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An exegetical study of the annunciation of Luke 1:26-38 through text and art

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Chapter II: Methodology & Literature Review

Methodology

To understand the interplay between text and artworks, this research aims to take an integrated approach – a comprehensive understanding of Luke 1:26-38 will be established against which the artworks can be examined. In this research, the Annunciation in the Gospel of Luke is viewed from three perspectives:

1. 70-90 CE – the original context¹ behind the composition of the Gospel of Luke;
2. Early Renaissance (Artwork 1 and 2) use and expression of Luke 1:26-38 in artworks and their theology; and
3. Contemporary (Artwork 3 and 4) use and interpretation of Luke 1:26-38 in artworks alongside a contemporary theology.

Each context is separate but linked to the others, as they all focus on the same event of the Annunciation. The research will investigate the Gospel of Luke in terms of its authorship, intended audience and reception in the original context of composition. In parallel to this, investigation into how the Annunciation is depicted in the artworks will encompass the use of the historical context, material culture, iconography and art analysis.

In order to gain an understanding of the original meaning of the Annunciation pericope in its original historical context, historical criticism will be used. This method provides the opportunity to trace the origins, development and significance of the Annunciation within “the world behind the text.” It will also provide insights to the world behind the artworks to be considered, and the interpretation of the same Lukan passage through the artworks respectively. The following diagram details the methodology:

¹ This time frame is the general consensus of scholars. Carroll Stuhlmueller, "The Gospel According to Luke," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1968), 44:18.

Table 2:1 - Methodology Diagram

Task: to identify an understanding of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) in the text as well as in four selected artworks from 16th and 20th centuries.

Part I: Examination of the text

Luke 1:26-38 will be researched through Historical Criticism to discover:

- World of the Text – to establish the historicity of Jesus’ birth, the Lukan author chronologically associates it with the reign of King Herod the Great with the arrival of the angel Gabriel to Nazareth (Lk 1:5, 26).
- World Behind the Text - Lukan author penned this gospel sometime during the Flavian Dynasty, which was from 69-96 CE.

Part II: Examination of the Artworks

Luke 1:26-38 will be researched through Historical Criticism to discover:

- How the text is understood in its historical-theological context and;
- How it is depicted in the artworks.

This will be conducted by using the knowledge and understanding acquired in PART 1 and examining the artworks under the following headings:

- Historical Context
- Material Culture
- Iconography
- Art Analysis (see Table 1:3 - Visual Analysis of the Artworks)

Findings and Analysis

Examination of the theological knowledge and understanding found through the study of both the text and the artworks will be analysed.

By examining the meaning of the Lukan text (exegesis) and determining the hermeneutic (the meaning of the text for the Early Renaissance and for the contemporary Australian artists) it is hoped that the distinctive interpretations of the

Annunciation event in the different periods of history and their contexts will come into sharp focus. The integration of the research findings on the Lukan author and the artists' interpretation of that event could provide a nuanced perspective on the Annunciation. By comparing and contrasting each of the artworks and the text, it is possible that different understandings of the chosen pericope may evolve as artists' interpretations are influenced by their respective historical context. Thus, Ricoeur's method reflects this research's meaning of "integration" as it is applied to the approach

