem*, *Exploring,* 58-63.

[25] V. K. Robbins, 'Summons and Outline in Mark: The Three-Step Progression', *Novum Testamentum* 23 (1981) 97-114 = *idem, New Boundaries*, 119-35 = *The Composition of Mark's Gospel: Selected Studies from Novum Testamentum* (compiled by D. E. Orton; Brill's Readers in Biblical Studies 3; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 103-20; *idem*, 'Mark I.14-20: An Interpretation at the Intersection of Jewish and Graeco-Roman Traditions', *NTS* 28 (1982) 220-36 = *idem, New Boundaries*, 137-54.

[26] G. A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003); R. F. Hock and E. N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric: Volume I. The Progymnasmata* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); R. F. Hock and E. N. O'Neil, *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Classroom Exercises* (Atlanta: SBL, 2002).

[27] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*.

Clifford Geertz, William Bascom, Roger D. Abrahams, Roger M. Keesing, Theodore R. Sarbin and Vernon L. Allen for social, cultural and social-psychological analysis. This study revealed evidence of a Mediterranean teaching-learning cycle in Plato's *Dialogues*, Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, ancient comedy, Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, the Abraham story, the Moses story, the Elijah-Elisha story, the Israelite prophets, Philo of Alexandria, Josephus and rabbinic literature. Subsequent studies have built on the analysis and interpretation in this book.[28]

Additional socio-rhetorical studies between 1983 and 1991 focused on Luke-Acts,[29] pronouncement stories, miracle stories and sayings.[30] During the same period of

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[28] M. Sawicki, *The Gospel in History: Portrait of a Teaching Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1988; *idem*, *Seeing the Lord: Resurrection and Early Christian Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994) 51-76; B. L. Melbourne, *Slow to Understand: The Disciples in Synoptic Perspective* (Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, 1988); M. N. Beavis, *Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4.11-12* (JSNTSup 33; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); V. K. Robbins, 'Interpreting the Gospel of Mark as a Jewish Document in a Graeco-Roman World', *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism* (ed. P. V. M. Flesher; Lanham, New York; London: University Press of America, 1990) 47-72 = *idem, New Boundaries*, 219-42; J. T. Dillon, *Jesus As a Teacher: A Multidisciplinary Case Study* (Lanham, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1995).

[29] V. K. Robbins, 'Prefaces in Greco-Roman Biography and Luke-Acts', *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, Vol. 2 (1978) 193-207 = *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 6 (1979) 94-108; *idem*, 'The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts', *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) 305-32; *idem*, 'Luke-Acts: A Mixed Population Seeks a Home in the Roman Empire', *Images of Empire* (ed. L. Alexander. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 202-21; *idem*, 'A Socio-Rhetorical Look at the Work of John Knox on Luke-Acts', *Cadbury, Knox, and Talbert: American Contributions to the Study of Acts* (ed. M. C. Parsons and J. B. Tyson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 91-105.

[30] V. K. Robbins, 'Pronouncement Stories and Jesus' Blessing of the Children: A Rhetorical Approach', *SBLSP* 21 (1982) 407-30 = *idem, New Boundaries*, 155-84 = *Semeia* 29 (1983) 43-74, plus responses; *idem*, 'Pragmatic Relations as a Criterion for Authentic Sayings', *Forum* 1.3 (1985) 35-63; *idem*, 'The Woman who Touched Jesus' Garment: Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of

time, specific discussions of rhetorical interpretation and specific strategies of analysis using insights from classical rhetorical treatises on the chreia and its elaboration appeared.[31] In 1993, Willi Braun completed a Ph.D. dissertation that included a substantive socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation of Luke 14, and it appeared in the SNTS monograph series in 1995.[32] In 1994 David B. Gowler, who had independently developed a socio-narratological approach to New Testament literature,[33] wrote a

the Synoptic Accounts', *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987) 502-15 = *idem, New Boundaries*, 185-200; *idem*, 'Rhetorical argument about lamps and light in early Christian gospels', *Context, Festskrift til Peder Johan Borgen* (ed. P. W. Böckman and R. E. Kristiansen; Relieff 24; Universitetet i Trondheim: Tapir, 1987) 177-95 = *idem, New Boundaries*, 201-17; *idem*, 'Pronouncement Stories from a Rhetorical Perspective', *Forum* 4.2 (1988) 3-32; *idem*, 'Beelzebul Controversy in Mark and Luke: Rhetorical and Social Analysis', *Forum* 7.3-4 (1991) 261-77.

[31] V. K. Robbins, 'Rhetoric and Biblical Criticism', with J. H. Patton, *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980) 327-37; *idem*, 'Picking Up the Fragments: From Crossan`s Analysis to Rhetorical Analysis', *Forum* 1.2 (1985) 31-64; *idem*, 'The Chreia', *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. D. E. Aune; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988) 1-23; *idem*, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*, with B. L. Mack. Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1989; *idem*, 'A Socio-Rhetorical Response: Contexts of Interaction and Forms of Exhortation', *Semeia* 50 (1990) 261-71; *idem*, 'Writing as a Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels', *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (ed. D. F. Watson; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 157-86; *idem*, 'From New Criticism and the New Hermeneutic to Poststructuralism: Twentieth Century Hermeneutics', with R. Detweiler, *Reading The Text: Biblical Criticism and Literary Theory* (ed. S. Prickett; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) 225-80; *idem*, 'Apophthegm', *ABD* (1992) 1:307-9; *idem*, 'Form Criticism: New Testament', *ABD* (1992) 2:841-44; *idem*, 'Introduction: Using Rhetorical Discussions of the Chreia to Interpret Pronouncement Stories', *Semeia* 64 (1993) vii-xvii; *idem*, 'Paradigms in Homer, Pindar, the Tragedians, and the New Testament', with Ø. Andersen, *Semeia* 64 (1993) 3-31; *idem*, 'Biblical Sources for Pronouncement Stories in the Gospels', with M. Dean-Otting, *Semeia* 64 (1993) 95-115.

[32] W. Braun, *The Use of Mediterranean Banquet Traditions in Luke 14:1-14* (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1993); *idem, Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (SNTSMS 85; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[33] D. B. Gowler, 'Characterization in Luke: A Socio-Narratological Approach', *BTB* 19:2 (1989) 54-62; *idem, Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (Emory

programmatic essay on the development of socio-rhetorical interpretation showing the manner in which it developed out of literary, rhetorical, social and cultural studies during the 1970s and 1980s.[34] These studies were precursors to the organization of socio-rhetorical interpretation on the basis of multiple textures of signification, meanings and meaning effects in texts. David Hester Amador included a full-length critical assessment of socio-rhetorical interpretation in this earlier form in a book that appeared in 1999.[35] Amador perceived the approach during this earlier phase to be driven by disciplinary strategies and goals, rather than being truly interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary in its approach.

III. Expansion beyond Biblical Literature

A major feature of socio-rhetorical interpretation since its inception has been its reach beyond biblical literature. Usually the literature outside the Bible was included for the purpose of intertextual analysis of biblical texts.[36] These interests led to analysis and interpretation in *Jesus the Teacher* of Dialogues of Plato,[37] Xenophon's *Memorabilia*,[38]

Studies in Early Christianity 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1991); *idem*, 'Hospitality and Characterization in Luke 11:37-54: A Socio-Narratological Approach', *Semeia* 64 (1993) 213-51. Also see D. B. Gowler, 'Text, Culture, and Ideology in Luke 7:1-10: A Dialogic Reading', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 89-125.

[34] Gowler, 'The Development of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism'.

[35] J. D. H. Amador, *Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction to a Rhetoric of Power* (JSNTSup 174; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

[36] Robbins, 'The We-Passages in Acts'; *idem,* 'Prefaces in Greco-Roman Biography and Luke-Acts', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 6 (1979) 94-108 = *SBLSP,* Vol. 2, ed. P. J. Achtemeier (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978) 193-207; *idem,* 'Laudation Stories in the Gospel of Luke and Plutarch's *Alexander*', *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 20, ed. K. H. Richards (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981) 293-308; *idem,* 'Mark I.14-20'.

[37] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher,* 87-94, 136-47.

[38] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher,* 54, 60-68, 86, 126-8, 172-3, 206-9.

sections of Flavius Josephus and Philo Judaeus,[39] rabbinic literature,[40] Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius,[41]* and the *Discourses* of Dio Chrysostom.[42] Half a decade later, it led to the publication of over 1500 selections from biblical, Greco-Roman, early Christian, rabbinic, and Muslim literature in *Ancient Quotes & Anecdotes*.[43]

During the 1990s, socio-rhetorical interpretation moved into a wider and wider range of sacred texts. One of the reasons is that socio-rhetorical interpretation features a constellation of interests that naturally moves an interpreter into programmatic analysis and interpretation of literatures of various kinds in various cultures, both on their own terms and in their own contexts.[44] Another reason, however, was that interpreters from various areas of specialty began to apply socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation in their own fields of study. In 1994, Jack N. Lightstone published a socio-rhetorical investigation of portions of the Babylonian Talmud,[45] followed in 2002 with portions of the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Semahot.[46] In 1997, Martin Oosthuizen produced a multiple

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[39] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher,* 94-101, 134-5.

[40] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher,* 101-5.

[41] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher,* 105-8, 147-55, 208-9.

[42] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher,* 189-91; cf. *idem,* 'The Reversed Contextualization of Psalm 22 in the Markan Crucifixion: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis', *The Four Gospels 1992. Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. F. van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle, J. Verheyden, volume 2; BETL 100; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992) 1161-83.

[43] V. K. Robbins (ed.) *Ancient Quotes & Anecdotes: From Crib to Crypt* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1989); cf. *idem* (ed.) *The Rhetoric of Pronouncement* (*Semeia* 64; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).

[44] V. K. Robbins, 'Pronouncement Stories in Plutarch's Lives of *Alexander* and *Julius Caesar',* *SBLSP*, Vol. 2, ed. P. J. Achtemeier (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978) 21-38; *idem,* 'Classifying Pronouncement Stories in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*', *Semeia* 20 (1981) 29-52;

[45] J. N. Lightstone, *The Rhetoric of the Babylonian Talmud, Its Social Meaning and Context* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism/Études sur le christianisme et le judaïsme 6; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses, 1994).

