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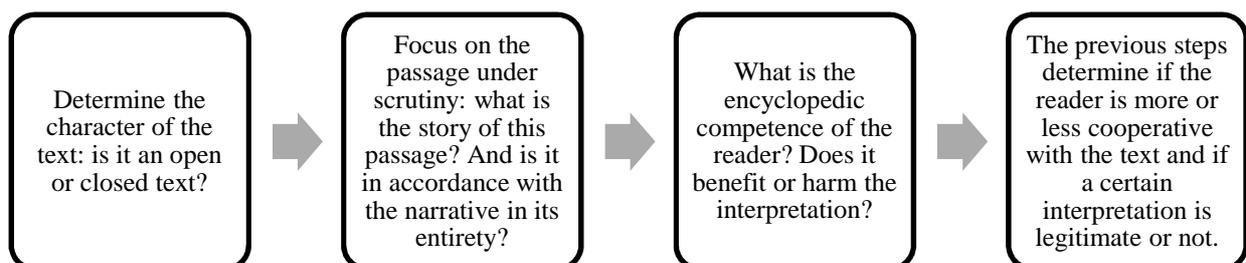
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CONCLUSION

Introduction

The aim of this study has been to determine the role of the reader in construing a Lukan Pneumatology. Through the various sub-questions (see above in the introduction) we explored the current status of Lukan Pneumatology in scholarly research (chapter 1, *Forschungsbericht*). We also described Eco's model of the cooperative reader as a useful method to gain insight into the role of the reader during the process of reading and interpreting a text (chapter 2, the role of the reader). Subsequently three different scholars were followed in their respective reading and interpreting of the Lukan πνεῦμα texts. These πνεῦμα texts were clustered in ten "literary knots" from the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. These ten passages were subsequently discussed through the reading of the respective scholars. This is how we applied Eco's model and gained insight into the interpretive choices these three scholars made (chapters 3, 4 and 5). This helped us understand the reading and interpretation of the three scholars. Understanding the interpretation of these scholars does not necessarily mean that we *share* their respective interpretations.

That brings us to the topic of criteria. What criteria are used to determine whether a text is correctly interpreted or not? As discussed in the previous chapter (chapter 6), are there limits to the interpretation of a text or are there limitless possibilities to interpret the text? We determined that there is a certain bandwidth in interpretation. The sort of text determines the extent of this bandwidth. Eco makes a distinction between an open text and a closed text. An open text has a rather large bandwidth or range of possible interpretations. On the contrary a closed text has a small bandwidth and is limited in the range of possible interpretations. After determining whether a text is open or closed, the reader / interpreter needs to focus on the passage under scrutiny and rightly determine the narrative structure (story) of this passage. This story should be in accordance with the whole of the narrative. Subsequently the encyclopedic competence plays a role in interpreting the text. It makes quite a difference if a text is read for the first time or if one is already familiar with the text. These various steps in the process of reading and interpreting determine the degree of cooperation of the reader with the text. Schematically this looks as follows:

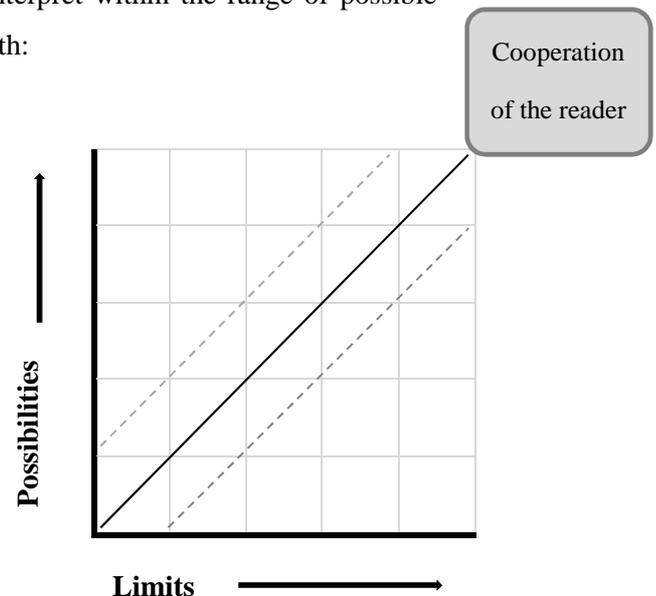


However the question remains what is a right, or better formulated, a *responsible* interpretation?

