CENTERED FULLER COMMUNICATION:

SENSUS PLENIOR, RELEVANCE THEORY, AND A BALANCED HERMENEUTIC

by

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Abstract

This thesis will suggest a centered approach to biblical hermeneutics, proposing a balance in the function of the hemispheres of the human mind, left and right. It will examine how 'ordinary readers' are doing hermeneutics both in Africa and the West, and join these contributions to the insights of scholars who use the historical-grammatical hermeneutic, and laypeople (ordinary readers) who use a personal-devotional hermeneutic. The insights of Gadamer will be employed on the topic of horizons of authors and readers. The interpretive practices of ordinary readers will be justified through the theological concept of *sensus plenior,* and the communication that takes place between God and people through Scripture will be analyzed in the framework of a linguistic theory of communication, Relevance Theory. Relevance Theory will explain why ordinary readers continue to interpret in a personal-devotional way. After proposing a balanced hermeneutic, constraints are proposed for its outworking. The significance of this thesis for the church and for Bible translation will also be discussed.

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Introduction

Balance

At the root of communication and interpretation is the universal desire to understand, and understanding is the nature of hermeneutics[1]: for believers it is to understand what God has revealed to us in Scripture. As human beings, we interpret the world around us through the lens of our personality, culture, and experience. Due to this diversity of cultures, people will approach the Scriptures from vastly different perspectives. In our increasingly globalizing world, these perspectives are coming into dialogue with each other, and, as iron sharpens iron, Christians from different parts of the world can learn from each other and be refined. Ordinary readers in the West and Africa are making valuable contributions to our understanding of theology.

The need for balance applies to the hermeneutical approaches with which we take to the Scriptures, but also to the core of our beings. Both sides of our brains are essential to properly receive the full message of God's Word. Questions are being raised regarding the simplistic division of the brain into left and right concerning its function (for example, that language is exclusively in the left, or that the right is responsible for emotions); however, there is still validity to the different functions of the hemispheres of the brain.[2] A scholarly approach is insufficient if its assumptions are derived from an Enlightenment perspective and if it ignores the contributions of ordinary readers and the full spectrum of brain potential. Ordinary readers (in Africa and the West) are enacting legitimate readings of Scripture in the realm of revelatory communication, which can be accounted for by Relevance Theory, and provide a balancing

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[1] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method (*2nd Rev. ed; trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; New York: Crossroad, 1992), xxxiv.
[2] Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010), 2.

influence to the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. To opt for a balanced approach to Scriptural hermeneutics, which takes into account the wide variety of perspectives beyond a Western, academic, and historical-grammatical perspective, is an increasingly necessary step for scholarship to take. Acknowledging the role of *sensus plenior* is also important.

Outline of Thesis

Firstly, the main thesis will be established in the introduction. In Chapter 1, the main ideas of the thesis will be introduced, including the idea of a hemispheric balance, suggested by McGilchrist. Relevance Theory will later be employed to examine the difference between the hermeneutic Biblical scholars use and that used by laypeople. A theological idea, *sensus plenior*, will be introduced and shown to be valid in interpretation, and through other hermeneutics. Finally, the topics of ordinary and inculturation theology will be introduced, exploring how laypeople read the Scriptures and interpret them in diverse cultures.

In Chapter 2, the characteristics of ordinary readers will be explored in detail and generalized. In Chapter 3, *sensus plenior* will be established as a legitimate theological phenomenon, and will be proposed as a middle ground between a 'one-meaning, one-interpretation' approach and postmodern multiple meanings. It will be argued that the writers of Scripture did not always follow a historical-grammatical hermeneutic themselves. In Chapter 4, the ideas of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Anthony Thiselton will be explored. They both proposed the idea of a "fusion of horizons," and their insights will be drawn upon in showing what we can learn from other hermeneutics. Looking at the contributions of ordinary readers in the West and Africa will show that God speaks through His Word according to His relationship with us, and not according to our 'proper' understanding of how to read the Scriptures. A *sensus plenior* approach to the Scriptures, as well as operating in the realm of intuition, covers the full spectrum

of the human brain, right as well as left. After legitimizing such a hermeneutic, Chapter 5 will show how to constrain its application to avoid misinterpretation. The guiding verse (Isa. 55:10-11) and the metaphor of the Apostle Peter's living stones will be employed. Finally, in Chapter 6, the significance for this thesis in the current world context will be explored.