[46] J. N. Lightstone, *Mishnah and the Social Formation of the Early Rabbinic Guild: A Socio-Rhetorical Approach* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism/Études sur le christianisme et le

texture socio-rhetorical interpretation of Deuteronomy 15:1-18.[47] In 1998, Gordon D. Newby began to use socio-rhetorical strategies of interpretation on portions of the Qur'an.[48] In 1999, Thomas J. Bell produced a full-scale socio-rhetorical study of two medieval 'sequences' attributed to Peter Abelard.[49] H. J. Bernard Combrink wrote socio-rhetorical analyses and interpretation of religious traditions and movements in South Africa,[50] and Robbins wrote an essay on participation in African biblical interpretation.[51] Patrick Gray analyzed the social rhetoric of sinfulness and punishment in the Apocalypse

judaïsme 11; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses, 2002).

[47] M. J. Oosthuizen, 'Deuteronomy 15:1-18 in Socio-Rhetorical Perspective', *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 3 (Herausgegeben von Eckart Otto unter Mitarbeit von Klaus Baltzer, et al.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997) 64-91. Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/OosthuizenDeut.pdf.

[48] G. D. Newby, 'Quranic Texture: A Review of Vernon Robbins's *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* and *Exploring the Texture of Texts', JSNT* 70 (1998) 93-100; *idem,* 'Folded Time: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Qur'anic and Early Islamic Apocalyptic Discourse', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 333-54.

[49] T. J. Bell, The Paraclete Abbey Bridal Tapestry: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Peter Abelard's Sequences *Virgines castae* and *Epithalamica* (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1999).

[50] H. J. B. Combrink, 'The Rhetoric of the Church in the Transition from the Old to the New South Africa: Socio-Rhetorical Criticism and Ecclesiastical Rhetoric', *Neot* 32 (1998) 289-307; *idem,* 'The Challenge of Making and Redrawing Boundaries: A Perspective on Socio-Rhetorical Criticism', *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 40 (1999) 18-30; *idem,* 'The Contribution of Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation to the Reformed Interpretation of Scripture', *Center for Theological Inquiry* (Princeton) forthcoming; *idem,* 'Salvation in Mark', forthcoming.

[51] V. K. Robbins, 'Why Participate in African Biblical Interpretation?', *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa* (ed. M. N. Getui, T. S. Maluleke, and J. Ukpong; Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2001) 275-91. Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/vkr01-05/africa.cfm.

of Peter.[52]   In turn, Robbins extended his socio-rhetorical studies into the Coptic Gospel

of Thomas,[53] portions of the Book of Mormon,[54] the Mishnah,[55] and the *Apocalypse of*

Paul.[56]   During the 1990s, Robbins and Newby teamed with Laurie L. Patton in Emory

College and Ph.D. courses in 'interactive' socio-rhetorical interpretation of Jewish,

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[52] P. Gray, 'Abortion, Infanticide, and the Social Rhetoric of the *Apocalypse of Peter*', *JECS* 9
(2001) 313-37.

[53] V. K. Robbins, 'Rhetorical Argument about Lamps and Light in Early Christian gospels',
Context, Festskrift til Peder Johan Borgen (ed. P. W. Böckman and R. E. Kristiansen; *Relieff*, 24;
Universitetet i Trondheim: Tapir, 1987) 177-95 = *idem, New Boundaries in Old Territory: Forms
and Social Rhetoric in Mark* (ed. D. B. Gowler; Emory Studies in Early Christianity 3; New
York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994) 201-17; *idem,* 'Rhetorical Composition and Sources in the
Gospel of Thomas', *Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers*; Atlanta: Scholars Press,
1997: 86-114, online:
http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/RhetCompThomas.pdf; *idem,* 'Enthymemic
Texture in the Gospel of Thomas', *Society of Biblical Literature 1998 Seminar Papers*; Atlanta:
Scholars Press, 1998: 343-66, online:
http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/enthymeme.cfm; idem, "Enthymeme and
Picture in the Gospel of Thomas," in Jon Ma. Asgeirsson, April D. DeConick, and Risto Uro
(eds.), *Thomasine Traditions in Antiquity: The Social and Cultural World of the Gospel of
Thomas* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 59; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006) 175-207.

[54] V. K. Robbins, 'Divine Dialogue and the Lord's Prayer: Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of
Sacred Texts', *Dialogue* 28 (1995) 117-46.

[55] V. K. Robbins, 'A Comparison of Mishnah Gittin 1:1–2:2 and James 2:1-13 from a Perspective
of Greco-Roman Rhetorical Elaboration', J. N. Lightstone, *Mishnah and the Social Formation of
the Early Rabbinic Guild: A Socio-Rhetorical Approach* (Studies in Christianity and
Judaism/Études sur le christianisme et le judaïsme 11; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press
for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation Canadienne des Sciences
Religieuses, 2002) 201-16. Online:
http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/Lightstone.pdf.

[56] V. K. Robbins, 'The Legacy of 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 in the *Apocalypse of Paul*', *Paul and the
Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict* (ed. T. J. Burke and J. K. Elliott; SupNovT 109;
Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003) 325-339. Online:
http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/ApocPaulThrallPubPgs.pdf.

Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist sacred texts. In 2001, R. Kevin Jaques used socio-rhetorical strategies of interpretation in his Ph.D. dissertation on Islamic Law.[57] In 2002, Stuart Young produced as a senior honors thesis a socio-rhetorical study of African-American slave songs.[58] Most recently, Robbins and Newby have begun special teamwork on socio-rhetorical interpretation of the relation of the Qur'an and the Bible,[59] and Robbins has begun a special investigation of Gospel traditions in the Qur'an.[60] Socio-rhetorical interpretation has continually moved beyond biblical studies into other disciplines and traditions. This is a natural result of its interdisciplinary and intercultural base and focus, and one can expect an even greater extension of this approach into other fields in the coming years.

IV. The Emergence of Multiple Textures in Sacred Texts

The paperback edition of Robbins's *Jesus the Teacher*, which appeared in 1992, contained an introduction that launched the organization of socio-rhetorical strategies of analysis and interpretation according to inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural

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[57] R. K. Jaques, 'A Muslim history of Islamic Law: Ibn Qadi Shuhbah's Tabaqat al-fuqaha' al-Shafi'iyah (The generations of the Shafi'i Jurists)' (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2001).

[58] S. Young, '"My Lord's Coming Again": Biblical Interpretation through Slave Songs' (B.A. Senior Honors Thesis, Emory University, 2002). Online: http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/YoungThesis.pdf.

[59] V. K. Robbins and G. D. Newby, 'A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qur'an and the Bible', *Bible and Qur'an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality* (ed. J. Reeves; Symposium Series; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 23-42. Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Quran/Proleg.pdf.

[60] V. K. Robbins, 'Lukan and Johannine Tradition in the Qur'an: A Story of *Auslegungsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte*', *Prospects for a Story and Programme: Essays on Räisänen's Beyond NewTestament Theology* (ed. T. Penner; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2005) 336-38. Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/RaisanenVolRRA.pdf.

texture, and ideological texture.[61] Robbins's initial display of a multi-textural approach occurred in a 1992 essay on the Woman who Anointed Jesus, written for the purpose of inviting multiple authors into a context of interpretation and discussion of the multiple versions of the story in the Gospels.[62] Robbins published his first programmatic multi-textural study in a 1994 essay on Mary, Elizabeth and the Magnificat in Luke.[63] In 1993, Wesley H. Wachob produced the first full-length Ph.D. dissertation containing multi-textural socio-rhetorical analysis, working in detail on James 2:1-13, and this study appeared in the SNTS monograph series in 1999.[64] Subsequently, many insights in this work were incorporated into Luke Timothy Johnson's commentary on the epistle of James,[65] and Wachob and Johnson co-authored a socio-rhetorical essay on sayings of Jesus in James.[66] Russell B. Sisson produced the second multi-textural Ph.D. dissertation on a New Testament text in 1994, working on 1 Corinthians 9, and subsequently he has produced a socio-rhetorical essay on the Sermon on the Mount.[67] In 1996, Robbins produced two book-length presentations of socio-rhetorical interpretation, organized

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[61] V. K. Robbins, 'Introduction to the Paperback Edition', *idem*, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) xix-xliv. Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/books/teacher-introduction.cfm.

[62] V. K. Robbins, 'Using a Socio-Rhetorical Poetics to Develop a Unified Method: The Woman who Anointed Jesus as a Test Case', *SBLSP* 31 (1992) 302-19.

[63] V. K. Robbins, 'Socio-Rhetorical Criticism: Mary, Elizabeth, and the Magnificat as a Test Case', *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (ed. E. S. Malbon and E. V. McKnight; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 164-209.

[64] W. H. Wachob, '"The Rich in Faith" and "The Poor in Spirit": The Socio-Rhetorical Function of a Saying of Jesus in the Epistle of James' (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, l993); subsequently published as *idem*, *The Voice of Jesus and the Social Rhetoric of James* (SNTSMS 106; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[65] L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995).

[66] W. H. Wachob and L. T. Johnson, 'The Sayings of Jesus in the Letter of James', *Authenticating the Words of Jesus* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 431-50.

[67] R. B. Sisson, 'The Apostle as Athlete: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 9' (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1994); *idem,* 'Voices of Authority in the Sermon on the Mount', *SBLSP 36* (1997) 551-66.

according to textures of a text. To display the approach, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* explored 1 Corinthians 9 from the perspective of inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture.[68] Sisson's earlier work contributed significantly to the sections presenting the socio-rhetorical interpretation of 1 Corinthians 9. Mark 15 served as the sample text throughout *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, and insights from two previous publications by Robbins, some of which appeared in Raymond E. Brown's *The Death of the Messiah*,[69] contributed to the sections interpreting this chapter of the second Gospel.[70] Robbins's *Exploring* added sacred texture to the four textures included in earlier studies and in *Tapestry*.[71]

The entire textural mode of interpretation, as it exists at present, is available in an interactive mode on the web (see Figure 1).[72] Excellent examples of integrated multi-textural interpretation can be found in the works of David A. deSilva.[73] These studies

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[68] Robbins, *Tapestry.*

[69] R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 1:873-7, 1461-2.

