



Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation

Richard Briggs

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How is the biblical text understood and how does it function in the life of the reader today?

Richard Briggs first provides an illuminating introduction to the nature and claims of speech act theory. This seeks to extend our understanding of both spoken and written means of communication by seeing them not as merely representational or 'reality-depicting', but as acting or causing acts to be performed through the words themselves.

Briggs goes on to discuss to what extent the application of speech act theory might be helpful in the interpretation of biblical texts. In one of the first book-length explorations of this topic, he examines in detail several biblical speech acts of particular theological significance, including the confession of sin, forgiveness and teaching.

Through exploring the specific ways in which the reader is drawn into the performative action of the biblical text, and how speech act theory forces the reader to look beyond language into the world which gives the language its ability to function, speech act theory is shown to offer valuable insights within today's complex hermeneutical debate.

'A very significant volume . . . '

Alan Torrance, Professor of Divinity, University of Andrews

'An excellent piece of work . . . which is thoroughly acquainted with speech act theory and takes the debate forward in a variety of creative, exegetical and theological ways.'

Dr Craig Bartholomew, University of Gloucestershire

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