How to responsibly interpret Biblical literature

Van den Brink and Van der Kooi discuss the Bible in chapter 13 of their *Christelijke Dogmatiek*.¹ In their discussion of the historical-critical method and modernism, they use the image of a “gap” or “gorge”. There is a gap between the history of the Biblical stories and our own history. A gap between the objective biblical scholar and the believing biblical scholar. And as a result of this there is a gap between the academic world and the church community.² Postmodernism and the development of reader-response theories pointed towards the reader of the Biblical text. The plurality of readers led to a plurality of interpretations. The image which is used here is that of a swamp. A swamp of relativity because there are no universal criteria to determine if a certain interpretation is right or wrong.³ Is it possible to get out of this swamp and to come to a responsible interpretation? I think it is. It is on purpose that I use the term *responsible* instead of right or wrong. Epithets such as right or wrong tend to create polarization, whereas we can agree about a responsible interpretation, but disagree with the interpretation as such. In using the model of Umberto Eco we can *understand* the role of the reader. This should lead to an *understanding* of the reader and the interpretive choices this reader makes. At the same time the model of Eco showed that the range of possible interpretations is not unlimited. Within the text there are limits of interpretation. Based upon the encyclopedic competence of the reader there are limits as well. Little encyclopedic competence will lead to a limited number of interpretations or inversely, several possibilities of interpretation if the reader has a depth of encyclopedic competence. In addition the danger exists that too much encyclopedic competence serves as a burden in the interpretation of the text. In the sense that too much is read into the story of the text instead of the story just being the story. So for a responsible interpretation it is important to interpret within the range of possible interpretations. This next picture visualizes the bandwidth:

The horizontal axis represents the limits of interpretation whereas the vertical axis represents the possibilities of interpretation. Right in the middle the diagonal line shows the most balanced interpretation. Surrounding this diagonal line is the range or bandwidth of interpretation. Should a reader be inclined to move too much towards the possibilities he exceeds the bandwidth of a responsible interpretation and allows himself too much freedom. The danger of relativism looms: the reader who creates his own meaning out of the



¹ Gijs van den Brink and Kees van der Kooi, *Christelijke Dogmatiek* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012), 483-516. English translation is forthcoming in 2016.

² Van den Brink, Van der Kooi, *Christelijke Dogmatiek*, 488-493.

³ Van den Brink, Van der Kooi, *Christelijke Dogmatiek*, 494-495.

text. Another danger is the use of a biblical story for proof -texting or validating one's own experiences. This could even lead to the extremes of power abuse or a domination of people. The other extreme is an inclination towards the limits of interpretation. This leads to a rigid view of the biblical narrative which can lead to biblicism, legalism and fundamentalism. People will be judged upon the right or wrong beliefs they have on certain matters. The Biblical narrative then becomes more of a measuring stick than a narrative which begs for a response.

For a responsible interpretation of Biblical literature it is necessary that the reader closely follows the steps outlined in the diagram above in the introduction. This diagram shows the criteria as discussed in chapter 6. Criteria which establish the range or bandwidth of interpretation. A responsible interpretation of Biblical literature is that interpretation which remains within the range between the limits and the possibilities of interpretation. This range also prevents the interpreter from "drowning in the swamp", it provides a guideline for interpretation. It so to say serves as a lifeguard and guide to find a way through the swamp.

Up till now I have only focused on the text itself. The model of Eco shows the way the reader deals with the text. The outlined steps in the diagram above all deal with the text. The bandwidth between limits and possibilities in interpretation are about the text. However, praxis shows there is more than the text alone which plays a role in interpretation. In the experience of reading and interpreting the text it shows that readers use more guidelines for their interpretation than the text shows. Sometimes church history is used or a certain cultural setting. A particular community of Christians can establish their own habits and use these in their interpretation of the text. We have already seen, that the history, creeds, and catechism of the Roman Catholic Church are important in William Kurz' treatment of the text. In addition the missionary zeal and Pentecostal background of Robert Menzies color his interpretations. Max Turner is academically oriented and careful in discussing particular applications of the text. In the next section I will give a brief assessment of all three scholars and situate them within the bandwidth of interpretation.