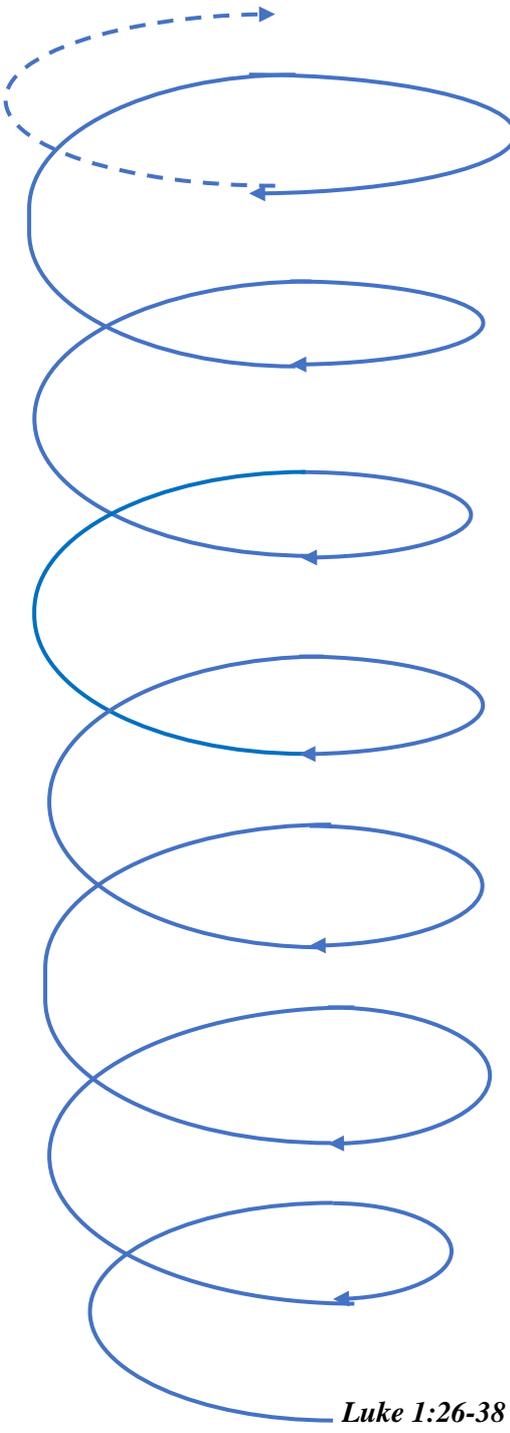
Paul Ricoeur explored the practice of "methods of interpretation as an arc leading from an initial situation and understanding to broadened understanding, both of the interpreter and the world as a world we can imagine ourselves as inhabiting."² However, Ricoeur's arc proved to be too limiting for this research as there is an implied or assumed end to the understanding of a theological concept. The following process was therefore adapted from Brueggemann's approach he developed when studying the psalms.³ The spiral in the following diagram shows the process of understanding of the text or image from the pre-critical (this the first reading or viewing) presentation of the text or image as a basic narrative. It then moves on to the subsequent stages of appropriation to critical reflection (understanding what the text or image means). From the critical understanding of the text or image based on explanation, it moves to the 'understanding' of the text or art, the post-critical phase.⁴ This is due to the appropriation of meaning in light of the new-found knowledge or understanding. As knowledge and understanding of the pericope through the art and text are acquired, these are reapplied to each stage. A spiral of informed understanding and knowledge continues expanding on the understanding of the Annunciation. This in turn, it is anticipated, will generate new ideas, applications and questions and therefore provide a more complete critical inquiry. After gathering and evaluating information and ideas from multiple perspectives, a well-reasoned analysis and interpretation is produced for this research with the potential for further research in the future.

² David Pellauer, Bernard Dauenhauer, and Edward N. Zalta (ed.), "Paul Ricoeur," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur/>.

³ Brueggemann uses the lineal model of first orientation, then disorientation to a new orientation. Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 9-11.

⁴ Brueggemann, *Spirituality Psalms*, 14-15.