Assumptions Regarding God's Communication through Scripture

This thesis will explore the nature of God's communication through Scripture to people, from within the framework of Relevance Theory. The assumption made is that God speaks to His people – primarily through His Word. Jesus stated that His sheep know His voice, and that they follow Him (John 10:3-4, 27). Learning to recognize the Shepherd's voice and distinguish it from other thoughts is critical for growing in maturity as a believer. God also speaks to His people both in and apart from the Bible, and Scripture is replete with such examples. One must ask the question, "Has God changed?" Some would quote Hebrews 1:2, and insist that God has spoken all that is necessary through the work of His Son, and then apply that once-and-for-all speaking to the subsequent revelation of Scripture. However, there is no passage of Scripture which suggests that the Logos Word, Jesus Christ, would ever stop speaking to believers. On the contrary, now that the Holy Spirit indwells every true believer, how much more likely is He to speak directly to our hearts? He speaks either through his word or through other means, for example through circumstances, or other people. This thesis will focus on communication through the written word of Scripture.

Personal Perspective

One important point to mention is that, as author of this thesis, I am presenting my perspective on how God communicates. From an experiential point of view, I can only truly

know how God speaks to me. Although concerted effort has been made to substantiate any claims made in this thesis, there are some things which by nature are not able to be substantiated. The work of the Holy Spirit is not repeatable or controllable, and John 3 reveals that He and those who follow Him are like the wind. This tension between what is able to be substantiated and what must be believed is present. I have tried my best to provide a Scriptural perspective, but the reader may disagree with some aspects of my perspective. The God who inspired Paul to "become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22) probably also communicates in a way that reaches people where they are at. How that communication works between God and believer will form the topic of later chapters.

First however, attention will be turned to the brain, the receptor of this communication.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Main Ideas and Frameworks

1.1 McGilchrist and the Left/Right Dichotomy

Disabusing the Popular Notion of Left/Right Brain

McGilchrist has argued that the common, simplified notion of the left brain/right brain distinction, that the left side deals with logic and reason, and that the right deals with creativity, is a misconception. The popular notions of left/right brain activity have been shown to be too simplistic, as both sides of the brain are involved with creativity, logic, and language.[3] Nevertheless, McGilchrist cites a number of authorities in the field, who do distinguish differences between the two hemispheres in their function.[4] The important factor, according to McGilchrist, is 'how' the brain works, or the manner in which it works, not 'what' it is, the latter is a left-brain, machine-oriented manner of looking at it.[5]

McGilchrist Thesis Statement

McGilchrist states his thesis, which is that "for us as human beings there are two fundamentally opposed realities, two different modes of experience; that each is of ultimate importance in bringing about the recognisably human world; and that their difference is rooted in the bihemispheric structure of the brain. It follows that the hemispheres need to co-operate, but I believe they are in fact involved in a sort of power struggle, and that this explains many aspects of contemporary Western culture."[6] His main argument is based on a Nietzschean parable, that of the Master (the right brain) and his emissary (the left brain).[7] The Master is betrayed by his emissary, who begins to believe that he does not need the Master anymore. This indicates a

[3] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 2.
[4] Both Joseph Hellige and Ramachandran hold such a position, as cited by McGilchrist, *The Master,* 2.
[5] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 3.
[6] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 3.
[7] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 14.

breakdown in the proper order of things, which, for the brain is to go from the right hemisphere to the left, and then return to the right.[8] The betrayal by the emissary is represented by a scenario in which the brain, after giving "detached, analytic attention" to the matter at hand, refuses to return to the perspective of the right brain, which would have otherwise resulted in a "positively enriched"[9] right hemisphere.

The relationship between the two hemispheres is asymmetric; the left hemisphere is "parasitic" off the right, but it is unaware of this truth, being filled instead with "alarming self-confidence."[10] The "unopposed action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere" in Western civilization has resulted in "an increasingly mechanistic, fragmented, decontextualized world, marked by unwarranted optimism mixed with paranoia and a feeling of emptiness."[11] Now, McGilchrist is not arguing against reason and logic, simply against "misplaced rationalism" or "narrow materialism."[12] The dominance of the left hemisphere was staved off through arts and religion, which were forces outside of the "enclosed system of the self-conscious mind."[13] McGilchrist views the brain as a type of "metaphor of the world,"[14] and there is a battle between the hemispheres for power.