[70] Robbins, *Exploring,* incorporating insights from *idem,* 'The Crucifixion and the Speech of Jesus', *Forum* 4.1 (1988) 33-46; *idem,* 'The Reversed Contextualization of Psalm 22 in the Markan Crucifixion: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis', *The Four Gospels 1992. Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, volume 2 (ed. F. van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle, J. Verheyden; BETL 100; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992) 1161-83.

[71] Robbins, *Exploring*, 120-31.

[72] Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRI/defns/index.cfm.

[73] D. A. DeSilva, *Despising Shame: The Social Function of the Rhetoric of Honor and Dishonor in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 152; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); *idem,* 'The Noble Contest: Honor, Shame, and the Rhetorical Strategy of 4 Maccabees', *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 13 (1995) 31-57; *idem,* 'The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Honor, Shame, and the Maintenance of the Values of a Minority Culture', *CBQ* 58 (1996) 433-55; *idem,* 'Investigating Honor Discourse: Guidelines from Classical Rhetoricians', *SBLSP* 36 (1997) 491-525; *idem,* 'Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John', *JSNT* 71 (1998) 79-110; *idem,* 'The Persuasive Strategy of the Apocalypse: A Socio-Rhetorical Investigation of Revelation 14:6-13', *SBLSP* 37 (1998) 785-806; *idem, The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999); *idem, Perseverance in Gratitude:*

Figure 1: Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Intepretation (click title for active links)

Inner Texture	Intertexture	Social-Cultural Texture	Ideological Texture	Sacred Texture
Repetitive **Progressive** **Narrational** **Opening-Middle-Closing**	**Oral-Scribal** Recitation Recontextualization Reconfiguration Narrative Amplification Thematic Elaboration **Cultural** Reference or allusion Echo	**Specific Topics** Conversionist Revolutionist Introversionist Gnostic-Manipulationist Thaumaturgic Reformist Utopian	**Individual Locations** **Relation to Groups** Clique Gang Action set Faction Corporate group Historic tradition Multiple traditions	**Deity** **Holy person** **Spirit being** **Human redemption**
Argumentative **Sensory-Aesthetic** Emotion-fused thought Self-expressive speech Purposeful action	**Social** **Historical**	**Common Topics** Honor-Shame: ascribed, acquired Individualist, dyadic Contracts: Colleague, Patron-client Challenge-response Exchange systems Peasants Limited goods Purity codes	**Modes of Intellectual Discourse** Historical-critical Social-scientific History of religions New historical Postmodern Socio-rhetorical	**Human commitment** **Religious community** Ecclesiology **Ethics**
		Final Categories Dominant Culture Subculture Counterculture Contraculture Liminal Culture	**Spheres of Ideology** Implied author location Ideology of power	

A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle 'to the Hebrews' (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 2000); *idem,* 'Hebrews 6:4-8: A Socio-Rhetorical Investigation. Part I', *Tyndale Bulletin* 50/1 (1999) 33-57; *idem,* 'A Socio-Rhetorical Investigation of Revelation 14:6-13: A Call to Act Justly toward the Just and Judging God', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 9 (1999) 65-117; *idem,* 'Fourth Ezra: Reaffirming Jewish Cultural Values through Apocalyptic Rhetoric', *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (ed. G. Carey and L. G. Bloomquist; St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999) 123-39.

regularly observe where different textures converge with one another in a text, and the interpretation proceeds on the basis of the convergences. H. J. B. Combrink wrote essays probing the Gospel of Matthew from a rhetorical perspective that was moving toward social-rhetorical analysis and interpretation.[74] During this period of time, Robbins produced additional socio-rhetorical studies of various kinds.[75] In addition to the Ph.D. dissertations of Braun, Wachob and Sisson, four additional socio-rhetorical dissertations were produced by 1997.[76] Then two more full-scale multi-textural dissertations were written by H. Stephen Brown on two second-century Christian martyr texts and by Thomas J. Bell on two medieval musical sequences attributed to Peter Abelard.[77] Also,

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[74] H. J. B. Combrink, 'Reference and Rhetoric in the Gospel of Matthew' (*Scriptura* 40 (1992) 1-17; *idem,* ''n Retoriese benadering tot die Nuwe Testament', *Skrif en Kerk* 14,2 (1993) 146-62.

[75] V. K. Robbins, 'A Male Reads a Feminist Reading: The Dialogical Nature of Pippin's Power', *Semeia* 59 (1992) 211-17; *idem*, 'Rhetoric and Culture: Exploring Types of Cultural Rhetoric in a Text', *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 443-63; *idem*, *New Boundaries in Old Territory: Forms and Social Rhetoric in Mark* (ed. D. B. Gowler; New York, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Paris: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994); *idem*, 'The Ritual of Reading and Reading a Text as a Ritual: Observations on Mieke Bal's *Death & Dissymmetry*', *In Good Company: Essays in Honor of Robert Detweiler* (ed. D. Jasper and M. Ledbetter; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994) 385-401; *idem*, 'Divine Dialogue and the Lord's Prayer: Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Sacred Texts', *Dialogue* 28 (1994) 117-46; *idem*, 'Foreword', John G. Cook, *The Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark: A Linguistic Approach* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) xiii-xvii.

[76] M. R. Huie-Jolly, 'The Son Enthroned in Conflict: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of John 5.17-23' (Ph.D. diss., University of Otago, New Zealand, 1994); E. Adams, 'Constructing the World: An Exegetical and Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Paul's Uses of ko/smoj and kti/sij' (Ph.D. diss., University of Glasgow, 1994); O. M. Hendricks, Jr., 'A Discourse of Domination: A Socio-Rhetorical Study of the Meaning of "*Ioudaios*" in the Fourth Gospel' (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1995); R. S. Ascough, 'Voluntary Associations and Community Formation: Paul's Macedonian Communities in Context' (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael's College, 1997).

[77] H. S. Brown, 'The Martyrs on Trial: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Second Century Christian Court Narrative' (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1999); T. J. Bell, 'The Paraclete Abbey Bridal

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Jon Ma Asgeirsson produced a series of studies on the Gospel of Thomas that contain significant socio-rhetorical dimensions.[78] During the 1990s, other people also produced studies that contained significant use of socio-rhetorical strategies of analysis and interpretation.[79] The beginning of the 21st century exhibits an increasing rate of socio-rhetorical studies appearing on multiple continents.[80]

Tapestry: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Peter Abelard's Sequences *Virgines castae* and *Epithalamica*' (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1999).

[78] J. M. Asgeirsson, 'Arguments and Audience(s) in the Gospel of Thomas (Part I)', *SBLSP* 36 (1997) 47-85; *idem*, 'Arguments and Audience(s) in the Gospel of Thomas (Part II)', *SBLSP* 37 (1998) 325-42; *idem*, 'Doublets and Strata: Towards a Rhetorical Approach to the Gospel of Thomas' (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1998); *idem*, 'The *Chria* as Principle and Source for Learning Literary Composition', in *Alexander's Revenge: Hellenistic Culture through the Centuries* (ed. J. M. Asgeirsson and N. van Deusen; Rekjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2002).

[79] B. K. Blount, 'A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Simon of Cyrene: Mark 15:21 and Its Parallels', *Semeia* 64 (1993) 171-98; I. Czachesz, 'Socio-Rhetorical Exegesis of Acts 9:1-30', *Communio Viatorum* (Praha) 37 (1995) 5-32; J. D. Hester, 'Socio-Rhetorical Criticism and the Parable of the Tenants', *JSNT* 45 (l992) 27-57; M. R. Huie-Jolly, 'Like Father, Like Son, Absolute Case, Mythic Authority: Constructing Ideology in John 5:17-23', *SBLSP* 36 (1997) 567-95; J. S. Jensen, 'Retorisk kritik: Om en ny vej I evangelieforskningen', *Dansk teologisk tidsskrift* 55 (1992) 262-79; ET: 'Rhetorical Criticism: On a New Way in Gospel Research'; T. C. Penner, 'Narrative as Persuasion: Epideictic Rhetoric and Scribal Amplification in the Stephen Episode in Acts', *SBLSP* 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) 352-67; *idem*, 'James in Contemporary Research', *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 7 (1999) 257-308; W. E. Arnal, 'Gendered Couplets in Q and Legal Formulations: From Rhetoric to Social History', *JBL* 116 (1997) 75-94; W. Braun, 'Social-rhetorical Interests: Context', *Whose Historical Jesus?* (ed. W. E. Arnal; Studies in Christianity and Judaism 7; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1997) 93-95; A. J. Batten, 'Patience Breeds Wisdom: Q 6:40 in Context', *CBQ* 60 (1998) 641-56; G. A. van den Heever, 'Finding Data in Unexpected Places (Or: From Text Linguistics to Socio-Rhetoric). A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of John's Gospel', *SBLSP* 37 (1998) 2:649-76; *idem*, 'From the Pragmatics of Textures to a Christian Utopia': The Case of the Gospel of John', *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 297-334; J. M. Cottrill, 'A Christological Contradistinction in the Gospel of Matthew'

V. Socio-Rhetorical Hermeneutics Versus Other Kinds of Hermeneutics

As various interpreters began to integrate social and rhetorical strategies of interpretation during the 1990s, it became obvious that different hermeneutics guided interpreters in different ways.[81] One obvious mode was a historical or historical-

(Master's thesis, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 1999); J. S. Kloppenborg, 'Patronage Avoidance in James', *HervTeoStud* 55, no. 4 (1999) 755-94; *idem*, 'The Q Document and the Q People' and 'Social Characterizations in Theological Perspective', *idem, Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) 166-213, 409-44; *idem,* 'Ideological Texture in the Parable of the Talents,' *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 64-88; J-S. Park, 'The Shepherd Discourse in John 10: A Rhetorical Interpretation,' (D.Th. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 1999).