A brief assessment of Max Turner, Robert Menzies and William Kurz

Max M.B. Turner

Because Max Turner is highly cooperative as a reader I would place him rather high along the diagonal line in the visualization above. In terms of limits and possibilities Turner has a tendency to focus on the limits of interpretation; this places him on the right side of the diagonal line, but still within the bandwidth. We have already seen in chapter 3 that Turner is very keen on the text itself. He is consciously aware of various limits and possibilities in interpretation. For instance in his treatment of the Pentecost episode in Acts 2 he carefully investigates if there could be some Sinai allusion, he discusses Menzies' arguments and comes with a cautious conclusion that Pentecost is not an allegory of

the Sinai episode, but that there is some correspondence which suggests that Pentecost can be viewed as “the fulfilment and renewal of Israel’s covenant”.⁴ Turner notices the possibilities within the text, he however safely chooses to stay within the limits the text provides. He is not only cooperative with the text but his large encyclopedic competence enables him to thoroughly discuss several arguments from other scholars and engage with (possible) background of the episode under scrutiny. His treatment of the promise of John the Baptist in Luke 3:16-17 shows this. After carefully discussing the text of this promise he comes with his interpretation of a metaphorical meaning of baptism with Spirit and fire and suggests that it points to an eschatological cleansing of the people of Israel. His translation of πύον being a spade instead of a fork-like shovel corroborates this interpretation. Unfortunately this is not followed by some sort of exposition of the practical implications for this promise for Christians or the church today. Are there any such practical implications? The church in general could have benefitted from additional exposition. Because Turner does not elaborate on this I place him on the limits side of the diagonal line instead of the possibilities side.

Robert P. Menzies

In comparison to Max Turner, Robert Menzies is a little less cooperative as a reader and therefore I would place him a little lower along the diagonal line. And unlike Turner, Menzies has a tendency to focus on the possibilities of interpretation. That puts him on the left side of the diagonal line, however still within the bandwidth. Menzies’ discussion of the episodes in Acts 8, 9 and Acts 19 especially show his cooperation with the text in this direction of the possibilities. In Menzies’ opinion the Spirit in Luke-Acts is an empowerment for mission. In those instances that the text speaks about the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17, 9:17 and 19:6), Menzies assumes that this is an act of commissioning for service, for mission. Because in these contexts the laying on of hands is not for healing (with 9:17 as an exception), it must be, according to Menzies, for a commissioning for mission.⁵ This could be so, however the text does not explicitly state this and the context does not (except in the case of Saul/Paul) elaborate on a Samaritan (Acts 8) or Ephesian (Acts 19) participation in mission. Menzies’ interpretation of Acts 19 that the group of disciples stayed with Paul and eventually were part of the group of elders in the Ephesian church is an interesting train of thought and could be a possibility, but in my opinion no more than that because there is simply no hard evidence for such an assumption.⁶

Menzies’ interpretation of the relevant Lukan passages raise a serious problem when Jesus and his ministry are treated as an *exemplar* to be (normatively) followed by Christians today (see above in §4.11.3 and §4.13.2). I understand the reasoning that Jesus sets an example for Christians today, a worthy example which needs to be followed. But to identify Christians today with Jesus and his unique ministry stretches the interpretation of the text too far. Christians should be full of the Spirit, they should

⁴ Turner, *Power from on High*, 289.

⁵ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 212.

⁶ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 225.

participate in mission, they will suffer, but this does not mean that this all will be *in the exact way* as it happened to Jesus. In my opinion Menzies does not do justice to the unique persons and aspects in salvation history. As far as I am concerned Menzies here even exceeds the possible interpretations with the danger of a division between Christians who follow Jesus, but in different manners.

William S. Kurz

William Kurz inclines to the possibilities side within the bandwidth of interpretation. He is less cooperative with the text as such and focuses on the application of the text. In the visualization of the bandwidth I would therefore place Kurz just as Menzies on the left side of the diagonal line and a bit lower because of his less cooperative reading. But again, just as Menzies and Turner, Kurz stays within the bandwidth so his interpretation is responsible. The center of gravity in Kurz' interpretation of the Lukan narrative is on application. The disadvantage of this is that he spends less attention to the text itself and as a consequence misses some difficult issues the text raises. He for instance only touches the surface in his treatment of Luke 3 and 4, respectively the promise of John the Baptist and Jesus' inaugural address. He does not elaborate on the relation between water baptism and spirit baptism (see above in §5.4), but only states that they are related. The possible relation between Jesus' words in Luke 4:14-19 and the year of Jubilee and/or the suffering Servant in Isaiah is briefly mentioned but not worked out. These examples are characteristic for Kurz' work: he briefly discusses the text and then illustrates this with possible applications. These applications are almost all related to the Catholic Church. This shows that besides the text, Kurz takes the Catholic Church also as a "guide through the swamp". In his context as a priest within the Catholic Church this is adequate and permissible to do. It shows an extra boundary for the interpretive bandwidth. However in some cases the Church boundary does not coincide with the textual boundary. This for instance is the case in Acts 8, the Samaritan episode. Based only on this episode the Catholic sacrament of confirmation makes sense. This interpretation is possible because in this instance Kurz does not interact with the whole story of Luke-Acts or even with the canon. It is possible for Kurz to stress God's freedom in giving the Spirit as He desires, and on the next page defend the Catholic sacrament of confirmation.⁷ We must acknowledge, however, that in Kurz' reading of Luke-Acts the Roman Catholic *Traditionsbegriff* plays an import role.⁸ Within Roman Catholicism the correct interpretation of the Bible originates with the apostles and is in tradition passed on and administered through the *magisterium*. So, as I already hinted at above, besides the text of Luke-Acts, there is the living tradition which serves as an interpretive guide to correctly understand and apply the biblical text.