Different Hemispheric Functions

The two hemispheres function quite differently, and this difference relates to the notions that will be discussed in this thesis, and shed light on hermeneutics. The left hemisphere looks at "pieces of information in isolation" while the right hemisphere looks at "the entity as a whole,

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[8] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 178.
[9] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 232.
[10] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 6.
[11] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 6.
[12] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 7.
[13] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 6.
[14] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 9.

the so-called *Gestalt*.[15] The right hemisphere "underwrites breadth and flexibility of attention," and sees things as a "whole, and in their context," while the left hemisphere "brings to bear focused attention," seeing "things abstracted from context, and broken into parts," subsequently "reconstructing a 'whole.'"[16] The evidence suggests that the right hemisphere allows for "broad, global, and flexible attention" while the left hemisphere allows for "local, narrowly focused attention."[17] There are five types of attention the mind can produce (vigilance, sustained attention, alertness, divided attention, focused attention), and all are right brain functions except for focused attention. This characteristic of the right brain allows it to focus on what it does not know, being able to receive something new with broad focus. Whereas the left hemisphere specializes in what it already knows, within a stable world that is predictable, the right hemisphere is open to new stimuli and new interpretations, which it is diligently remaining attentive to receive.[18]

The following chart summarizes many of the major differences between the two hemispheres, as covered by McGilchrist in part I of his book.[19]

[15] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 4.
[16] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 27-28.
[17] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 39-40.
[18] McGilchrist, *The Master*, *38*-40.
[19] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 32-92.

Table 1.1: Comparison of right and left hemisphere

Category	*Left hemisphere characteristic functional preference*	*Right hemisphere characteristic functional preference*
Attention	Focus and grasp	Breadth and flexibility
Information	Known	New
Frame preference	Predictability	Possibility
Connection	Division	Integration
Vision and perception	Part	Whole
Meaning	Abstraction	Context
Distinguishing examples	Categories	Individuals
Relational	Impersonal	Personal
Emotions	Secondary	Empathetic, dominant, receptive, expressive
Thinking	Reason	Rationality

Another descriptive table outlining the difference between hemispheres was proposed by Walrod, and is presented below.[20] He is careful to note that it does not mean that only that hemisphere can perform only those specific functions listed, but "that there is a strong tendency toward that type of localization or hemispheric specialization."[21]

Table 1.2: "Cognitive functions related to brain hemispheres"

Left hemisphere	*Right hemisphere*
symbolic or verbal	visuospatial
logical or analytical	synthetic perceptual
sequential or linear	holistic or nonlinear
rational and factual	emotive and intuitive
propositional	appositional or gestalt
language skills	nonverbal ideation

It is critical to note that intuitive functioning is associated with the right hemisphere.

[20] Michael R. Walrod, *Normative Discourse and Persuasion: An Analysis of Ga'dang Informal Litigation* (Manila: Linguistic Society of the Philippines, 1988), 33.
[21] Walrod, *Normative Discourse, 33.*

Pre-eminence of Right Hemisphere

McGilchrist considers the right hemisphere to be in some ways more fundamental than the left hemisphere because it "can also use the left hemisphere's preferred style, whereas the left hemisphere cannot use the right hemisphere's" with respect to associations.[22] There are other reasons why the right hemisphere should be considered to have primacy: the ideal progression is "from right hemisphere, to left hemisphere, to right hemisphere again;"[23] implicitness and metaphor, processed in the right hemisphere, are the foundation of "abstraction and explicitness;"[24] the right hemisphere is responsible for affect and the unconscious will;[25] "both thought and its expression originate in the right hemisphere;"[26] and finally, the right hemisphere is responsible for reintegration, which, as Hegel suggested, is the joining of union and division, with union having "ultimate priority."[27]

Although it is clear that the right brain is important and that its role should be valued, this thesis will not call for as radical a paradigm shift as McGilchrist argues for, but instead, a centered balance that brings to bear the fullness of the entire human personality in the act of interpretation. Both the incredible human achievements forged through the linear functioning of the left brain, as well as the creativity and intuition of the right brain can be honoured. Balance is key, not the overvaluing of one perspective with respect to another.

Now that the differences between the hemispheres have been introduced, it is time to introduce an overarching model, Relevance Theory, which describes how communication takes place.

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[22] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 41.
[23] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 178.
[24] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 179.
[25] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 184, 186.
[26] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 189.
[27] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 201.

