Tussen schrift en preek. Ontwerp van een analysemodel voor de bijbelinterpretatie in preken met gebruikmaking van de tekstuele hermeneutiek van Paul Ricoeur

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SUMMARY

This study presents an attempt to design a model for the analysis of biblical interpretation in sermons using the textual hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur.

Chapter 1 starts with a description of the main question of this study: how to develop a model of analysis to identify hermeneutical models in sermons. Three - for Ricoeur closely related - levels can be distinguished in hermeneutics: methodology, epistemology and philosophy. The actual ways of interpreting the biblical texts that come to expression in sermons are found on the methodological level. The organization of research into the hermeneutics of sermons - the model of analysis - belongs to the epistemological level. The underlying level in terms of consciousness, being, reason is the philosophical.

After a presentation of the design of the book - methodology in chapters 2 and 3, epistemology in chapter 4, three examples of sermon analysis in chapter 5 - the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur is described as a dialectics of giving and receiving of meaning. Phenomenology (Husserl), ontology (Heidegger), dialectics (Hegel) and creative imagination (Kant) play an important role in Ricoeur’s textual hermeneutics, which is described in terms of ‘delay’ and ‘detour’ (through the text). The chapter closes with a paragraph on the relation of methodology (structural and historic analysis), epistemology (the ecclesia de la recherche) and philosophy (truth and interpretation) in Ricoeur’s biblical hermeneutics.

Chapter 2 describes a number of interpretative models that have been playing a role since the Enlightenment in biblical interpretation and that are at work in the praxis of preaching. The models are arranged according to their starting point: text or reader. In the first category three models are depicted successively: the naive reading, the historic critical reading, and the structuralistic reading. The second category features the models of Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Gadamer. Several developments can be pointed out within this scheme. There is an historic development: as interpretative models succeed one another in time, they accumulate former developments. There is also a dialectic development: within the category of the text the giving of meaning by the reader becomes more and more important and within the category of the reader the same thing happens to the receiving of meaning from analyzed texts from analyzed evaluation.

Chapter 3 gives an analysis in his book Int in metaphors and symbols, understanding, these a hermeneutics, in which a dialectical relation between the two becomes particularly clear in chapter 3 as an illustration of subordination of interpretation by the unique method of reading as its most important in terms of the Kind in understanding, with an evaluation of the relation of text and reader.

In chapter 4 I present a description of two ever the method and the questions (Hil and Pieterse). The f the reader is more empirically. My own model of subordinating and receiving is Ricoeur’s dialectics of meaning.

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the analysis of biblical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoëur.

Chapter 2 begins with a reconstruction of this study: how can biblical hermeneutical models in sermons be distinguished in philosophy. The actual expression in sermons - as a beginning of research into the two before mentioned categories, text and reader - belongs to the epistemological consciousness, being, methodology in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 3 gives an outline of Ricoëur’s textual hermeneutics as summarized in his book Interpretation Theory. Language as discourse, the text, metaphors and symbols, and finally the dialectics of explanation and understanding, these are the four pillars on which Ricoëur builds his textual hermeneutics, in which he brings the structural and the historic analysis in a dialectical relation with each other. I see this relation as a dialectical relation of the two before mentioned categories, text and reader, in which the receiving of meaning from the text by the reader and the giving of meaning to the text by the reader come together. The latter dialectic becomes particularly clear in Ricoëur’s biblical hermeneutics which is described in chapter 3 as an illustration of his general textual hermeneutics. The order of subordination of Biblical hermeneutics to general hermeneutics is reversed by the unique matter of this text, that employs structural and historic reading as its most appropriate organon, to elaborate a new way of being in terms of the Kingdom of God proposed by the text. Chapter 3 closes with an evaluation of Ricoëur’s textual hermeneutics which centers on the relation of text and reader and on consciousness as a task.

In chapter 4 I present my own model of sermon analysis, preceded by a description of two existing models of sermon analysis: the Heidelberger method and the quantitative / qualitative protocol analysis (Van der Ven and Pieterse). The former method is very theological and general, the latter is more empirical and specific in terms of human and social sciences.

My own model of sermon analysis can be considered as a dialectic of giving and receiving meaning, a hermeneutical spiral movement based on Ricoëur’s dialectics of explanation and understanding.

On the epistemological level this research operates by means of a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis. Meaning is received out of the sermon text which - as it should be in a qualitative analysis - forms my starting point. I try to establish the rhetorical meaning of the text surface by summarizing the sermon with keywords from the text itself, and this can be checked by the respondent. The hermeneutical meanings are received in an intuitive way in this stage. In the following stage hermeneutical meaning is given - in a quantitative way - based on the preceding hermeneutical theory, the interpretation models described on the methodological level in chapters 2 and 3. By attaching codes to the keywords that correspond with the interpretation models a mix of models is developed for each receiving of meaning from the text. The models are illustrated by fragments from analyzed sermons - when available. The chapter closes with an evaluation.
individual sermon. The conclusive element of this explanatory stage is the establishment of the final mix: the total number of times that the different interpretation models occur in this sermon or with this respondent when a respondent has sent in more than one sermon. The third stage leads to a renewed understanding of the hermeneutical working procedures that have been active in this sermon / respondent. An interpretative evaluation of the final quantitative mix of models is given in which also theologically relevant aspects feature. This final evaluation is discussed with the respondents who have their own responsibility with regard to the results of the analysis and to the extension of their own hermeneutical consciousness.

The sermon analyses themselves are centered around the following question: How do preachers who are - for the sake of this research - invited to make a sermon on the book of Ruth interpret the text of this Bible-book? This question served two goals: 1. Methodological: verification of the hypothesis, that Ricoeur’s textual hermeneutics is beneficial for the encounter of Bible text and Bible reader, creates more hermeneutical depth and gives therefore also more rhetorical expressiveness to the sermon. 2. Epistemological: verification of the hypothesis, that Ricoeur’s textual hermeneutics can also serve the interpretation of sermon texts and leads to deeper insights in the hermeneutical working procedures of preachers than only a theological, a quantitative or a qualitative analysis would do. Both hypotheses have been affirmed by the analysis.

Twenty ministers from the Dutch Reformed Church in Holland reacted positively to my invitation and did send in one or more sermons to be analyzed.

In chapter 5 I give the complete analysis of three sermons, each of them belonging to one of the mentioned categories (text, reader, and dialectic of text and reader). The analyses are done with help from a computer program named Kwalitan which has been developed for qualitative analysis, but in my project adapted to my own purposes.

The analyses are followed by a methodological evaluation of the advantages of Ricoeur’s interpretation model in comparison to the other models and an epistemological evaluation of my own model of sermon analysis based on the Ricoeurian dialectics of explanation and understanding. The chapter closes with some concluding remarks on an important issue in Practical Theology: the relation of description and prescription. This relation can also be described as a dialectical relation of giving and receiving meaning. Applied to Biblical normativity and preaching it will change the vicious hermeneutical circle into an ever developing hermeneutical spiral promising new hope for the future.