⁷ Kurz, *Acts of the Apostles* (2013), 142-143.

⁸ For *Traditionsbegriff*, see: Van den Brink, Van der Kooi, *Christelijke Dogmatiek*, 76-77, 360-361, 499-500; Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: A Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, ¹1854, ⁴³2012); Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Systematic Theology: Tasks and Methods' in: F. Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (eds.), *Systematic Theology. Roman Catholic Perspectives* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991, ²2011), 54-58; Richard Boeckler, *Der moderne römisch-katholische Traditionsbegriff* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); Ludwig Ott, *Grundriss der Katholischen Dogmatik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1952).

When we take this *Traditionsbegriff* into account we can only fully understand and appreciate the work of Kurz. Appealing in Kurz' approach is his interaction with the whole story of the Bible. He does not hesitate to interact with other books or authors. These interactions then demonstrate Kurz' point of view on the unity of the Bible and the value of the whole of the canon. The purpose of Kurz' writings is to edify Christians and encourage them to read the Bible and grow in discipleship (especially obvious in *Following Jesus* and the Living Tradition sidebars in his recent commentary on Acts). The benefit of this is accessible work for the Christian believer, however the disadvantage is a superficial treatment of the various texts from a scholarly point of view.

Concluding remarks

At the end of this research we can conclude that the role of the reader in construing a Lukan pneumatology is crucial. Not in the sense that the reader creates meaning out of the text, but in the sense that the reader interprets the meaning of the text. There are rules of interpretation, there are limits within the text, and there are possibilities within the text. The part of the reader in his cooperation with the text and the use of his encyclopedic competence all play a huge role during the process of reading, rereading, interpreting and eventually determining the meaning of a text. This crucial role of the reader comes with an enormous responsibility. The reader's responsibility is to stay within the bandwidth allowed, the bandwidth that is found within the possible interpretations that the text offers. This responsibility begs the reader / interpreter to consequently determine the character of the text under scrutiny, to carefully focus on the passage at hand while not losing sight of the entire narrative and to constantly be aware of his own encyclopedic competence to prevent harmful interpretations and applications. This bandwidth of interpretation shows the extent of a responsible interpretation. Outside this bandwidth an interpretation is simply wrong. The reader / interpreter cannot simply make anything out of the text or create his own meaning. There are limits to the possible interpretations. This conclusion does not solve the disagreements in Lukan pneumatology. It perhaps does not even contribute to a wider consensus in Lukan pneumatology. However, it does show the responsibility of the interpreter and the possible range of interpretation. It does help to understand the various interpretations of the Lukan *πνεῦμα* clusters and based on the criteria mentioned above it is possible to determine whether an interpretation is responsible or not. In my opinion all three of the discussed scholars succeeded to responsibly interpret the biblical narrative of Luke-Acts. Although I pointed out that in some cases a certain scholar crossed the boundaries, the overall picture is that all three scholars cooperate with the text albeit in their own respective manner. Through the use of Eco's model of the cooperative reader we gained understanding in their respective interpretive choices. This understanding does not mean that we share all of these interpretive choices. That is the consequence of a certain range in possible interpretations.

There is one more thing what needs to be said here and could possibly instigate further research. All three of the discussed scholars are not only readers and interpreters. All three are authors as well. I deduced their reading of the Lukan narrative from their writings. All three have written with a specific purpose and audience in mind. They have written for a special reference group. One question remains and is beyond the scope of this present research to be properly answered: in what way did the specific reference group of these three scholars influence their reading and interpretation of the Lukan narrative? This question could prove to be worthwhile for further research to investigate if a specific reference group or purpose attributes (positively or negatively) to the encyclopedic competence of the reader / interpreter of the Lukan narrative.

In respect towards future research I hope that the discipline of biblical studies will benefit from Eco's model and that it will instigate further theological debate about the importance of the role of the reader in interpretation. It is my wish that both the academy and the church will benefit from responsible interpretations of the biblical narrative.