1.2 Introduction to Relevance Theory

Introduction

Relevance Theory, developed by Sperber and Wilson[28] is a theory of communication that broke from the traditional understanding of language as primarily a code, and underscored the importance of inference in communication. The technical definition of 'inferring something' in pragmatics is to "derive it as a conclusion on the basis of a number of premises."[29] Pragmatics involves the study of contexts of both the communicator, and the one communicated to, in order to determine meaning. There is a gap between what one encodes and what others understand from the communication, and this gap is filled by inference; one can thus conclude that a code model on its own cannot fully explain human communication.[30]

Cognitive Effects

An act of communication, or utterance, is relevant to the extent that it produces 'cognitive effects' in the receiver, where cognitive effects represent useful ideas that the utterance produces[31], which can result in changes in the beliefs of an individual.[32] These cognitive effects are instances of the more general contextual effects that take place within a given cognitive system.[33] In general, these cognitive effects are "adjustments to the way an individual represents the world."[34] Cognitive effects are of three major types: a) "**strengthening** of an existing assumption," b) "**contradicting** and leading to the elimination of an existing assumption" and c) "**contextual implication**, where new information follows from the combination of new and

[28]Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (2nd ed.; Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1995; repr., 1996).
[29] Billy Clark, *Relevance Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16.
[30] Clark, *Relevance,* 21.
[31] Clark, *Relevance,* 30.
[32] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance,* 265.
[33] Clark, *Relevance,* 100.
[34] Clark, *Relevance,* 31.

existing assumptions but would not follow from either alone."[35] Currently in Relevance Theory, cognitive effects are defined positively, that is as "positive cognitive effects," so that stimuli that produce false conclusions are considered not to be relevant. Positive cognitive effects are "true conclusions, warranted strengthenings or revisions of existing assumptions, and…. any effect 'which contributes positively to the fulfillment of cognitive functions or goals.'"[36]

Cognitive and Communicative Principles of Relevance (CPR1 and CPR2)

There are two main principles which undergird Relevance Theory. The first is the "Cognitive Principle of Relevance" (CPR1), which states that "human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance."[37] The CPR1 implies that, in all communication, humans tend to try to obtain adequate cognitive effects with minimal processing effort. If one way of saying something results in more positive cognitive effects than a different way, and the processing effort for each is equivalent, the CPR1 states that the former is more relevant. Also, if two utterances have similar cognitive effects, but the second requires more processing effort, the first will be more relevant by this same principle. Cognitive effects and processing effort are context-dependent, and relevance is a "comparative notion," as utterances vary in how relevant they are.[38]

The second principle of Relevance Theory is the "Communicative Principle of Relevance" (CPR2), which states that, for ostensive-inferential communication, "Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance."[39] To unpack this statement, it is necessary to understand both what an "ostensive stimulus" and the "presumption of its own

[35] Clark, *Relevance,* 102.
[36] Clark, *Relevance,* 103.
[37] Clark, *Relevance,* 29.
[38] Ernst-August Gutt, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* (Boston: St. Jerome Pub, 2010), 31.
[39] Clark, *Relevance,* 108.

optimal relevance" mean. An ostensive stimulus has an informative intention, as well as a communicative intention. An informative intention is "the intention to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions" while a communicative intention is "the intention to make it mutually manifest or more manifest to audience and communicator that the communicator has this informative intention."[40] The "presumption of its own optimal relevance" implies two things: first, that the ostensive stimulus is "relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it" and that it is also the "most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences."[41] The cognitive benefits that arise will arise in the context of the "cognitive environment" of the addressee; the cognitive environment is the "set of assumptions that are manifest" to the addressee.[42] When something is manifest, one is capable of "representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true, or probably true."[43]

Relevance Theory Comprehension Heuristic

With the basic principles explained, the next question is what sort of pattern guides communication and understanding from speaker to addressee. This is found in the "relevance-guided comprehension heuristic" which outlines how people understand utterances. One should "follow a path of least effort in deriving cognitive effects" by testing "interpretations (e.g. disambiguations, reference resolutions, implicatures, etc.) in order of accessibility," and one should only "stop when [one's] expectations of relevance are satisfied."[44]

What is communicated under a relevance-guided comprehension heuristic? There is a technical notion of explicatures and implicatures. Explicatures, which are "partly encoded and

