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978-1-107-04104-2 - The Genre of Acts and Collected Biography

Sean A. Adams

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INTRODUCTION

Why is genre important?

The underlying premise of this investigation is that determining the genre of a work is fundamentally important for interpretation. One of the primary ways to understand the function of genre is that it acts as a 'code of social behavior',¹ with the selection of a genre being an act of communication by the author to the reader. The author is identifying the rules of the code, which not only affect how an author writes, but also how the author asks the reader to approach the text.² This 'generic contract', enacted through structural and content features, informs the reader that the author will follow some of the patterns and conventions associated with the genre(s) selected and that the reader in turn should pay close attention to particular aspects of the work that are characteristically important to that genre type.³ As stated by T. Todorov, 'It is because genres exist as an institution that they function as "horizons of expectation" for readers and as "models of writing" for authors'.⁴ Although the reader is not obligated to follow the author's intention, the expectation of the author is embedded in the genre contract.

¹ E. D. Hirsch, Jr, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 93.

² H. Dubrow, *Genre* (The Critical Idiom 42; London: Methuen, 1982), 31, 'Genre is a conceptual orienting device that suggests to the hearer the sort of receptorial conditions in which a fictive discourse might have been delivered.' M. Depew and D. Obbink, 'Introduction', in M. Depew and D. Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Societies* (CHSC 4; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1–14, 6.

³ Dubrow, *Genre*, 31; F. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 106. With this being said, it is possible that the author may wish to deceive the reader and fool him or her into thinking that the work is of an alternate genre. However, this is not common for ancient texts and so will not be further discussed in this work.

⁴ T. Todorov, 'The Origin of Genres', in D. Duff (ed.), *Modern Genre Theory* (LCR; New York: Longman, 2000), 193–209, 199.

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As a result, a scholar's or reader's genre assumption frames their reading of a text and ultimately their interpretation. To take a modern example, if a writer composes a work of irony (e.g., Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*), but the reader fails to recognise this fact and rather interprets the work as non-fiction, it is easy to see how the reader will miss the author's intention. In *Catch-22* Yossarian's problematic situation regarding flight duty is used to justify military bureaucracy in the novel; however, if (properly) understood from an ironic perspective, the situation completely undermines the established process and becomes a challenge to traditional procedures. Another illustration: if the genre work of fantasy, say *The Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*, is not recognised as fictitious, there will likely be a number of people with a confused outlook on the world.

Taking an example from ancient texts, in ancient Graeco-Roman culture there were a number of genre similarities between history and biography. If one were to misinterpret a biography as history, it is likely that the interpretation would not be too far off. However, the interpreter would miss a number of the subtleties within the text. Furthermore, the authorial emphasis in the work would be twisted and lost to the reader. Ps.-Herodotus' *Life of Homer* or other *Lives of the Poets* provide a good example of this. Here the main focus of the work is to entertain, rather than provide historical details of the poet's life and relationships, most of which are legendary or taken from the poet's literary works (e.g., such as the dating of Homer's birth, *Vit. Hom.* 38).⁵ Interpreting the work as history misses the authorial intention and risks adopting historically inaccurate information.⁶

If one of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* was taken as a history, there would be less issue in terms of historical veracity than with Ps.-Herodotus' *Life of Homer*. However, the primary goal of Plutarch's *Lives*, which is to enact change within the reader, would be overshadowed by the reader's search for historical factoids. That a reader can only take historical tidbits from the text without acknowledging the goal of the work is clear. However, for a proper understanding of the historical nugget, it is beneficial for the extractor to know how the author was shaping the material. For example, an action that was positively interpreted in the *Life* may be reconsidered negatively in the *synkrisis*. Pericles in his *Life* is praised by

⁵ M. R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (CLL; London: Duckworth, 1981), viii.

⁶ A modern example is recounted by D. Allison, who, in his discussion of the importance of genre, tells how he mistakenly thought that *Mark of the Taw* was a work of history rather than of historical fiction. D. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 441–2.