[80] G. Theissen, *Gospel Writing and Church Politics: A Socio-rhetorical Approach* (Chuen King Lecture Series 3; Hong Kong: Theology Division, Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001; C. W. Lee, 'The Pauline Concept of the Law in Romans 7: A Socio-Rhetorical Approach' (D.Th. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2001); M. J. Nel, 'Vergifnis en versoening in Matteus (Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Matthew) (D.Th. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2002); O. J. Megbelayin, 'A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of the Lukan Narrative of the Last Supper' (Ph.D. diss., St. Paul University, Ottawa, Canada, 2002; *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003; R. R. Jeal, 'Melody, Imagery and Memory in the Moral Persuasion of Paul' *Rhetorics, Ethics, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse* (ed. A. Eriksson and T. H. Olbricht; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, forthcoming); F. J. Long, 'From Epicheiremes to Exhortation: A Pauline Method for Moral Persuasion in Hellenistic Socio-Rhetorical Context' *Rhetorics, Ethics, and Moral Persuasion in Biblical Discourse* (ed. A. Eriksson and T. H. Olbricht; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, forthcoming).

[81] J. Botha, *Subject to Whose Authority? Multiple Readings of Romans 13* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity 4; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994); V. K. Robbins, 'Socio-Rhetorical Hermeneutics and Commentary', *EPI TO AYTO. Essays in honour of Petr Pokorny* (ed. J. Mrazek, R. Dvorakova, and S. Brodsky; Praha-Trebenice, Czech Republic: Mlyn, 1998) 284-97, http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/commentary.cfm; *idem*, 'Historical,

theological hermeneutic. Randall C. Webber perhaps was the first person to use the term socio-rhetorical in a context guided by a dominantly historical hermeneutic.[82] Since then, Ben Witherington has produced commentaries that use social and rhetorical strategies of interpretation within a historical-theological hermeneutic.[83]

John H. Elliott began in the 1980s with a historical hermeneutic influenced by sociological and rhetorical strategies of analysis and interpretation, and during the 1990s he nurtured these strategies in ways that are more directly social-scientific in nature.[84] Beginning in 1988, many publications by Jerome H. Neyrey exhibited an integration of social-scientific exegesis with rhetorical analysis and interpretation, and in some

Literary, Linguistic, Cultural, and Artistic Intertextuality: A Response', *Semeia* 80 (1999) 299-303, http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/response.cfm.

[82] R. C. Webber, ''Why Were the Heathen so Arrogant?': The Socio-Rhetorical Strategy of Acts 3-4', *BTB* 22 (l992) 19-25.

[83] B. Witherington III, Conflict and Community in Corinth : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994); *idem*, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi : The letter of Paul to the Philippians* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994; *idem*, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); *idem*, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998); *idem, The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2001; *idem* and D. Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2003).

[84] J. H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) with a new subtitle: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy in the paperback edition, 1992; *idem,* 'The Epistle of James in Rhetorical and Social Scientific Perspective: Holiness-Wholeness and Patterns of Replication' (*BTB* 23 (1993) 71-81; *idem*, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (GBS, NT Series; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). Also see J. H. Elliott, 'Household/Family in the Gospel of Mark as a Core Symbol of Community', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 36-63.

instances his strategies have become explicitly socio-rhetorical.[85] Thus, some interpreters approach socio-rhetorical interpretation from a social scientific perspective, and they vary in the manner in which they allow a socio-rhetorical hermeneutic guide their interpretations.[86]

During this period of time, Robbins participated actively in the Context Group, which uses a social-scientific hermeneutic to guide its work, and he produced two essays that explicitly use aspects of social-scientific analysis and interpretation.[87] In addition, Robbins incorporated many insights and interpretive strategies from the works of Bruce

[85] J. H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); *idem, 2 Peter and Jude* (AB37C; New York: Doubleday, 1993); *idem*, 'Josephus' Vita and the Encomium: A Native Model of Personality', *JSJ* 25,2 (1994) 177-206; *idem*, ' What's Wrong With This Picture? John 4, Cultural Stereotypes of Women, and Public and Private Space', *BTB* 24 (1994) 77-91; *idem*, 'Loss of Wealth, Loss of Family and Loss of Honor: A Cultural Interpretation of the Original Four Makarisms', *Modelling Early Christianity. Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (ed. P. F. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995) 139-58; *idem*, 'The Footwashing in John 13:6-11; Transformation Ritual or Ceremony?' *The Social World of the First Christians. Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (ed. L. M. White and O. L. Yarbrough; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 198-213; *idem*, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality*, with B. J. Malina (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1996); *idem*, 'The Trials (Forensic) and Tribulations (Honor Challenges) of Jesus: John 7 in Social Science Perspective', *BTB* 26 (1996) 107-24; *idem*, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); *idem*, 'Questions, Chreiai, and Challenges to Honor. The Interface of Rhetoric and Culture in Mark's Gospel', *CBQ* 60 (1998) 657-81.

[86] See D. C. Duling, '"Whatever Gain I Had …": Ethnicity and Paul's Self-Identification in Philippians 3:5-6', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 222-41.

[87] V. K. Robbins, 'The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts', *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) 305-32; *idem,* 'Beelzebul Controversy in Mark and Luke: Rhetorical and Social Analysis', *Forum* 7.3-4 (1991) 261-77.

J. Malina in *Tapestry* and *Exploring*.[88] Robbins, however, approaches social scientific analysis and interpretation from a socio-rhetorical perspective. This means that he uses a socio-rhetorical hermeneutic as an interpretive analytic to guide the incorporation of social scientific insights into analysis and interpretation of a text, artistic object, or other social, cultural, ideological, or religious phenomenon.

A noticeable alternative to either a historical or social-scientific hermeneutic is a literary hermeneutic. Robert C. Tannehill developed a literary hermeneutic during the 1970s that was richly rhetorical in nature, and his approach was deeply influential on socio-rhetorical interpretation. After explicit dialogue between Tannehill and members of the Context Group during the early 1990s, in 1996 Tannehill produced a socio-literary commentary on the Gospel of Luke that contains significant socio-rhetorical dimensions.[89] One of the people with whom Tannehill dialogued was Richard L. Rohrbaugh, a member of the Context Group who integrated social-scientific exegesis with literary readings that were essentially rhetorical interpretations during the 1990s.[90] Some interpreters, in contrast to Tannehill and Rohrbaugh, interacted appreciatively but critically with socio-rhetorical interpretation from the perspective of a literary or a social-scientific hermeneutic.[91] Robbins wrote an essay on the relationship between social-scientific and literary hermeneutics from the perspective of a socio-rhetorical

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[88] Robbins, *Tapestry*, 159-66; *idem*, *Exploring*, 30-31, 75-86, 100-1, 107.

[89] R. C. Tannehill, *Gospel of Luke* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

[90] R. L. Rohrbaugh, 'A Peasant Reading of the Parable of the Talents: A Text of Terror?', *BTB* 23 (1993) 32-9; *idem*, 'A Dysfunctional Family and its Neighbors: Luke 15:11-32', *Perspectives on the Parables: Images of Jesus in his Contemporary Setting* (ed. V. G. Shillington; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997); *idem*, 'Legitimating Sonship: A Test of Honor: A Social Science Study of Luke 4:1-30', Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context (ed. P. F. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995) 183-97.

[91] M. Ledbetter, 'Telling the Other Story: A Literary Response to Socio-Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament', *Semeia* 64 (1993) 289-301; P. F. Craffert, 'Relations Between Social-Scientific, Literary, and Rhetorical Interpretations of Texts', *BTB* 26 (1996) 45-55; R. A. Culpepper, 'Mapping the Textures of New Testament Criticism: A Response to Socio-Rhetorical Criticism', *JSNT* 70 (1998) 71-7.

hermeneutic[92] and later wrote a socio-rhetorical interpretation with a special focus on aesthetic texture for Robert Tannehill's Festschrift.[93]

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza activated a political hermeneutic in a direct criticism of socio-rhetorical interpretation in her address at the first South African Rhetorical Conference in 1994.[94] Robbins responded in the Florence Conference in 1998, analyzing the oppositional rhetoric Fiorenza used in the address and recommending ways the discussion could move forward using socio-rhetorical strategies of dialogue and discussion.[95] Then Robbins in 2002 was invited to exhibit a 'full-turn' socio-rhetorical approach that might inform feminist interpretation.[96] Priscilla Geisterfer Nyvlt has written a substantive response to Fiorenza's essay from the perspective of feminist criticism.[97]

H. J. B. Combrink has written a series of essays that use a socio-rhetorical hermeneutic to analyze, interpret, and challenge the present climate of NT interpretation

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[92] V. K. Robbins, 'Social-Scientific Criticism and Literary Studies: Prospects for Cooperation in Biblical Interpretation', *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (ed. P. F. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995) 274-89.

[93] V. K. Robbins, 'The Sensory-Aesthetic Texture of the Compassionate Samaritan Parable in Luke 10', *Literary Encounters with the Reign of God* (ed. Sharon H. Ringe and H. C. Paul Kim; T & T Clark, 2004).

[94] E. S. Fiorenza, 'Challenging the Rhetorical Half-Turn: Feminist and Rhetorical Biblical Criticism', *Rhetoric, Scripture & Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 131; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 28-53.

[95] Robbins, 'Rhetorical-Political Analysis'.

[96] Robbins, 'Feminst Hermeneutics'.

