SPIRIT, SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY THROUGH A LUKAN LENS: A REVIEW ARTICLE†

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The late Colin Hemer once observed that we must 'evaluate Luke rather by his performance than by any literary Vorverständnis'.¹ So true. Along with Colin’s mentor, F.F. Bruce, a distinguished group of scholars have devoted their lives and now continue to labor in a great tradition in order to place Luke’s work in its historical context, building confidence in Luke’s historicity, as illustrated recently by the important The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting series. Since Luke’s performance with respect to various historical backgrounds has been shown to be so reliable, it is timely to observe that one phenomenon in which he clearly took a keen interest, and which set Christianity apart from, rather than making it consistent with, the Greco-Roman religion and Palestinian spirituality within these backgrounds, was the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit which he narratively detailed. Yet much remains to be done to try to get a handle on how Luke would have expected Theophilus to react to these narrative descriptions of activities of the Spirit. Should Theophilus become a Christian, he could ignore them or expect them. Are there clues in Luke’s performance in this

† This article is dedicated to the memory of Colin Hemer—Lukan scholar, New Testament historian and friend.

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regard which point the way to his intentions and expectations for divine actions?

Onto this comparatively untrodden ground comes Roger Stronstad, with a work focusing on hermeneutics which could be of use to the broad evangelical community for discussion and progress in Lukan studies. Spirit, Scripture and Theology attempts to sort out Luke’s mixture of history and theology, his self-understanding of his prophetic position and his rationale for documenting activities of the Holy Spirit within the primitive evangelical mission.

The volume opens with an excellent foreword by William Menzies (pp. iii-vi), who sets into recent historical focus the task of trying properly to understand and interpret Luke’s writing about the Holy Spirit as an independent and consistent complement to Paul. Stronstad himself wants to move beyond the ‘Pentecost-as-pattern’ hermeneutic of early Pentecostalism and engage recent discussion by Gordon Fee, Howard Ervin and William Menzies in his opening piece on ‘Trends in Pentecostal Hermeneutics’ (pp. 11-30). Fee began his criticism of the simplistic ‘Pentecost-as-pattern’ approach with his ‘The Genre of New Testament Literature and Biblical Hermeneutics’, in which he argues that historical precedent cannot be used as an analogy to establish a normative pattern or even what might be normal in Christian experience, although he leaves token room for the distinctive genre of Luke–Acts to carry some theological weight. Since the reasonable concepts of Sprachereignis (occurrence of distinctive speech) or Wortgeschehen (descriptive word event) can legitimately be supplemented by an explicit articulation of experience, it is not surprising that interpreters have sought to move on from unnecessarily confining and historically minimizing approaches like that of Fee. I say unnecessarily confining and