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Plutarch for his building projects on the Acropolis (*Per.* 12.1–13.13); however, this same building programme is denigrated in the *synkrisis* when compared to the real work of a statesman, that of virtue (*Comp. Per. Fab.* 2.1). Therefore, in order to understand the importance of the historical fact, one must understand its context, and that is best gained by a thorough investigation of genre.

One's understanding of genre is insufficient, however, insofar as it fails to take into account temporal and cultural dislocation. If a modern reader reads an ancient biography with modern biography genre expectations, it is likely that the reader's interpretation will do damage to the original message. Accordingly, understanding ancient genres is central to any understanding of ancient literature. Both modern and ancient genres have specific structural and content features that are derived from their respective culture(s). These features are culturally conditioned and function differently from culture to culture. Moreover, genre formalises cultural conventions of written communication and guides the production and interpretation of written texts. The prerequisite for written communication to take place, however, is a social context guiding the production and interpretation of written texts, not necessarily pre-existent genre categories.⁷

Developing a proper knowledge of ancient genres, moreover, is important because it influences judgments of quality and interpretation.⁸ When modern readers try to appreciate ancient Graeco-Roman literature, a particular work may (wrongly) seem deficient because the rules and expectations held by the original readers and authors are not understood. As a result, it is important to define accurately ancient genres in ways that the original readers from the culture would have recognised. If modern readers are to understand an ancient work, they must understand the genre expectations the original readers had when they approached the text. This is because our response to genres is deeply conditioned by our modern social constructs and frames the way we approach and respond to a text. This view of genre dictates that it is a fundamental and preliminary

⁷ C. N. Mount, *Pauline Christianity: Luke–Acts and the Legacy of Paul* (NovTSup 104; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 67–9.

⁸ A good example of this would be modern scholars' evaluation of Horace's *Ars poetica*. Although this work has been treated and evaluated as a treatise, it is clear through its structure and address that it is a letter written to the Pisos. Accordingly, some of the criticisms of the work are invalid, as they are expectations imposed from a different genre category. H. R. Fairclough, *Horace: Satires, Epistles, Ars poetica* (LCL; London: William Heinemann, 1929), 442.

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component of interpretation and needs to be considered when approaching a text.

A classic example from biblical studies of those who did not take this perspective into account would be the form-critical view of the Gospels as a discrete collection of parables and miracle stories exemplified by Dibelius and Bultmann.⁹ In this approach, the individual sayings and parables are excised from the larger work in order to discover the most primitive Christian tradition by tracing its development through the careful study of its literary forms. Accordingly, Dibelius classified the Gospel narratives into 'pure' and 'less pure' paradigms¹⁰ and focused on tales and legends, 'religious narratives of a saintly [person] in whose works and fate interest is taken'.¹¹ Unfortunately, by dividing the text so discretely in an attempt to get behind the text to its source, the value of the literary whole and the role of the author in the creation process are neglected. This fails to appreciate the genre of the work and misses the overall thrust of the book, which is the presentation of Jesus, his message, and an emphasis on his person as seen through the eyes of its author.¹²

A genre-sensitive approach rightly takes a holistic perspective and focuses on the role of artistic intention, purpose, etc. Accordingly, literary approaches, building on the findings of redaction criticism, have been able to make insightful comments on the nature of the Gospels and the role of the author/redactor as a creative and culturally conditioned writer. Scholars such as Talbert, Shuler, and Burridge have made important advances by identifying the formal parallels between the Gospels and Graeco-Roman biographies and note the cumulative effect of the developed narrative and how its overall structure provides interpretive parameters for understanding a parable in context.¹³

⁹ M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangelium* (3rd edn; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1919); R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921).