Table 2:2 - Hermeneutical Spiral

<p style="text-align: center;">HERMENEUTICAL ASCENDING SPIRAL <i>Ever Increasing Knowledge and Understanding</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Stages of Development of Knowledge and Understanding</p>
 <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Luke 1:26-38</i></p>	<p><i>Open to Further Study in the Future</i></p> <p>Final Stage for <u>this research</u>: Analysis After gathering and evaluating information and ideas from multiple perspectives, an analysis and interpretation is produced, which is open to further study in the future.</p> <p>Stage 7: In light of this new-found knowledge and understanding, reconsider the text and all the artworks.</p> <p>Stage 6: <i>Post-Critical Phase</i> Taking this compiled knowledge and understanding reconsider the original Koine Greek</p> <p>Stage 5: <i>Critical Phase</i> Compare and contrast the text and all the artworks for their depicted theological content and focus through historical criticism</p> <p>Stage 4: Compare and contrast all artworks with the original text through historical criticism.</p> <p>Stage 3: Interpret Luke 1:26-38 by using historical criticism to gain an understanding of the theological focus in the context in the Early Renaissance and Contemporary. Examine all artworks in the historical context in which they were created.</p>

	<p>Stage 2: Interpret the original text of Luke 1:26-38 by using historical criticism to gain an understanding of the original context behind the composition of the Lukan Gospel.</p> <p>Stage 1: <i>Pre-critical Phase</i> Original Koine Greek text of Luke 1:26-38 or examination of artworks as a basic narrative.</p>
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Overview of the Exegesis of the Text

Koine Greek was studied to understand the text as it was originally written. The text was examined using historical criticism to gain an understanding of the origins of the text and the “world behind the text.” Ian Howard Marshall's approach to historical criticism will be used so that the study of the narrative that purports to convey historical information to determine what happened and is described or alluded to in the passage in question, is then critically assessed. The critical studies of the New Testament, which involve more than historical criticism, examine the historical process of both events described and the reading and production of the text. This method of interpretation of the Annunciation aided the research by providing an historical context for the event and facilitated investigation into its deeper meanings.

Overview of the Exegesis of the Artworks

Study of the text Luke 1:26-38 in this research is supported by material from two different eras. The Early Renaissance material comes from both Valencia (where Nicolás Falcó was painting) and Ghent (where the Rothschild Prayer Book was most likely written and illuminated). The artworks will be examined for their interpretation of the Annunciation guided by Viladesau’s approach in which he states:

The theological-aesthetic appreciation of a work of art involves a complex hermeneutical interaction among the artist, the work, and the viewer or hearer, along with the life-context of each. These elements may be present to varying degrees and may interact in different ways in constituting mediation of transcendence.

Viladesau also points out that in order to grasp the truth and meaning of a work it may require what Baxendale calls the “period point of view” (i.e. insight arising from the work's original life context) whilst recognising Van der Leeuw’s idea that, “works of art do possess their own life: they perhaps mean something very different to him who receives them than to him who created them.”⁵

For this research “life context” was understood as the purpose for which the artwork was created. Using the information gained from the nominated key visual literacy elements for the artworks, the depictions of the Annunciation can be understood from both Baxendall’s “period point of view” or insight arising from the work's original life context; and Van der Leeuw’s perspective of the viewer’s understanding compared with the artist’s depiction.

The artworks were examined in detail as per the following table, under the headings: Historical Context, Material Culture, and Iconography and Art Analysis. This information acquired from the examination of each artwork was then compared and contrasted against each artwork and the text of the Annunciation itself, to reveal an understanding of the scriptural event. The ideas gained from the text and each of the artworks and the different historical contexts in which they were created was then integrated. Thus, the knowledge that was accumulated at each stage was used to build on as a newer and even greater understanding of the Annunciation pericope developed, that spiralled upwards and outwards.

⁵ Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty and Art* (New York: Oxford University Press (US), 1999), 147.

Table 2:3 – Visual Analysis of the Artworks ⁶

<p style="text-align: center;">Material Culture and Iconography</p>	<p>Context - How does the artwork relate to a particular time, place, culture and society in which it was produced?</p> <p>When was it made? Where was it made? Who made it? Who was the work made for? Who was the artist? How does the work relate to other art of the time? Does the work relate to the social or political history of the time? Can the artwork be linked to other art of the period? The artwork's relationship to other areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Process – How the work was made and what techniques were used?</p> <p>Attributes Colours Emblems Symbols, signs and motifs How is the iconography to be interpreted?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis of Art Form and Composition</p>	<p>Form - the examination of the formal elements of the artwork addressing the following questions:</p> <p>What is the medium of the work? Which colours does the artist use? Why? How has the colour been organised? What kind of shapes or forms are present?</p>