[97] P. Geisterfer Nyvlt, 'Consciousness as the Heartbeat of Critical Feminist Biblical Interpretation: The Cooperative Language of Liberation in Rhetorical Criticism', *Her Master's Tools?* (ed. C. Vander Stichele and T. Penner; Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship Series; Atlanta: SBL and Leiden: Brill, 2004). See also W. Braun, 'Fugitives from Femininity: Greco-Roman Gender Ideology and the Limits of Early Christian Women's Emancipation', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 317-32.

in the new South Africa.[98] In addition, L. Gregory Bloomquist has written a series of studies that probe the inner nature of a socio-rhetorical hermeneutic in the context of sociological, philosophical, and theological systems of thought and practice.[99] In this context, both Combrink and Duane F. Watson have written essays that probe the implications of using a socio-rhetorical hermeneutic, rather than an alternative hermeneutic, to guide the writing of commentary on biblical texts.[100] One of the results of this work has been an increased emphasis on the role of ideological texture in socio-rhetorical interpretation.[101] Thus, the implications of using a socio-rhetorical

[98] Combrink, 'The Rhetoric of the Church in the Transition'; *idem,* 'The Challenge of Making and Redrawing Boundaries'; *idem,* 'The Contribution of Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation to the Reformed Interpretation of Scripture'.

[99] L. G. Bloomquist, 'Rhetorical Analysis and Sociological Analysis in Historical Jesus Research', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 9.2 (1997) 139-54; *idem,* 'The Rhetoric of the Historical Jesus', *Whose Historical Jesus?* (ed. W. E. Arnal; Studies in Christianity and Judaism 7; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1997) 98-117; *idem, '*Methodological Considerations in the Determination of the Social Context of Cynic Rhetorical Practice: Implications for our Present Studies of the Jesus Traditions', *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 200-31; *idem*, 'Patristic Reception of a Lukan Healing Account: A Contribution to a Socio-Rhetorical Response to Willi Braun's *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14', Healing in Religion and Society, From Hippocrates to the Puritans* (ed. S. Muir and J. K. Coyle; Studies in Religion and Society 43; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999) 105-34; *idem*, 'A Possible Direction for Providing Programmatic Correlation of Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Analysis', *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 61-96.

[100] Combrink*,* 'The Challenges and Opportunities of a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary'; Watson, 'Why We Need Socio-Rhetorical Commentary' *idem,* '"Keep Yourselves from Idols": A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of the *Exordium* and *Peroratio* in 1 John', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 281-302.

[101] See *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003): H. J. B. Combrink, 'Shame on the Hypocritical Leaders in the Church: A Socio-Rhetorical

hermeneutic, rather than a hermeneutic from a different arena of interpretation, to guide socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation has become more evident during the last decade. The implications lie primarily in the sphere of socio-rhetorical interpretation as an interpretive analytic that negotiates multiple arenas of analysis. An interpretive analytic is designed to negotiate analysis and interpretation produced by multiple disciplinary methods, rather than to pursue analysis and interpretation within the strictly drawn boundaries of one disciplinary method.

VI. The Emergence of Multiple Rhetorolects in Early Christianity

By 1996, socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation began to exhibit significantly different textures for different kinds of early Christian discourse. For example, early Christian miracle discourse has a different texture than wisdom or apocalyptic discourse. In addition, early Christian prophetic discourse is different from precreation discourse. In an essay that appeared in 1996, Robbins defined and described six kinds of discourse in the New Testament as 'rhetorolects'.[102] According to the essay, 'A rhetorolect is a form of language variety or discourse identifiable on the basis of a distinctive configuration of themes, topics, reasonings, and argumentations'.[103] Each rhetorolect blends with the other rhetorolects during the first seven decades of the emergence of early Christian discourse. This raises a challenge for interpreters to describe the texture of each rhetorolect and to explain and display the manner in which each rhetorolect blends with the other

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Interpretation of the Reproaches in Matthew 23', 1-35; J. S. Kloppenborg, 'Ideological Texture in the Parable of the Talents', 64-88; Gowler, 'Text, Culture, and Ideology'; Bloomquist, 'Paul's Inclusive Language'; C. A. Wanamaker, '"By the Power of God": Rhetoric and Ideology in 2 Corinthians 10-13', 194-221; R. B. Sisson, 'A Common Agōn: Ideology and Rhetorical Intertexture in Philippians', 242-63; W. H. Wachob, 'The Epistle of James and the Book of Psalms: A Socio-Rhetorical Perspective of Intertexture, Culture, and Ideology in Religious Discourse', 264-80.

[102] V. K. Robbins, 'The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse', *Scriptura* 59 (1996) 353-362. Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/dialect.cfm.

[103] Robbins, 'The Dialectical Nature', 356.

rhetorolects during the emergence of Christian discourse as an identifiable phenomenon in the Mediterranean world.

Robbins's move to analysis of rhetorolects had actually started with his papers at the 1992 Heidelberg conference and the 1993 annual *Exegetiska dagen* at the University of Uppsala, where he investigated difference kinds of culture in relation to different kinds of discourse.[104] This means that attention to multiple textures in early Christian discourse began to emerge prior to the publication of the books that presented the multi-textural approach in 1996. However, Robbins actually launched the multiple discourse approach in a paper on the dialectical nature of six kinds of early Christian rhetorolects at the second annual South African Rhetorical Conference in 1996 at the University of Stellenbosch.[105] The names that have gradually evolved for these six rhetorolects are: wisdom, miracle, prophetic, precreation, priestly, and apocalyptic.[106] In 1996, Robbins also published an article on the game-like nature of the wisdom discourse in the Epistle of James, using insights from the anthropologist Bradd Shore.[107] As Robbins began to analyze different modes of early Christian discourse more intensively, socio-rhetorical analysis of enthymemes became a more prominent feature of the approach.[108] The result was a conclusion that enthymemes work with social, cultural, ideological and theological topics and values, using some topics and values as a context for reconfiguring others.

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[104] V. K. Robbins, 'Rhetoric and Culture: Exploring Types of Cultural Rhetoric in a Text', *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 443-63; *idem,* 'Interpreting Miracle Culture and Parable Culture in Mark 4-11', *SEÅ* 59 (1994) 59-81.

[105] Robbins, 'The Dialectical Nature'.

[106] The names 'oppositional, suffering-death-resurrection and cosmic' in the 1996 essay gradually have changed to 'prophetic, priestly and precreation'.

[107] V. K. Robbins, 'Making Christian Culture in the Epistle of James', *Scriptura* 59 (1996) 341-51.

http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/james.cfm; B. Shore, *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture, and the Problem of Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[108] Robbins, 'The Present and Future', 33-40.

Beginning in 1998, Robbins's analysis and interpretation of enthymemes began to display rule, case, and result, rather than simply major premise, minor premise, and conclusion.[109] The purpose was to invite a discussion concerning the relation of deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning in early Christian argumentation, and this is now in process. Robbins has argued for the unusual sequence of argumentation in Luke 11:4 and 11:13 as abductive in the context of enthymematic networks about praying to God to be forgiven in a context where one forgives others and God's giving of the Holy Spirit in a context where one sees God as Father who gives food and other basic needs to people in God's kingdom.[110] In addition, Robbins has argued for a series of instances of abductive reasoning in the Gospel of Thomas.[111] L. G. Bloomquist, in a context of careful exploration of C. S. Peirce's statements about abduction, has concluded that only in a few instances might one be able to detect abductive reasoning in New Testament texts.[112] Rather, he suggests, 'What Peirce calls deduction, as the tracing out of necessary and probable consequences of certain original hypotheses that were held, seems widely present in the New Testament argumentation and, in fact, appears to be the primary argumentative form.'[113] D. E. Aune has objected to any discussion of abduction in relation to enthymemes in the New Testament, asserting that 'Enthymemes, like syllogisms, are *always deductive*…'[114] Aune does not discuss Bloomquist's essay, nor

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[109] V. K. Robbins, 'Enthymemic Texture in the Gospel of Thomas', *SBLSP* 37 (1998) 343-66: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/vkr/enthymeme.cfm; *idem*, 'From Enthymeme to Theology in Luke 11:1-13', *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.

[110] Robbins, 'From Enthymeme', 197, 210-14.

[111] Robbins, 'Enthymemic Texture', 346-47, 356-65.

[112] L. G. Bloomquist, 'A Possible Direction for Providing Programmatic Correlation of Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Analysis', *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; JSNTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 61-96.

[113] Bloomquist, 'A Possible Direction', 85.

[114] D. E. Aune, 'Use and Abuse of the Enthymeme in New Testament Scholarship', *NTS* 49 (2003) 299-320, quotation on 315.

does he cite Robbins's essay on the Gospel of Thomas nor Richard L. Lanigan's discussion of abduction and the enthymeme in his 1995 essay,[115] on which Robbins's analysis was initially based. Socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation of enthymemes is still in its early stages, and it appears that it may be the center of some considerable discussion in the near future. Jeffrey Walker has recently published an important analysis and interpretation of the 'lyric enthymeme' in the writings of Pindar, Alcaeus, Sappho, and Solon.[116] This study promises to contribute substantively to the discussion, since it contains enthymematic interpretation of quite lengthy sections of text that people have not regularly considered to be rhetorically argumentative.[117]

In 1999, Robbins turned to apocalyptic discourse and produced an essay on Mark 13 that contains a significant amount of socio-rhetorical analysis of its enthymematic texture in a context that interprets the passage as transferring holiness from the Jerusalem temple to the bodies of Jesus' disciples.[118] Bloomquist also has produced socio-rhetorical studies of apocalyptic discourse.[119] Newby, who began socio-rhetorical analysis in the

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[115] R. L. Lanigan, 'From Enthymeme to Abduction: The Classical Law of Logic and the Postmodern Rule of Rhetoric', *Recovering Pragmatism's Voice: The Classical Tradition, Rorty, and the Philosophy of Communication* (ed. L. Langsdorf and A. R. Smith; Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995) 49-70.

[116] J. Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[117] Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics*, 154-273.

[118] V. K. Robbins, 'Rhetorical Ritual: Apocalyptic Discourse in Mark 13', *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (ed. G. Carey and L. G. Bloomquist; St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999) 95-121.