¹⁰ 'Less pure' paradigms are those 'intermediate forms' (*Mischformen*) that exhibit traits common to two or more categories. M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (2nd edn; trans. Bertram L. Woolf; London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 57–9. Pure: Mark 2.1ff.; 2.18ff.; 2.23ff.; 3.1ff. Less pure: Mark 1.23ff.; 2.13ff.; 6.1ff.; 10.17ff.

¹¹ Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 104.

¹² E. P. Sanders, *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); W. G. Doty, 'Fundamental Questions about Literary-Critical Methodology: A Review Article', *JAAR* 40 (1972): 521–7.

¹³ P. L. Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); C. H. Talbert, *What is a Gospel?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); R. A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (2nd edn; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

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The need to identify the genre of Acts has become apparent in the last few decades, as is demonstrated by the proliferation of genre ascriptions (see below). The genre label applied to Acts fundamentally influences the interpretation of passages, scenes, and the work as a whole. For example, labelling Acts an apology makes a statement regarding the intended audience (to outsiders), authorial motivation (to influence how outsiders view the Christian community), and character presentation (favourable and in the best light). Calling Acts an epic speaks to the intention of the work (that it is presenting a founding narrative of a group), while labelling Acts a biography indicates the author's focus on the individuals within the narrative.

State of the question

A thorough discussion of the history of the genre of Acts is too lengthy for inclusion, especially as there are a number of recent articles that provide a comprehensive overview.¹⁴ Accordingly, such an endeavour is not needed here. However, in order to provide context for my argument, a brief synopsis is warranted. Broadly speaking, there are four genre labels applied to Acts by scholars: history, novel, epic, and biography. Of these options, history is by far the most common label with a number of sub-genre divisions proposed. These designations will be discussed in turn with particular attention paid to the view of Acts as biography.

Acts as history

Championed by H. J. Cadbury in his pivotal work, *The Making of Luke–Acts*, Cadbury proposes that Luke and Acts are not two separate works by one author, but rather two parts of one unified work.¹⁵ In light of this perspective, the attribution of the genre of biography to Luke, he claims, must also fit with the nature of Acts, if this is to be a correct label. Unfortunately lacking sufficient discussion regarding his decision, Cadbury declares that Acts is not a biography (although there are some biographical foci on Peter and Paul), and that Luke–Acts is best

¹⁴ For an overview of the question of the genre of Acts and some of the scholarly industry that it has inspired, see T. Penner, 'Madness in the Method? The Acts of the Apostles in Current Study', *CBR* 2 (2004): 223–93, esp. 233–41; T. E. Phillips, 'The Genre of Acts: Moving towards a Consensus?', *CBR* 4 (2006): 365–96; S. A. Adams, 'The Genre of Luke and Acts', in S. A. Adams and M. Pahl (eds.), *Issues in Luke–Acts: Selected Essays* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012), 97–120.

¹⁵ H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke–Acts* (London: MacMillan, 1927), 1–11.

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understood under the rubric of history.¹⁶ Cadbury cautions that, although Luke is the most literary of the Gospel writers, Luke–Acts is not ‘formal history’ in the nature of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, but has similarities to more popular ‘folk literature’.¹⁷

Cadbury’s investigation struggles by not clearly defining genre or what makes a work a history and not a biography. Although he rightly identifies that Acts has a focus on the disciples, his use of style as a major genre-distinguishing feature is problematic without support from other formal features, such as subject, character representation, etc. Furthermore, his lack of thorough formal comparisons with other biographies and histories is disturbing, since he makes a number of generalisations (e.g., subject, language use, inclusion of speeches) that do not hold up after critical comparison.

Martin Dibelius is another scholar who has significantly influenced the investigation of the genre of Acts by investigating literary parallels between Acts and Graeco-Roman histories. With studies on major interpretive issues such as sources, speeches, and the person of Paul, Dibelius set the tone of scholarship for a number of years, particularly with his application of form criticism.¹⁸ In light of his comparisons, Dibelius concludes that Acts, unlike Luke’s Gospel, is history, although there are still a number of unanswered questions surrounding its historical veracity and the amount of liberty that Luke took in the creation of this piece of literature.¹⁹ Although Dibelius’ comparative approach rightly compares the formal features of Acts with contemporary literature, his findings are problematic, since they are based on form-critical approaches whose theoretical underpinnings have been undermined by Doty and others.²⁰ Furthermore, Dibelius does not evaluate the whole range of Acts’ formal features, but only evaluates a select portion.