⁶ Table 1 is a compilation from the following university and museum websites: Terry Barrett, "Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary," Mayfield Publishing Company, https://www.uwgb.edu/malloyk/art_criticism_and_formal_analysi.htm.; Monash University, "How Do I Structure My Visual Analysis?," Monash University, <http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/artdesign/writing/1.3.xml>.; The J. Paul Getty Museum, "Elements of Art," The J. Paul Getty Museum, http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/formal_analysis.html http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements_art.pdf. Duke University, "Visual Analysis," Duke University, <https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/visual-analysis.original.pdf>.

	<p>What kind of marks or techniques are used by the artist? What is the surface like? What kinds of textures can be seen? Physical size of the artwork? Purpose of the artwork?</p> <p>Mood or atmosphere – how the artist has created a certain atmosphere of feeling. How does the work make the viewer feel? Can you answer this? Only from your own point of view Why would the viewer possibly feel this way? How does the colour, texture, form or theme of the work affect the viewer’s mood? Compositional questions like, the shapes that lead the eye around the artwork, the use of light and dark? What do they say about the relationships between those depicted?</p>
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Literature Review Relevant to the Research Task

Theological Aesthetic

Edward Farley’s book *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* discussed the understanding of beauty held by theologians and art historians which helped in the context of this study.⁷ Richard Viladesau’s book *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty and Art* is used in the examination of the artworks being considered as it declares aesthetics as a source for theology.⁸ Furthermore, his comprehensive explanation of the theological hermeneutical theories of Gadamer, and others, helped direct this research in understanding the artworks. *Theology and The Arts: Encountering God Through Music, Art and Rhetoric* also by Richard Viladesau has two chapters especially relevant to this research study.⁹ In Chapter 2 the author discusses the history of art and the ever-changing point of view and in Chapter 3 in which the author explores artworks as the locus of faith – this is particularly relevant

⁷ Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001).

⁸ Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000).

⁹ Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts*.

to the artworks from the Middle Ages being explored in this research.¹⁰ The author also examines the ways in which art enters into theology and theology into art throughout the book. *A Cultural Study of Mary and the Annunciation: from Luke to the Enlightenment* by Gary Waller contributed to discussions on the understanding of the Gospel of Luke and significance of the sacred image to theological understanding.¹¹ Also, George W. Ferguson's *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* and Gertrude Sill's *A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art* and Margaret Manion and Bernard J. Muir's *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship* were important in this research in understanding the sign and symbols in each of the artworks.¹²

Hermeneutics

When considering the hermeneutics for this research, scholarly works that are traditionally expected to be part of this type of exegetical study were included, such as *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology*, as well as more recently published works such as *Opening Up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and The Foundations of Biblical Interpretation* by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI).¹³ The combination of information also presented in *How Do Catholics Read the Bible?, Truly Our Sister* and various Mariological papal documents as well as *Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in The Septuagint* added to background knowledge of hermeneutics.¹⁴ From these combined works, an interpretative understanding and approach was developed for studying the pericope of the

¹⁰ Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts*.

¹¹ Gary Waller, *A Cultural Study of Mary and the Annunciation: From Luke to the Enlightenment*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2015). online resource.

¹² George Wells Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), electronic resource; Gertrude Grace Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1975) ; Margaret. M. Manion and Bernard. J. Muir, *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998).

¹³ Dan R. Stiver, *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); José. Granados et al., *Opening up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and the Foundations of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008).

