Introduction

Part Three of this monograph is a study of selected linguistic devices for speech reporting in Acts. Our study will proceed in a manner analogous to our treatment of Chariton in Part Two. Accordingly, chapter 9 is a pilot study of various linguistic dimensions of speech reporting in Acts 8–14 (analogous to chapter 6 above).

Chapter 10 has three tasks: 1) a survey of the speech margins of monologic direct speech in Acts; 2) delimitation of a database of the dialogues of Acts involving direct speech; 3) discussion of some of the notorious problems of the textual criticism of Acts.

On the basis of this preparatory work, in chapter 11 we turn our attention to the speech margins of dialogues in Acts. Our main concern will be how the narrator tracks conversational dynamics by using formal variation in his speech margins. A variety of formal devices will be examined, especially (but not only) the choice of speech reporting verb.

Chapter 11 ends with a brief Excursus on speech margins in Genesis LXX and the Life of Aesop. This excursus hints at possibilities for further research, and begins to contextualize the speech margins of Chariton and Acts within the broader corpus of Hellenistic Greek narratives.

The Acts of The Apostles

In chapter 5 of this monograph, I discussed the standard introductory questions pertinent to the study of Chariton’s novel. Given the venue of publication of my work, its likely audience of NT scholars will not need a detailed treatment of the standard historical-critical, literary-critical, and text-critical issues surrounding Acts. Accordingly, my discussion below will largely concentrate on how the issues of criticism intersect the issue of speech reporting techniques.

Interest in such techniques is, of course, not confined to NT scholars. I hope my work will find its way into the hands of classicists and general linguists. Such readers may be relatively unfamiliar with the scholarship on Acts. I would refer such readers to the introductory sections of the standard commentaries on Acts, many of which are cited in the footnotes to Part Three of this monograph.1

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1 For anyone seeking a concise overview of the critical issues and scholarship on Acts, the following is highly recommended: Mark Allan Powell, What Are They Saying About Acts? (WATSA; New York: Paulist, 1991).
Regarding the issues raised in the criticism of Acts, these vary considerably in their relevance to speech reporting techniques. In my treatment below, I mention the following issues (some very briefly, others at greater length): genre; the unity of Acts and the Third Gospel; language/style (including discussion of sources and rhetoric); text; author; date.

Genre
“The ancient Greco-Roman world knew three principal forms of narrative prose: history, biography, and the novel. The book of Acts is perhaps the only work surviving from antiquity to have been ascribed to all three.”\(^2\) The debate over genre has been intense, and not easy to extricate from the question of the historical reliability of Acts.\(^3\) This is hardly the place to attempt to settle such a debate. But I do find the following remark insightful:

That the three genres of biography, history, and novel were extant in the first century CE makes it possible that Luke [author of Acts] was influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by all three to some degree. This would explain why elements of each can be, and have been, discerned in Luke’s work.\(^4\)

Pervo has catalogued numerous formal parallels between Acts and the ancient novel (including Chariton).\(^5\) In response, Ben Witherington III offers a robust defence of the historigraphical character of Acts.\(^6\) Witherington argues that the ‘novelistic’ traits of Acts are not foreign to ancient historiography:

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