[119] L. G. Bloomquist, 'Rhetorical Argumentation and the Culture of Apocalyptic: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Lk.21', *The Rhetorical Interpretation of Scripture: Essays from the 1996 Malibu Conference* (JSNTSup 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 173-209; *idem*, 'Methodological Criteria for Apocalyptic Rhetoric: A Suggestion for the Expanded Use of Sociorhetorical Analysis', *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (ed. G. Carey and L. G. Bloomquist; St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999) 181-203. Also see D. A. deSilva, 'Toward a Socio-Rhetorical Taxonomy of Divine Intervention: Miracle Discourse in the Revelation to John', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K.*

Quran in 1997, also has produced an essay on apocalyptic discourse in Surahs 2, 10, and 18 of the Quran.[120] Thus apocalyptic rhetorolect, which blends extended sequences of vivid, graphic images with emphatic assertions about God's actions, became the testing ground for rhetorical analysis and interpretation that moved beyond semi-philosophically oriented wisdom rhetorolect grounded in God's created order to a rhetorolect grounded in God's ability to act as an omnipotent emperor who can destroy all evil in the universe and transport all holy souls into an environment of complete well-being.

By the time of the Lund Rhetoric Conference in 2000, it was becoming evident that different ways of 'elaborating' *topoi* held the key for describing each rhetorolect on its own terms and in relation to the other rhetorolects in early Christian discourse. Robbins's socio-rhetorical essay for the Lund conference worked programmatically with enthymematic argumentative elaboration in the six rhetorolects that are perceived to be central to first century Christian discourse.[121] In the context of writing a socio-rhetorical study of the intertexture of apocalyptic discourse in Mark for the 1999 SBL NT Rhetoric session, Robbins began to distinguish between narrative-descriptive and argumentative-enthymematic elaboration,[122] and to work with their relation to one another in each rhetorolect. Since 2000, Robbins considers narrative description to be 'rhetography' (picturesque expression) and calls rhetography 'pictorial narration'. In turn, Robbins

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Robbins (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 303-16.

[120] Newby, 'Qur'anic Texture'; *idem,* 'Folded Time'.

[121] V. K. Robbins, 'Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation', *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference* (ed. A. Eriksson, T. H. Olbricht, and W. Übelacker; Emory Studies in Early Christianity 8; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002: 27-65. Online:

http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/LundArgument.pdf.

[122] V. K. Robbins, 'The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the Gospel of Mark', *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (ed. D. F. Watson; Symposium Series 14. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002) 11-44. Online:

http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/ApocIntertexture.pdf. The origin of my awareness of this distinction lies in W. H. Wuellner, 'Toposforschung und Torahinterpretation bei Paulus und Jesus', *NTS* 24 (1978) 463-83, esp. 467.

considers argumentative enthymeme to be 'rhetology' (argumentative expression) and calls rhetology 'argumentation'.[123] Narrative begins by creating a verbal picture (pictograph). Elaboration of one verbal picture by means of additional pictures in a sequence creates a graphic story (rhetography). Argumentation, in contrast, begins by asserting a thesis (logos). Elaboration of a thesis through some combination of rationale, opposite, contrary, analogy, example, citation of authoritative testimony, and/or conclusion creates an argument (rhetology). Each early Christian rhetorolect has its own way of blending pictorial narration and argumentation.

The essay on the intertexture of apocalyptic discourse in Mark, mentioned above, focused primarily on enthymematic argumentation. Virtually every instance identified as a 'Case' features pictorial narration. In addition, it is characteristic of apocalyptic discourse to create both 'Rules' and 'Results' through pictorial narration. This means that the enthymematic argumentation (rhetology) of apocalyptic discourse unfolds through pictorial narration (rhetography). The essay states many of these things only implicitly, however, as it attempts to exhibit the sequential rhetology (enthymematic argumentation) of Markan apocalyptic discourse through different sequences of Rule, Case, and Result, and through different manifestations of Rule, Case, and Result (e.g., contrary Rule,[124] contrary Case,[125] contrary Result,[126] exhortative Result,[127] petitionary Result[128]). Both the 1999 SBL essay and the 2000 Lund essay explicitly attempt to negotiate multiple early Christian rhetorolects in a context of analysis and interpretation of enthymematic argumentation. H. J. B. Combrink has contributed to this most recently in an investigation of the enthymematic nature of prophetic rhetorolect in Matthew 23.[129]

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[123] V. K. Robbins, 'Enthymeme and Picture in the Gospel of Thomas', *Thomas in Current Scholarship* (tentative title; ed. J. M. Asgeirsson, forthcoming).

[124] Robbins, 'The Intertexture of Apocalyptic', 25.

[125] Robbins, 'The Intertexture of Apocalyptic', 29, 32, 33, 39.

[126] Robbins, 'The Intertexture of Apocalyptic', 29.

[127] Robbins, 'The Intertexture of Apocalyptic', 20, 31,

[128] Robbins, 'The Intertexture of Apocalyptic', 39.

[129] H. J. B. Combrink, 'Shame on the Hypocritical Leaders in the Church: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of the Reproaches in Matthew 23', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of*

VII. Conceptual Blending of Multiple Social Locations in Rhetorolects

In the context of analysis and interpretation of the different modes of argumentation in the six major early Christian rhetorolects, reasoning associated with particular social, cultural, and religious locations began to emerge as highly significant. This has led more and more to analysis of the 'social' in socio-rhetorical interpretation. It became obvious, first of all, that a major characteristic of early Christian discourse emerges from the patterns with which it creates enthymematic argumentation out of pictorial narration and reasoning related to people's bodies, households, villages, synagogues, cities, temples, kingdoms and empires. In other words, the cognitions and reasonings were emerging from 'lived experiences' in specific places in the first century Mediterranean world. This has led to the use of 'critical spatiality theory' in socio-rhetorical interpretation. This area of study, located in the field of cultural geography studies, builds in particular on writings by Henri Lefebvre,[130] Robert D. Sack,[131] Pierre Bourdieu,[132] Edward W. Soja,[133] and Stephen Toulmin.[134] James W. Flanagan has been especially instrumental in bringing critical spatiality theory into biblical study.[135] In 1991, Robbins used Robert D. Sack's

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Vernon K. Robbins (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 1-35.

[130] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991 [1974]).

[131] R. D. Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1986); idem, *Homo Geographicus: A Framework for Action, Awareness, and Moral Concern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1997).

[132] P. Bourdieu, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', *Sociological Theory* 7 (1989) 14-25.

[133] E. W. Soja, *Postmodern Geography: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989); *idem,* 'Postmodern Geographies and the Critique of Historicism', *Postmodern Contentions: Epochs, Politics, Space* (ed. J. P. Jones III, W. Natter, and T. R. Schatzki; New York: Guildford, 1993) 113-36; *idem, Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996).

[134] S. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[135] J. W. Flanagan, 'Ancient Perceptions of Space/Perceptions of Ancient Space', *Semeia* 87 (1999) 15-43. Online: http://www.cwru.edu/affil/GAIR/papers/jwfpapers/CBA2000/CBA.html.

Human Territoriality for socio-rhetorical analysis of 'images of empire' in Acts[136] and T. F. Carney's *The Shape of the Past[137]* for the social location of the implied author of Luke-Acts.[138] Jerome H. Neyrey has applied strategies for interpreting the social location of the implied author to Jude and 2 Peter,[139] Luke's social location of Paul,[140] the Gospel of John,[141] and to Paul's writings.[142] Since 2000, Roland Boer has written an important study on 'the production of space' in 1 Samuel 1-2,[143] Michael McKeever an analysis of 'refiguring space in the Lukan passion narrative,[144] Claudia V. Camp an important essay on 'storied space' in Sirach,[145] Victor H. Matthews an important discussion of physical,

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[136] V. K. Robbins, 'Luke-Acts: A Mixed Population Seeks a Home in the Roman Empire', *Images of Empire* (ed. L. Alexander; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 202-21. Online: http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/MixedPopulation.pdf.

[137] T. F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity* (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1975).

[138] V. K. Robbins, 'The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts', *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) 305-32.

[139] J. H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* (AB 37C; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 32-42, 128-42.

[140] J. H. Neyrey, 'Luke's Social Location of Paul: Cultural Anthropology and the Status of Paul in Acts', *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. B. Witherington III; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 251-79.

[141] J. H. Neyrey, 'Spaces and Places, Whence and Whither, Homes and Rooms: 'Territoriality' in the Fourth Gospel', *BTB* 32 (2002) 60-74; *idem,* 'Spaced Out: 'Territoriality' in the Fourth Gospel', *HervTeoStud*, forthcoming.

[142] Jerome H. Neyrey, 'The Social Location of Paul', *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003) 126-64.

[143] R. Boer, 'Sanctuary and Womb: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space', presented to the AAR/SBL Constructions of Ancient Space Seminar, 2000.

[144] M. C. McKeever, 'Refiguring Space in the Lukan Passion Narrative', Constructions of Ancient Space, 2000.

[145] C. V. Camp, 'Storied Space, or, Ben Sira "Tells" a Temple', presented to the AAR/SBL Seminar on Constructions of Ancient Space, 2002.

imagined, and 'lived' space in ancient Israel,[146] and Thomas B. Dozeman an essay on Ezra-Nehemiah'.[147]

Socio-rhetorical interpretation is using critical spatiality theory together with cognitive theory about 'conceptual blending' to analyze and interpret the nature of early Christian discourse. Here the foundational work is Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*.[148] The merger of conceptual blending theory with critical spatiality theory is clarifying the relation of social places to cultural, ideological and religious spaces in the six major early Christian rhetorolects. According to Fauconnier and Turner: 'Conceptual integration always involves a blended space and at least two inputs and a generic space'.[149] Socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation of rhetorolects begins, therefore, with a perception that places and spaces are related to conceptual blending in manner displayed in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Conceptual Blending
according to the Categories of Experience, Place and Space
in Rhetorolects

Bodily experiences	Sensory-aesthetic experiences of the body
Social places	Location of the body in social places
Spaces of blending	Cultural, ideological and religious spaces provide the material for debate and reconciliation in the rhetorolects

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[146] V. H. Matthews, 'Physical Space, Imagined Space, and "Lived Space" in Ancient Israel', *BTB* 33 (2003) 12-20.