Following Dibelius, a majority of scholars readily dismissed the idea that Acts might belong to a literary genre other than history, being content to apply the general category of ancient historiography to this work. In more recent times the history perspective has splintered into more refined and specific sub-genres. Such sub-genres include historical monograph

¹⁶ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke–Acts*, 132–3.

¹⁷ Cadbury, *The Making of Luke–Acts*, 134–5. Cadbury acknowledges the difficulty in the label ‘folk literature’ in that this category has typically resisted clear-cut subdivisions that accompany conscious workmanship and particular literary features.

¹⁸ M. Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology* (ed. K.C. Hanson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

¹⁹ Dibelius, *The Book of Acts*, 5.

²⁰ For references, see Doty, ‘Fundamental Questions’, 521–7.

(Conzelmann, Hengel, Palmer, Plümacher, Bock),²¹ institutional history (Cancik),²² kerygmatic history (Fearghail),²³ apostolic testimony in oral history (Byrskog),²⁴ biblical history (Rosner),²⁵ theological history (Maddox),²⁶ typological history (Denova),²⁷ rhetorical history (Rothschild, Yamada),²⁸ Deuteronomic history (Brodie),²⁹ and historical

²¹ H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), xl; D. W. Palmer, 'Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph', in B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke (eds.), *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting. I: Ancient Literary Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 1–29; E. Plümacher, 'Die Apostelgeschichte als historische Monographie', in J. Kremer (ed.), *Les Actes des Apôtres: tradition, redaction, théologie* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1979), 457–66; E. Plümacher, 'Cicero und Lukas: Bemerkungen zu Stil und Zweck der historischen Monographie', in J. Verheyden (ed.), *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (BETL 142; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 759–75; D. L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 3; M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (trans. J. Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979). Hengel (p. 36) claims that 'the genre of the work [Acts] is that of a very special kind of "historical monograph", a special history which describes the missionary development of a young religious movement in connection with two prominent personalities, Peter and Paul'. Unfortunately, Hengel fails to define what he means by 'special' and how the focus on the missionary activities creates a 'special' type of genre.

²² H. Cancik, 'The History of Culture, Religion, and Institutions in Ancient Historiography: Philological Observations Concerning Luke's History', *JBL* 116 (1997): 673–95. For a critique of this perspective, see C. Heil, 'Arius Didymus and Luke-Acts', *NoyT* 42 (2000): 358–93.

²³ F. Ó. Fearghail, *The Introduction to Luke-Acts: A Study of the Role of Lk 1, 1–4, 44 in the Composition of Luke's Two-Volume Work* (AnBib 126; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991).

²⁴ S. Byrskog, 'History or Story in Acts – A Middle Way? The "We" Passages, Historical Intertexture, and Oral History', in D. P. Moessner (ed.), *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claim upon Israel's Legacy* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1999), 257–84; S. Byrskog, *Story as History – History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (WUNT 123; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 228–34.

²⁵ B. S. Rosner, 'Acts and Biblical History', in B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke (eds.), *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting. I: Ancient Literary Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 65–82.

²⁶ R. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 16.

²⁷ R. I. Denova, *The Things Accomplished among us: Prophetic Tradition in the Structural Pattern of Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 141; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 26–8, 112.

²⁸ C. K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History* (WUNT 2.175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); K. Yamada, 'A Rhetorical History: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles', in S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht (eds.), *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference* (JSNTSup 131; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 230–50. Yamada states that 'the historiography of the Acts of the Apostles is rhetorical, particularly of a Ciceronian mixed type' (p. 242). To support this, Yamada supplies six points; however, he does not adequately define what characterises a 'Ciceronian' history type, nor does he defend how Luke's mention of 'eyewitnesses' and use of speeches are related to this category specifically and not other to types of history.