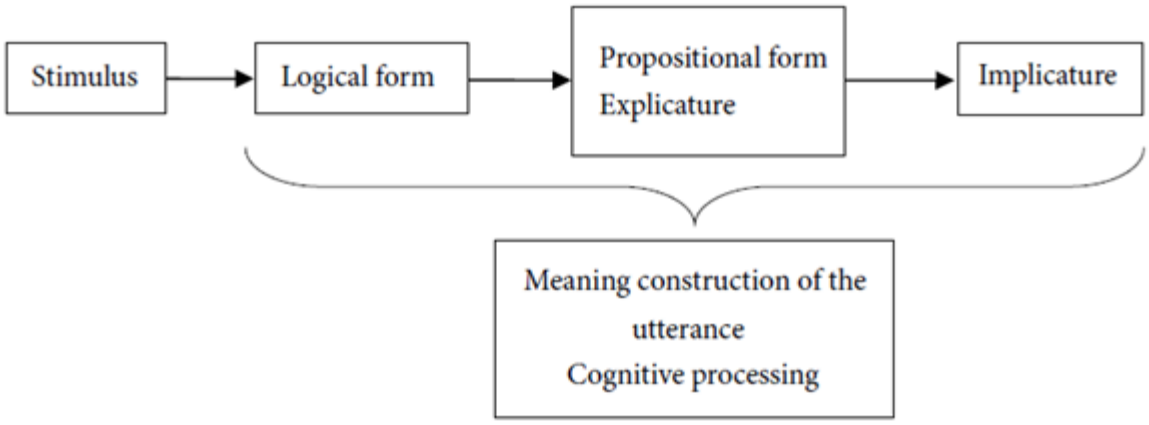
[40] Clark, *Relevance,* 114.
[41] Clark, *Relevance,* 108.
[42] Clark, *Relevance,* 115.
[43] Clark, *Relevance,* 115.
[44] Clark, *Relevance,* 119.

partly inferred," refer to "communicated propositions which are constructed by developing the linguistically encoded logical form of an utterance."[45] Implicatures are simply "communicated propositions which are not explicatures,"[46] in other words, everything else which is intentionally communicated, and they are realized through inference.

Meaning Construction

Oswald summarizes (with admitted simplification) the process of meaning construction in Relevance Theory through the following diagram.[47]

Figure 1.1: Relevance Theory's model of meaning construction (simplified)



RT's model of meaning construction (simplified).

To further clarify the above diagram, the logical form is "a structured sequence of concepts corresponding to its syntactic and semantic structure."[48] The logical form is processed to derive the propositional form, which consists of explicatures, resulting "through the

[45] Clark, *Relevance,* 78.
[46] Clark, *Relevance,* 78.
[47] Steve Oswald, "Towards an Interface between Pragma-Dialectics and Relevance Theory," *Pragmatics & Cognition* 15 no. 1 (2007): 192.
[48] Oswald, "Towards," 191.

disambiguation of the logical form."[49] When the recipient of an act of communication further processes the input (along with contextual clues) they will derive implicatures, inferences drawn with the goal of deciphering the intended meaning of the act of communication. Oswald summarizes the main goal of Relevance Theory, which is to "account for how and why a particular interpretation is derived."[50] Oswald mentions that Relevance Theory attempts to account for both the 'how' and 'why' of communication, and the above diagram summarizes the 'how;' the 'why' has been covered earlier through the discussion on relevance, cognitive benefits and processing effort.

Communicators and Receptors of the Message of Scripture

Before discussing the mechanics of how the different hermeneutical strategies function within Relevance Theory, it is necessary to lay out the characteristics of the participants in the act of communication with respect to Scripture. Understanding the communicators and receptors will prove crucial in understanding the types of communication that take place.

The act of communication will take place in a certain context, where context is defined as "a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world" which can include "expectations about the future… religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker."[51]

The receptors of the communication of Scripture appear to be relatively clear, consisting of people throughout every generation since the first stories of the OT were spoken orally. However, there is also a divine audience for the word of God, at minimum where Jesus prays to the Father in John, but probably extending further in the sense that Jesus whole life's work and

[49] Oswald, "Towards," 191.
[50] Oswald, "Towards," 192.
[51] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance,* 15-16.

ministry in word were directed to the Father. There is infinite communication happening when Jesus is addressing the Father in John 17.[52] Since this thesis involves human understanding of God's word, the focus will be on the human recipients. The key aspect of the human recipients of God's divine message is the binary nature of their brains. This binary aspect allows a full spectrum of communication to take place: in the right hemisphere, revelatory, intuitive, associational and metaphorical types of communication can be processed; and in the left hemisphere, focused, analytical, linear and sequential communication can be processed.