[147] T. B. Dozeman, 'Geography and History in Herodotus and in Ezra-Nehemiah', *JBL* 122/3 (2003) 449-466.

[148] G. Fauconnier and M. Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). The use of this book for socio-rhetorical commentary is the result of an e-mail by L. G. Bloomquist on Dec. 4, 2002, which called attention to the relation conceptual blending theory to early Christian blending of rhetorolects, which was a topic of discussion at the Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity meetings prior to the AAR/SBL sessions at Toronto in November, 2002.

[149] Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think,* xv, 279.

Sensory-aesthetic experiences of the body in various social places – like household, village, city, synagogue, kingdom and temple – in the world create the contexts in which people grow in cognitive and conceptual abilities that interpret the social places they experience as cultural, ideological and religious spaces. People's interpretations in the ongoing context of their sensory-aesthetic experiences are the 'spaces of blending' in which they lead their daily lives. Socio-rhetorical interpreters are accepting the challenge of analyzing and interpreting six rhetorolects that emerge in early Christian discourse in relation to these places and spaces: wisdom, prophetic, miracle, precreation, priestly and apocalyptic. Figure 3 below presents an initial display of important places and spaces that play a role in the six early Christian rhetorolects.

Early Christian wisdom rhetorolect (generic space) blends human experiences of the household and the created world (firstspace: two places of social experience) with the cultural space of God's cosmos (secondspace). In the space of blending (thirdspace), God functions as heavenly Father over God's children in the world, who are to produce goodness and righteousness through the medium of God's wisdom (light). Wisdom rhetorolect, then, features productivity and reproductivity. The goal of the conceptual blending is to create people who produce good, righteous action, thought, will, and speech with the aid of God's light, which equals God's wisdom which certain people speak on earth.

Early Christian prophetic rhetorolect blends human experiences of a prophet's body with the cosmos, under the presupposition that God's will has been communicated to the prophet. In the space of blending, God functions as heavenly King over his righteous kingdom on earth. Prophetic rhetorolect, then, features the performance of righteousness on the earth according to God's will. The goal of the conceptual blending is to create a governed realm on earth where God's righteousness is enacted among all the people in the realm with the aid of God's specially transmitted word in the form of prophetic action and speech.

Early Christian miracle rhetorolect blends human experiences of a bodily agent of God's power with the cosmos, where God's power to create and restore life is opposed by powers of death. In the space of blending, God functions as healer of inter-subjective bodies of people on earth. This means that as God heals malfunctioning bodies of

Figure 3: Blended Spaces and Locations in Early Christian Rhetorolects

Generic spaces (Rhetorolects)	Wisdom	Prophetic	Miracle	Precreation	Priestly	Apocalyptic
Places of Social Relationships (Firstspace)	Household and Created World (Nature) -Garden	Prophet's body as communication of God's will to persons -Tabernacle -Temple -Wilderness -Mountain	Bodily agent and recipient of God's power	Empire -Emperor's household	Temple City and Afflicted body	Empire -Imperial Army
Culturally Configured Spaces (Secondspace)	Cosmos (God the heavenly Father)	Cosmos (God the heavenly King)	Cosmos (God as power of life vs. powers of death)	Cosmos (God as heavenly emperor Father)	Cosmos -Temple	Holy bodies -Temple
Spaces of Mental Conception	Cause-effect, change, time, identity, intentionality, representation, part-whole Formal argumentative topics: opposites, grammatical forms of the same word, correlatives, more and less, time, turning back upon the opponent, definition, varied meanings, division, induction, previous judgment, parts, consequence, contrast, openly and secretly, analogy, same result, before and after, purpose as cause, for and against, implausible probabilities, contradictions, cause of false impression, cause and effect, better, doing contrary to what has been done, mistakes, meaning of a name.[150]					
Space of Blending or Livedspace (Thirdspace)	Bodies of people who produce goodness and righteousness	God's righteous kingdom on earth	Inter-subjective bodies of people with full social well-being	God's household giving people eternal benefits	Sacrificial bodies effecting beneficial exchange between God and people	Holy cosmos filled with well-being and presence of God

individual people, God is restoring communities of people to relationships of well-being among one another. Miracle rhetorolect, then, features transformation through healing and restoration. The goal of this blending is to create full social well-being among all inter-subjective bodies on the earth with the aid of God's power in the form of a miraculous event.

Early Christian precreation rhetorolect blends human experiences of the emperor and his household with the cosmos, with the presupposition that God has the status of a loving heavenly emperor with a household populated by loving people. The result of this

[150] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II.23.1-29 (1397a-1400b); G. A. Kennedy, *Aristotle, On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 190-204.

blending is the presence in God's heavenly household of God the loving Emperor Father, God's Son who does what His Father asks him to do, and heirs and friends of the emperor and his son, who receive eternal benefits from their relation to God's household through its members. In the space of blending, God functions as heavenly Emperor Father who possesses eternal blessings He will give to people as a result of his love for the world and the people in it. People may enter into this love by believing, honoring and worshipping not only God but also members and friends of God's household whom he sends out with a message of eternal blessings. Precreation rhetorolect, then, features love that is the source of all things in the world and the means by which people may enter into God's eternal love. In this rhetorolect, God's light is love that provides the possibility for entering into eternal love, rather than being limited to light that is the basis for the production and reproduction of goodness and righteousness. The goal of the blending in precreation rhetorolect is to guide people towards community that is formed through God's love, which reflects the eternal intimacy present in God's precreation household.

Early Christian priestly rhetorolect blends human experiences of the temple city with God's cosmos, with a presupposition that specific actions in the temple are actions that benefit God in a manner that activates divine benefits for humans on earth. In the space of blending, people make sacrifices by giving up things that give them well being in the form of giving them to God. Things like food, possessions and money but also things like comfort and honor may be given up to God. Some of these things may be given to God by giving them to other people on earth, or by allowing other people to take things like honor or fame away without protest. The greatest sacrifice people can offer to God, of course, is their entire life. Usually, in contrast, a person gives up only certain highly valued things in life. Priestly rhetorolect, then, features beneficial exchange between God and humans. The goal of the conceptual blending is to create people who are willing to give up things they highly value in exchange for special divine benefits that come to them, because these sacrifices are perceived to benefit God as well as humans. In other words, sacrificial actions by humans create an environment in which God acts redemptively among humans in the world.

Early Christian apocalyptic rhetorolect blends human experiences of the emperor and his imperial army with God's heavenly temple city, which can only be occupied by

holy, undefiled people. In the space of blending, God functions as a heavenly emperor who gives commands to emissaries to destroy all the evil in the universe and to create a cosmic environment where holy bodies experience perfect well-being in the presence of God. Apocalyptic rhetorolect, then, features destruction of evil and construction of a cosmic environment of perfect well-being. The goal of this blending is to call people into action and thought guided by perfect holiness. The presupposition of the rhetorolect is that only perfect holiness and righteousness can bring a person into the presence of God, who destroys all evil and gathers all holiness together in His presence. Apocalyptic redemption, therefore, means the presence of all of God's holy beings in a realm where God's holiness and righteousness are completely and eternally present.

The inclusion of conceptual blending theory and critical spatiality theory in socio-rhetorical interpretation allows an interpreter to construct a topology of spaces in early Christian rhetorolects and to interpret the rhetorical power of the blending of spaces in these rhetorolects. Since each of the rhetorolects presents social, cultural and ideological language, story-telling and argumentation that evoke specific pictures, emotions, cognitions and reasonings, each rhetorolect made vital contributions to a new culture of discourse that was emerging during the first century. Since many of the social places present in early Christian discourse (like household, village, places of sacred ritual, city, etc.) continue to exist to the present day in some kind of reconfigured form, early Christian discourse continually functions anew in places believers perceive to be similar in social, cultural and religious function. Some believers locate their thinking primarily in one rhetorolect at a time, blending aspects of other rhetorolects into this one rhetorolect for very specific purposes. Other believers locate their thinking in a particular blend of multiple rhetorolects, inviting specific aspects of other rhetorolects in implicit, subtle and nuanced ways. These variations produce a dynamic conceptual, cognitive and verbal system of Christian discourse that is highly adaptive to multiple contexts and cultures. Figure 4 below exhibits the dominant social, cultural and ideological rhetoric internal to each rhetorolect. Figure 5 exhibits the multiple kinds of expression that could emerge in early Christian discourse as a result of blendings of the rhetorolects with one another.

Figure 4: Rhetoric Internal to Each Rhetorolect

Wisdom	Prophetic	Miracle	Precreation	Priestly	Apocalyptic
God's speech through Christ produces fruitfulness	God and Christ call people to be a righteous kingdom	God's power working in and/or through Christ produces bodily transformation	Christ's primordial divinity produces eternal life in believers	Christ's sacrifice produces holy benefit for believers	Christ's initial coming produced a new beginning and Christ's return will produce a new world

Dynamic blending of the six early Christian rhetorolects created a richly variegated culture of early Christian discourse by the end of the first century. Believers blended each rhetorolect dynamically with the other rhetorolects either by blending multiple rhetorolects into one dominant rhetorolect or by blending particular rhetorolects together in a particularly forceful manner. The dynamics of these blendings throughout the verbal culture of early Christianity produced a continually increasing combination of cognitions, reasonings, picturings, and argumentations. This interactive process continued in Christian discourse throughout the centuries, and it continues in our present day.

Starting from the top, left corner of Figure 5, one sees that Christian wisdom rhetorolect features people's production of goodness and righteousness through guidance from God's speech, which functions as light in human bodies. When wisdom rhetorolect blends with prophetic rhetorolect, the emphasis is on the production of righteousness and justice that motivates leaders and people in God's kingdom to provide food, clothing and shelter for the poor, the widow, the outcast and the foreigner. When wisdom rhetorolect blends with miracle rhetorolect, the emphasis is on the miraculous transformation of people who usually focus on themselves and their own possessions into people who produce goodness and righteousness in the world through their beneficial actions toward others. When wisdom rhetorolect blends with precreation rhetorolect, the emphasis is on God's speech as a medium through which believers receive eternal life. When wisdom rhetorolect blends with priestly rhetorolect, the emphasis is on Christ's sacrifice, which creates a model of losing one's life for the sake of receiving life. When wisdom rhetorolect blends with apocalyptic rhetorolect, the emphasis is on Christ's production of new fruit with his initial coming to earth and his production of a final harvest of abundant fruit when he comes again.