²⁹ T. L. Brodie, *Luke the Literary Interpreter: Luke-Acts as a Systematic Rewriting and Updating of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative in 1 and 2 Kings* (Vatican City: Pontificia Universita

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hagiography (Evans).³⁰ These approaches, although identifying important features of Acts, each have particular methodological problems in their interaction with Acts' formal features and corresponding discussion of Luke's purpose of composition.

There are, however, some history labels that have gained broader scholarly support and so need to be treated individually.

General history

David E. Aune argues that Luke–Acts is a 'popular "general history" written by an amateur Hellenistic historian with credentials in Greek rhetoric'.³¹ Although his labelling Acts 'history' is not unique, his claim for the Gospel of Luke as history, contrary to the dominant position, is distinctive. Aune states that 'Luke does not belong to a type of ancient biography for it belongs with Acts, and Acts cannot be forced into a biographical mould'.³² After a survey of historiographical genres (or, more correctly, sub-genres) within the Graeco-Roman literary world, Aune claims to have found 'five major genres of Hellenistic "historical" writing in antiquity . . . : (1) genealogy or mythography, (2) travel descriptions (ethnography and geography), (3) local history, (4) chronography, and (5) history'.³³ Aune subdivides the fifth category of 'history' into what he labels 'historical monographs', works that focus on an important sequence of events during a restricted period of time, 'general history', which narrates the important historical experiences of a single national group from their origin to the recent past, and 'antiquarian history', which is an eclectic form of general history of people groups from mythic times.³⁴ Aune further defines 'general history' in the ancient world as 'focused on particular people (typically the Greeks or Latins) from mythical beginnings to a point in the recent past, including contacts (usually conflicts) with other national groups in various geographical theatres'.³⁵ Aune sees this definition as fitting the nature of Luke–Acts

S. Tommaso d'Aquino, 1981); T.L. Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings* (NTM 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2004).

³⁰ C. A. Evans, 'Luke and the Rewritten Bible: Aspects of Lukan Hagiography', in J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans (eds.), *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (JSPSup 14; SSEJC 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 170–201.

³¹ D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 77.

³² Aune, *Literary Environment*, 77. Although I disagree with his statement on the genre of Luke, I appreciate the genre consistency that Aune applies to Luke–Acts in his study.

³³ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 84. ³⁴ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 86–9.

³⁵ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 139.

in that the main representatives of the Luke–Acts Christian movement had contact with significant Graeco-Roman persons in important places throughout the Mediterranean world.³⁶

Having suggested formal parallels between Luke–Acts and general histories, Aune states, ‘Luke’s dependence on the conventions of general history made it natural to conceptualize Christianity on analogy to an ethnic group. He presents Christianity as an independent religious movement in the process of emerging from Judaism to which it is its legitimate successor.’³⁷ Furthermore, the distancing of Christians from other religious, political, and partisan groups in the Acts narrative serves to identify the content of Luke–Acts as a fitting subject for historical treatment.³⁸

One of the challenges to Aune’s view is his proliferation of genre and sub-genre categories, since it is difficult to see how the ancients would have subscribed to all these genre divisions. Furthermore, his criteria for establishing parallels between Luke–Acts and history are not always well defined and do not take into account some important formal features. In discussing style, Aune needs to compare Luke to other historians and prose writers in addition to the writers of the Gospels. He also needs to account for Acts’ clear emphasis on disciples and the presence of other biographical literary *topoi*. Furthermore, Aune fails to interact with how religious/philosophical groups were typically discussed in Graeco-Roman literature.

Political history

In a number of articles David L. Balch has tried to map out parallels between Acts and Hellenistic history writers, concluding that Acts is akin to Graeco-Roman political history.³⁹ In an early article, ‘The Genre of Luke–Acts’, Balch addressed concerns with understanding Acts as

³⁶ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 140. ³⁷ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 140.