The authors of Scripture will be looked at secondly. Scripture is the result of an interplay, an intimate dance, between human and divine influence. Scripture testifies about its nature, stating that it is "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16)[53] and that the people who wrote it were carried along by the Holy Spirit as they wrote (2 Pet. 1:21-22). This passage in 2 Peter explicitly states that prophecies do not originate in the human will. The following Table summarizes the difference between the divine Author and the human author with respect to communication. The different characteristics of biblical authors described below have important ramifications for the Relevance Theory analysis of communication between the Scriptural authors and the believer today.

[52] Vern S. Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub, 1999), 22.
[53] The NIV will be used throughout this thesis in quoting Scripture.

Table 1.3: Characteristics of divine and human authors

Characteristic	*Divine Author*	*Human authors*
Knowledge (of context, of situation of audience, of future)	Completely sufficient, omniscient	Incomplete, limited
Inspiration	Unique source of inspiration	Dependent on God for revelation
Intertextuality	Complete knowledge of all writings, particularly of inspired ones and their interdependence	For OT authors: Varied, some familiarity with other works For NT authors: familiarity with OT, incomplete knowledge of NT
Current Presence	Living and active, close to the believer due to indwelling	Far removed from modern audience, in space/time/culture
Authority	Absolute, final	Only authority is found in inspiration by Holy Spirit
Relationship to text	Eternal word, fixed in heaven (Psalm 119:89)	Experienced temporally, start and end to work
Expressed meaning	Infinitude[54]	Finite thoughts

Divine Author's Freedom in Communication and the Left/Right Brain

That Scripture contains in its purview the perspective of both the human and divine authors – who are so completely different – clearly makes it a unique book, a fusion of influences, revealing the divine perspective in human terms. As Sparks makes clear, Scripture allows us to "appreciate the profound difference between the divine and human viewpoints" and see "the majesty of God."[55] There is a richness that is found in the divine-human interaction with respect to the Scriptures. God, whose communication and possibility of expressed meaning is infinite, communicates with the pinnacle of His creation, human beings.[56]

The beauty of this type of communication resides in the nature of the divine Author. From a Relevance Theory perspective, God can communicate with maximal relevance if he so

[54]Poythress, *God-Centered,* 79.
[55] Kenton L. Sparks, *God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 54.
[56] According to McGilchrist, some have estimated that there are "more connections in the human brain than there are particles in the known universe." See McGilchrist, *The Master,* 9.

prefers, due to His attributes. These communications can be maximally relevant and tailored to perfectly suit the cognitive environment of the individual receiving the communication.

God also often speaks in ways that don't always match up with the principles of Relevance Theory. For example, we expect others in cooperative communication to maximize relevance, to not leave out any key details, and to minimize the processing effort required to understand. However, sometimes God deliberately conceals things (see Prov. 25:2 and Matt. 13:44) in such a way that there is considerable effort and cost necessary to find them and acquire them. When Jesus taught in parables, He was concealing the truth from those who were not truly seeking Him, while opening up the secrets of the kingdom of God to those who were already following Him, or were diligently seeking after Him and the truth. The nature of God's communication thus requires care in interpreting Scripture, for His communication may not always entirely follow the principles of Relevance Theory, but may follow His preferences instead, which may differ.

As will be discussed further in the chapter on constraints, any interpretation – whether stemming from predominantly left or right brain – is not guaranteed to be correct. When one interprets, the goal is to obtain positive cognitive effects, which are described by Sperber and Wilson as resulting in a "genuine improvement in knowledge."[57] Sometimes an interpretation will be false, and "when false information is mistakenly accepted as true, this is a cognitive effect, but not a positive one: it does not contribute to relevance (though it may seem to the individual to do so)."[58] When there is a false interpretation, it is always the fault of the interpreter, not God's.

[57] Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber, "Truthfulness and Relevance," *Mind* 111, no. 443 (2002): 602n.
[58] Wilson and Sperber, "Truthfulness," 602n.

The message of God – perhaps an insight on a passage of Scripture and how it applies to the receptor, or an encouragement or a warning – can be processed through either hemisphere, or through a combination of both, on a continuum. The right hemisphere will be open to new information[59] and for this reason it is suitable for receiving direct revelation. It will attempt to create associations, which will then be unpacked as to their significance through the left hemisphere. The left hemisphere will be intent on understanding the written word within the context of the Scriptural world which it has created, and will prefer what it already has understood.[60] It will focus in and work out all the implications and connections in a tight, logical manner. The above discussion gives some idea of how Relevance Theory and the left/right dichotomy relate to one another, more of which will be looked at further in later chapters.

