CHAPTER FOUR


4.1. Introduction

Examples of multi-level speech acts are the speech acts performed by an author, the speech acts performed by the characters within that author’s narrative, and the author’s report of their speech acts. It is a matter of deciphering the direct and indirect speech acts and the reports by various speakers. A complete speech act consists of an utterance, a propositional, and an illocutionary act. A report, which differs from a complete speech act, consists of an utterance and a propositional act but not an illocutionary act. Searle’s distinctions pertain to a speaker’s intentional (with t) and intensional (with s) speech acts and mental states. A speaker can perform intensional (with s) speech acts about someone’s intentional (with t) speech acts (e.g., John ‘reporting’ verbatim what Jesus ‘said’), and have intensional (with s) mental states about someone’s intentional (with t) mental states (e.g., John ‘believed’ that Jesus ‘believed’ that his own flesh and blood was life-giving).


---

1 Searle, Intentionality, 17, 22–26. See Searle’s chapter, “Intensional Reports of Intentional States and Speech Acts,” pages 180–196 in Intentionality. For a condensed version, see Searle’s section on “Intensionality-with-a-t and Intensionality-with-an-s,” pages 174–178 in Mind. Austin had discussed the differences between reports or descriptions (i.e., constatives) and performatives. A reporter has a separate function than does a speaker or writer. Making a promise or naming a ship generates a different outcome than making a report or description (How to Do Things, 3, 5, 13, 25, 70, 79). Austin also identified three types of acts: phonetic acts (i.e., making certain sounds when speaking), phatic acts (i.e., uttering vocables or words), and rhetic acts (i.e., performing an act using words) in How to Do Things, 92–98, 115, 130.

2 See n. 23 in chapter three for an explanation of my use of Judeans and non-Judeans in place of Jews and Gentiles.
the illocutionary acts of other speakers—a question asked by the Judeans of how it was possible for Jesus to give them his flesh to eat (John 6:52b), and Jesus’ response in the form of direct and indirect speech acts concerning the effects of eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:53b–58). In Rev 1:5b–6, John performed multi-level speech acts in the form of an assertive and expressive on Christ’s blood. In Rev 7:13–14, John reported the elder’s illocutionary acts—a question and also an assertive concerning those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The linguistic structures of all three texts reveal the complexities associated with a speech act analysis of biblical pericopes, their functions, and their meanings. How did the NT writers relate to their own words in one sense and to the words of their characters in another? The question regarding the reports in John 6:52b, 53b–58 and Rev 7:13b, 14b is whether both Johns made the ‘same’ illocutionary acts that the biblical characters performed (e.g., the Judeans, Jesus, and the elder). In John 6:52b, for example, did John ask the question along with the Judeans or did he only report it? The distinction calls for a proper understanding of the status of words in various contexts: the act of repeating and the act of reporting; representations and presentations of those representations. The point is to see whether these distinctions contribute to our understanding of biblical texts.

4.2. JOHN, THE JUDEANS, AND JESUS IN JOHN 6:52–59

I follow those scholars who say that John the evangelist was not the writer of Revelation. Richard Bauckham argues that the Beloved Disciple wrote the Gospel of John but was not part of the twelve (Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006], 384–412; see also Bauckham, The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007]).

Searle clarifies when a reporter ‘repeats’ or ‘reports’ the same speech acts as the speaker (Intentionality, 183–188).