³⁸ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 141.

³⁹ Balch is not the only scholar who has suggested this perspective on Acts, but is one of the major proponents and initiators of this theory. Some scholars who have also advocated this view are W.C. van Unnik, ‘Luke’s Second Book and the Rules of Hellenistic Historiography’, in J. Kremer (ed.), *Les Actes des Apôtres* (BETL 48; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979), 37–60; Plümacher, ‘Cicero und Lukas’, 759–75; E. Plümacher, ‘The Mission Speeches in Acts and Dionysius of Halicarnassus’, in D. P. Moessner (ed.), *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke’s Narrative Claim upon Israel’s Legacy* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1999), 251–66; S. E. Porter, ‘Thucydides 1.22.1 and the Speeches in Acts: Is there a Thucydidean View?’, *NovT* 32 (1990): 121–42; W. J. McCoy, ‘In the Shadow of Thucydides’, in B. Witherington (ed.), *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3–32; Heil, ‘Arius Didymus and Luke–Acts’, 358–93.

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biography (Talbert) and novel (Pervo).⁴⁰ Although Balch did not dismiss all of the arguments comprising these two views, he did suggest that the genre most similar to Luke–Acts is Greek history, especially the approach of Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

Balch stated that the historiographic form created and utilised by Dionysius provided a model for Luke's narrative. Following a preface, 1.1–8, Dionysius divides his *Roman Antiquities* into three main parts: (1) 1.9–70 – Rome: Ancestors and Date of Settlement; (2) 1.71–4.85 – The Roman Monarchy: Founding and Overthrow; and (3) books 5–20 – The Roman Aristocracy: Annual Consuls to the First Punic War (before Polybius' history).⁴¹ Balch saw a similar pattern in Luke's work, which, following the prefaces (Luke 1.1–4; Acts 1.1–2), is also divided into three similar parts: (1) Luke 3.23–8; Acts 7.1–53; 13.16–41, 46–7 – Ancestors; (2) Luke – The Royal Founder; and (3) Acts – 'Growth of the Word among All Nations'.⁴² For Balch, Stephen's speech in Acts 7, the concept of a royal founder with accompanying birth and death narratives, and the story of the expansion of the Christian faith to include many different ethnic groups linked Luke–Acts to the political history strain of Dionysius.

In a more recent article, however, Balch has de-emphasised the importance of being able to specify the genre of Acts, stating that 'the question of genre is for the most part secondary'.⁴³ Balch now expresses a more nuanced understanding of ancient genre in which the categories of biography and history overlap and have blurred boundaries.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Balch has determined that specifying the genre of Acts is secondary to understanding its internal argument.⁴⁵ Balch still views Acts as history, but suggests that identifying a specific sub-genre of history should be

⁴⁰ D. L. Balch, 'The Genre of Luke–Acts: Individual Biography, Adventure Novel, or Political History', *SWJT* 33 (1990): 5–19. Most of this material, but not all, can also be found in D. L. Balch, 'Comments on the Genre and a Political Theme of Luke–Acts: A Preliminary Comparison of Two Hellenistic Historians', *SBLSP 1989* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 343–61. For a fuller discussion on the approaches of Talbert and Pervo, see below.

⁴¹ Balch, 'The Genre of Luke–Acts', 11; Balch, 'Comments on the Genre and a Political Theme of Luke–Acts', 345.

⁴² Balch, 'The Genre of Luke–Acts', 12; Balch, 'Comments on the Genre and a Political Theme of Luke–Acts', 345.

⁴³ D. L. Balch, 'ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ – Jesus as Founder of the Church in Luke–Acts: Form and Function', in T. Penner and C. V. Stichele (eds.), *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2003), 139–88, 141.

⁴⁴ Balch, 'ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ', 143.

⁴⁵ Balch, 'ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ', 145.