

POSTGRADUATE PRE-READING SUMMARY FOR MODULE: TH7151

Pre-reading is a vital and essential part of your PG studies at Regents. It is prescribed for each module you attend, and consists normally of a review of 800-1000 words of one or two books.

To comply with the requirements of pre-reading, you need to submit a report on each book according to the following template:

(Please note that points 4/5 and 6/7 may appear to be the same thing, but they are not!

In 4/5 you need to look at the way the author marshals their argument, and comment on how coherent or cogent this process has been – or not.

In 6/7 you are required to compare the author's conclusions with your own, and say why you agree or disagree with them.)

Minimum: 800 words (per book)

Maximum: 1000 words (per book)

Author(s): James B. Shelton
Title and place/publisher/date: Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, January 2000.
1. Description/evaluation of the author – who are they and what perspective do they adopt? Dr James B. Shelton is Professor of New Testament studies at Oral Roberts University where he also received his BA and MA before completing his PhD at the University of Stirling, Scotland. His PhD thesis during that period developed into this book. Shelton would be considered Pentecostal in his understanding of a separate, distinct, filling of the Holy Spirit post-conversion. ¹
2. A short summary of the work – an outline and overview of its content Shelton's work opens with a chapter outlining his methodology (redaction criticism) and approach to the study. His research starts by reviewing Luke's references to the Holy Spirit within his gospel against the same passages in the other gospels; then addressing those passages unique to Luke's account. The final chapters of the book look at Acts, which plays a significant role in Shelton's interpretation of Luke. He comments that "Luke's pneumatology

¹ This is reflected within his profile by the specific reference to his "baptism with the Holy Spirit" as a distinct event from his "conversion [and] childhood baptism". "Profiles," accessed October 29, 2018, <http://www.oru.edu/academics/faculty-profiles/profile.php?id=194>.

blossom[s] and proliferate[s]” within Acts after losing the dependency his gospel has upon his source text (p.13).

3. The author's major presuppositions and the logic of their argument

Shelton uses reductive criticism in an attempt to identify Luke’s unique perspective within the gospel accounts. He argues that by comparing Luke’s unique presentment of the Holy Spirit against the other gospel accounts and looking solely at the differences in Luke’s account, we can identify Luke emphasis (p.5). Shelton argues that for Luke, his presentation of the Holy Spirit has a “distinct emphasis of power and witness” (p.5).

Shelton exclusively uses redaction criticism within his study, which allows the author's emphasis to be identified within the text. In isolation, it is not sufficient for identifying the meaning or necessarily the motivation for writing (p.5). Other methodologies, such as historical criticism, could have been used in support in order to better support his conclusions within the historical context.

4. Points that you feel the author has established convincingly.

Shelton notes that through John, the Spirit’s role of empowerment to witness is shown beginning with John’s prophesy identifying Jesus as the anointed Christ (p.44). Shelton rightly observes that Luke is primarily interested in John as a witness, not as the ‘Baptist’. He emphasises this through the removal of his title from the baptismal material (p.38). Luke also places the arrest of John before the details of Jesus’ baptism, failing even to mention John’s presence during the baptism account. Instead, emphasising the Spirit’s descent. Water baptism and the repentance associated with it falls into the background (p.42). Luke uses John to highlight the picture of the Spirit he is trying to communicate to his readers.

5. Points that you feel the author has failed to establish convincingly

Shelton argues that the account presented through Jesus’ life was considered by Luke to be archetypal for believers (p.157). This is defended by, in Shelton’s view, Luke’s use of the term “filled with the Holy Spirit” throughout his narrative and the symmetry between Luke’s account of the birth of the church, and that of the birth of Christ (p.26). Shelton discounts the presence of any epochal division within Luke’s narrative instead arguing for continuity of salvation history. The impact on how access to the Holy Spirit change, before and after Pentecost, is not evaluated.

6. Points with which you find you tend to agree (and why.)

In using redactional criticism, Shelton successfully brings forth Luke’s distinctive contribution to the gospel accounts and his emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s role in empowering people to witness. He is right in pointing out that we should not attempt to interpret Luke’s distinctive voice within his account(s) through the eyes of Paul.

To emphasise his point, Luke edits his source material: for example, Mark's emphasis on the Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness (p.58) or Matthew/Mark's accounts of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (p.79). Luke restructures specific areas like the positioning of John's Death before Jesus' baptism; and adds additional information in, such as the doubled mention of the empowering of Jesus (p.67). It is convincing for Shelton to conclude that these editorial decisions have emphasised the role of the Holy Spirit, for the empowerment to witness.

7. Points with which you find it difficult to agree (and why.)

Shelton argues that the pre-Pentecost disciples met Paul's criteria for salvation (p.128), but even at the ascension of Jesus, Matthew tells us that some still doubted him (Matt. 28:17). Although absolute certainty is a prerequisite for conversion, it can not be conclusively said that all the disciples were converted before Pentecost.

If concessions were made on the disciple's conversion, the ascension of Jesus was still required before the Holy Spirit could be sent. Therefore, the Spirit was not yet available to the disciples in the same way as after Pentecost. This could provide a reason for a differing experience between those two events, removing the need for the gap between conversion-initiation and empowering to be the intended experience.

Shelton uses the example of Jesus' empowerment and the Samaritan's apparent delay in receiving the Spirit to establish the norm. Whereas Dunn², for example, interprets the uniqueness of Pentecost and Jesus' baptism as exceptions to the norm. Apart from a minor interaction with Dunn in the appendix, Shelton fails to dialogue with other significant viewpoints within his thesis.

Luke's emphasis may have been on empowerment to witness, but an emphasis does not necessarily indicate that Luke did not also see these events as salvific, a point that Shelton concedes on to some degree (p.148).

² See: J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (SCM Press, 2010).