Figure 5: Blended Rhetorics in Each Rhetorolect

	Wisdom	Prophetic	Miracle	Precreation	Priestly	Apocalyptic
Blended Wisdom Rhetorolect	**God's speech through Christ produces fruitfulness**	God's speech through Christ calls people to produce a righteous kingdom	God's speech through Christ miraculously produces benevolence and goodness in people's bodies	God's speech through Christ produces eternal fruit	God's speech through Christ produces sacrificial, holy fruitfulness	God's speech through Christ produces new beginnings and good endings
Blended Prophetic Rhetorolect	God and Christ call people to produce righteous fruit	**God and Christ call people to be a righteous kingdom**	God and Christ call people into miraculous, righteous bodily transformation	God and Christ call people into an eternal righteous kingdom	God and Christ call people into sacrificial, holy righteousness	God and Christ call people into new beginnings
Blended Miracle Rhetorolect	God's power in and/or through Christ produces transformed fruitfulness	God's power working in and/or through people whom God has chosen transforms people into a righteous kingdom	**God's power in and/or through Christ produces miraculous bodily transformation**	God's power in and/or through Christ produces eternal bodily transformation of believers	God's power in and/or through Christ produces holy bodily transformation of believers through sacrifice	God's power in and/or through Christ produces new bodily beginnings
Blended Precreation Rhetorolect	Christ's primordial divinity produces eternal fruit for believers	Christ's primordial divinity chooses people to be an eternal kingdom of believers	Christ's primordial divinity produces eternal bodily transformation in believers	**Christ's primordial divinity produces eternal life in believers**	Christ's primordial divinity and sacrifice produces eternal holiness in believers	Christ's primordial divinity produces eternal beginnings in believers
Blended Priestly Rhetorolect	Christ's sacrifice produces holy fruit for believers	Christ's sacrifice calls people to sacrificial action internal to a holy kingdom of believers	Christ's sacrifice produces holy bodily transformation in believers	Christ's sacrifice produces eternal holiness in believers	**Christ's sacrifice produces holy benefit for believers**	Christ's sacrifice produces holy beginnings for believers
Blended Apocalyptic Rhetorolect	Christ's initial coming produces new fruit and Christ's return will produce an abundant harvest	Christ's initial coming called people into God's kingdom in the world and Christ's return will call people into Christ's kingdom	Christ's initial coming produces exorcism of demons from bodies and Christ's return will produce resurrection of bodies to eternal life	Christ's initial coming produces eternal destruction of sin and renewal of life for believers	Christ's initial coming and return produces a new holy benefit for believers through his sacrificial death	**Christ's initial coming produced a new beginning and Christ's return will produce a new world**

Christian prophetic rhetorolect features a divine call to people and groups to produce righteousness and justice in an earthly kingdom that is perceived to be God's kingdom. The call regularly requires a person with a message about God's will to confront people whom the narration perceives to have strayed from doing God's will.

When prophetic rhetorolect blends with wisdom rhetorolect, the emphasis is on God's speech which, through Christ, chooses special people and groups to produce righteousness and justice on earth, which is perceived to be the realm of God's kingdom. When prophetic rhetorolect blends with miracle rhetorolect, the emphasis is on God's power working in and through people whom God calls to confront other people with God's power, for the purpose of transforming people to God's will. When prophetic rhetorolect blends with precreation rhetorolect, the emphasis is on God's choice of particular people and groups to be leaders and members of God's eternal kingdom. When prophetic rhetorolect blends with priestly rhetorolect, God's sending of Christ to die as a sacrifice produces a call to people to live a life of sacrificial action, which is an internal characteristic of God's holy kingdom of believers. When prophetic rhetorolect blends with apocalyptic rhetorolect, God's initial sending of Christ brought a call to people to come into God's righteous kingdom on earth, and Christ's return will call people into Christ's kingdom.

Christian miracle rhetorolect features God's power working in and through people to produce bodily transformation. When miracle rhetorolect blends with wisdom rhetorolect, the emphasis is on God's speech working through Christ miraculously to produce benevolence and well-being in people's bodies. When miracle rhetorolect blends with prophetic rhetorolect, the emphasis is on God and Christ calling people into righteous bodily transformation. When miracle rhetorolect blends with precreation rhetorolect, Christ's primordial relation to the eternal divinity of God produces eternal redemptive transformation of believing people's bodies. When miracle rhetorolect blends with priestly rhetorolect, Christ's sacrifice produces holy bodily transformation of believers eternally. When miracle rhetorolect blends with apocalyptic rhetorolect, Christ's initial coming produces exorcism of demons from people's bodies, and Christ's return will produce resurrection of people's bodies to eternal life.

Christian precreation rhetorolect features God's eternal divinity working through Christ's primordial divinity to produce eternal life in believers. When precreation rhetorolect blends with wisdom rhetorolect, Christ's speech which comes from God produces eternal fruit in believers. When precreation rhetorolect blends with prophetic rhetorolect, God and Christ call people into an eternal righteous kingdom. When

precreation rhetorolect blends with miracle rhetorolect, God's power working in and through Christ produces eternal bodily transformation of the bodies of believers. When precreation rhetorolect blends with priestly rhetorolect, Christ's sacrifice produces eternal holiness in believers. When precreation rhetorolect blends with apocalyptic rhetorolect, Christ's primordial divinity with God produces eternal destruction of sin and renewal of life within believers.

Christian priestly rhetorolect features Christ's death on the cross as a sacrifice that produces holy benefit for believers, if believers reciprocally live a life of sacrificial action. When priestly rhetorolect blends with wisdom rhetorolect, God's speech through Christ produces a sacrificial life that produces holy fruitfulness. When priestly rhetorolect blends with prophetic rhetorolect, God and Christ call people into sacrificial righteousness. When priestly rhetorolect blends with miracle rhetorolect, God's power working in and through Christ produces holy bodily transformation of believers. When priestly rhetorolect blends with precreation rhetorolect, Christ's primordial divinity with God produces eternal holiness in believers. When priestly rhetorolect blends with apocalyptic rhetorolect, Christ's initial coming and return produces new holy benefit for believers through Christ's death on the cross as a sacrifice for sins.

Christian apocalyptic rhetorolect features Christ's initial coming to earth to produce a new beginning and Christ's return to earth to produce a new world. When apocalyptic rhetorolect blends with wisdom rhetorolect, God's speech through Christ produces new beginnings and good endings. When apocalyptic rhetorolect blends with prophetic rhetorolect, God and Christ call people into new beginnings. When apocalyptic rhetorolect blends with miracle rhetorolect, God's power working in and through Christ produces new bodily beginnings. When apocalyptic rhetorolect blends with precreation rhetorolect, Christ's primordial divinity with God produces eternal beginnings in believers that turn endings into a time of joy and celebration. When apocalyptic rhetorolect blends with priestly rhetorolect, Christ's sacrifice produces holy beginnings for believers.

Believers have the potential to blend every rhetorolect with every other rhetorolect either on the terms of one dominant rhetorolect or a particular blend of rhetorolects. Multiple kinds of blendings created a vibrant, interactive system of

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

VIII. Conclusion

Socio-rhetorical interpretation began in the 1970s with an attempt to explain special characteristics of language in the accounts of voyaging on the sea in Acts and Jesus' calling, gathering, teaching and sending out of disciples in the Gospels. In both instances, the goal was to understand the language of New Testament literature in the context of Mediterranean literature, both religious and non-religious. Also, the goal was to understand the use of language in relation to social, cultural, ideological and religious environments and relationships in the Mediterranean world. During the 1980s, the rhetorical treatises entitled *Progymnasmata* (Preliminary Exercises) played a major role in the interpretation of abbreviation, expansion, addition, rebuttal, commendation and elaboration in biblical and Mediterranean literature before and during the time of the emergence of early Christianity. During the 1990s, socio-rhetorical interpretation identified multiple textures of texts for the purpose of reading and re-reading them in ways that activated a wide range of literary, rhetorical, historical, social, cultural, ideological and religions 'webs of signification' in texts. This led to a display of

strategies of interpretation for five textures of texts: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture and sacred texture. During the last half of the 1990s, socio-rhetorical interpretation gradually moved toward analysis of different rhetorolects in early Christian discourse. Gradually, six early Christian rhetorolects have appeared: wisdom, prophetic, miracle, precreation, priestly and apocalyptic. Having initially gravitated toward wisdom rhetorolect during the 1980s and early 1990s, socio-rhetorical interpreters focused specifically on apocalyptic and miracle rhetorolect during the last half of the 1990s. Two books on rhetorical interpretation of apocalyptic rhetorolect appeared during the late 1990s, and each includes essays that explicitly display socio-rhetorical strategies of interpretation.[151] A session on rhetorical analysis and interpretation of miracle rhetorolect was held at an SBL meeting in 2001, and a book containing essays from the session is forthcoming.[152] A Festschrift appeared in 2003 that reviewed many of the developments in socio-rhetorical interpretation and featured contributions to the approach from various angles.[153] Socio-rhetorical interpreters still face major challenges of analyzing and interpreting prophetic, precreation and priestly rhetorolect in early Christian writings. In addition, they face the challenge of writing programmatic commentary that displays the manifold ways in which early Christian writings blend early Christian rhetorolects together. Work is under way to display this kind of socio-rhetorical commentary in a forthcoming series entitled Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity.[154]

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[151] Carey and Bloomquist, *Vision and Persuasion* and Watson, *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament.*

[152] Watson, *Miracle Discourse in the New Testament.* Atlanta: SBL, 2012.

[153] *Fabrics of Discourse*.

[154] Online: https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/books_RhetoricReligiousAntiquity.aspx.