¹⁴ Daniel J. Harrington SJ, *How Do Catholics Read the Bible?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), electronic resource; Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York; London: Continuum, 2006). as well as *Lumen Gentium* by Pope Paul VI on 21 November 1964, *Fulgens Corona* by Pope Pius XII on 8 September 1953 - an encyclical establishing the perpetual virginity of Mary, *Ad Caeli Reginam* –by Pope Pius XII, on 11 October 1954. This encyclical established the feast Queenship of Mary and *Redemptoris Mater* – Pope John Paul II delivered this encyclical on 25 March 1987. Johann Cook and Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Vetus Testamentum, Supplements: Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint (1)* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2012), electronic resource.

Annunciation. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* has a chapter on hermeneutics by Brown and Schneiders that provided a more contemporary understanding of the Annunciation.¹⁵ In the book *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives* Pope Benedict XVI succinctly compares and contrasts the infancy narratives in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew.¹⁶ His examination of the historical accuracy of the narratives, the many classic and expected Augustinian interpretations of the Church and eschatology, as well as acknowledging the roots of his hermeneutic in Greek religious literature before considering the contemporary relevance of the Annunciation, helped form a more rounded understanding of the Annunciation for this research.

Historical Context of Europe

Werner Schwarz's chapter "In the Traditional View" of *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation: Some Reformation Controversies and Their Background*, provided a general understanding of the historical context of Europe at the time in which the selected artworks were created.¹⁷

Oberman's *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, was a primary source for understanding the historical context of Flanders at the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹⁸ Also, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* provided a basic contextual background for the theology of the Annunciation in Flanders.¹⁹

Early email communications with Profesor Albert Hauf Valls, an expert in the field of theology in Spain directed my studies to include many works specific to Valencia.²⁰ Among these, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion in Isabel de Villena's Vita Christi* by

¹⁵ Raymond E. Brown and Sandra M. Schneiders, "Hermeneutics," in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990).

¹⁶ Benedict XVI and Whitmore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 3.

¹⁷ Werner Schwarz, "In the Traditional View," in *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation: Some Reformation Controversies and Their Background* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1955).

¹⁸ Heiko A. Oberman, "Mariology," in *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963).

¹⁹ Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, c2001).

²⁰ Albert Hauf Valls, Email, 19 June 2018.

Lesley Twomey, gave an insight to the devotions relating to Mary and the historical context in which she was revered.²¹ As well as Rosanna Cantavella's work "Intellectual, Contemplative, Administrator Isabel De Villena and the Vindication of Women" helped to identify the challenges faced by the community of Valencia.²²

Historical Context of Contemporary Australia

Finding theologians whose thoughts and ideas that were unique to Australia in the late twentieth century presented many challenges for this research. Advances in technology, easier and more economically viable opportunities for international travel and trade, contributed to exposing Australian society and academia to the theological ideas and attitudes that were also being discussed in other parts of the Western World. The Thomas More Centre has been publishing *AD2000- Magazine* since April 1988 and has copies of publications since its inception.²³ These provided a general insight to theological issues of the time. "Landing the Sacred" was a paper presented at the conference "A Grain of Eternity: 1997 Australian International Religion, Literature and the Arts" in Sydney in 1997 by Noel Rowe.²⁴ It also provided a general understanding of the historical context and environment in which the contemporary Australian artworks were created. However, *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for a Changing World* by John Thornhill clearly outlined the challenges the Church [in Australia] was facing in the post-Vatican II world.²⁵ His writings, as an Australian theologian, discuss the role of Mary and the Church.

²¹ Lesley K. Twomey, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion in Isabel De Villena's Vita Christi* (Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2013).

²² Rosanna Cantavella, "Intellectual, Contemplative, Administrator: Isabel De Villena and the Vindication of Women," in *A Companion to Spanish Women's Studies*, ed. Xon de Ros and Geraldine Hazbun (London: Thames, 2011).

²³ <http://www.ad2000.com.au/index.html>

²⁴ Noel Rowe, "Landing the Sacred" (paper presented at the A Grain of Eternity: 1997 Australian International Religion, Literature and the Arts, Sydney, 1997).

²⁵ John Thornhill, *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for a Changing World* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1988).