Attention will now be turned to an idea regarding Scripture that takes seriously the nature of the divine Author and His communication.

1.3 Introduction to Sensus Plenior

Definition of Sensus Plenior

Is the meaning of Scripture singular, literal, defined only by the intention of the human author? Or are there additional meanings beyond the literal sense, found in the mind of God, who inspired it so that it speaks anew to every generation? These additional meanings are known as "*sensus plenior*," or the "fuller sense." This term was popularized by Raymond E. Brown, a Catholic scholar during the 20th century. He defined it as follows: "The *sensus plenior* is that additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book)

[59] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 40.
[60] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 40.

when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation."[61] In a following chapter, a distinction will be made between types of *sensus plenior*, but for now, Brown's conception of *sensus plenior* will be analyzed. Already, *sensus plenior* is suggesting the importance of an enhanced hermeneutic, as the historical-grammatical hermeneutic focuses on the original context, the meaning and intent of the author, whereas *sensus plenior* focuses in on the divine Author, and what intentions He has for His word.

Brown states that the literal meaning comes from historical-grammatical analysis, while *sensus plenior* is postulated when the regular process of exegesis results in a meaning that was not intended by the human author, rather by God.[62] When originally proposing *sensus plenior* in his dissertation, Brown gave two criteria: that the *sensus plenior* is homogeneous with the literal sense, and that evidence taken must be based on canonical revelation.[63] This point is further developed through Oss, who states that when doing *sensus plenior* analysis, the meaning emerges from the text as the text is considered in the entire canon, and the canon sheds light on the individual part.[64] For Oss, *sensus plenior* does not involve "allegorization or eisegesis"; instead, the various canonical strata add the meaning as they will.[65] The canonical guideline helps to add safeguards, to keep in check any errant interpretations obtained from a *sensus plenior* approach. Oss raises a number of questions about *sensus plenior* that have been part of the evangelical debate concerning it. He wonders whether historical-grammatical exegesis

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[61] Raymond Edward Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Ph.D. Diss., St. Mary's University, Pontifical Theological Faculty, 1955). Reprinted as Raymond Edward Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior *of Sacred Scripture*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 92.
[62] Raymond E. Brown, "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 268-69.
[63] Brown, "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years", 274.
[64] D. A. Oss, "Canon As Context: The Function of *Sensus Plenior* in Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Grace Theological Journal* 9 no. 1 (1988): 105.
[65] Oss, "Canon as Context," 105.

should only be used in hermeneutics, whether there is additional meaning, and whether the human and divine intent can be separated from one another.[66]

History of the Term

Brown did not come up with the concept of *sensus plenior* entirely on his own, for the seed of the perspective was found in the Fathers' OT exegesis,[67] and in the NT, where there is evidence of hermeneutical practices which are "not always historical, but often a spiritualization of the literal meaning."[68] So although the term was coined in the 1920s by Father Fernández,[69] the practice of finding a 'spiritual' sense beyond a literal was common in patristic exegesis.[70] The church recognized something that Brown suggested, that the individual parts of a group of texts have greater meaning in the context of the whole.[71] The concept of *sensus plenior* was debated hotly in the 20th century, and various interpreters sought to establish its practical definition; however, Brown himself, before the end of his life, ended up "rejecting it as too problematic," unable to be used as a "viable hermeneutic for scriptural interpretation."[72] This thesis, however, argues that it is still viable, and many non-Catholics have attempted a solution including LaSor, Moo, Poythress and others.[73]

Meaning Beyond the Human Author's Intention

One critical concern in formulating a *sensus plenior* theory is discerning whether God inspired meaning beyond the author's intention. Most Christians acknowledge that God is the

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[66] Oss, "Canon as Context", 105.
[67] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 36-55.
[68] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 34-36.
[69] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 88.
[70] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 55.
[71] Raymond Brown, "Theory of a *Sensus Plenior*," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, vol.15, no. 2 (April, 1953): 145.
[72] Matthew Dunn, "Raymond Brown and the *Sensus Plenior* Interpretation of the Bible," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 36 no. 3-4 (2007): 531 & 533.
[73] Dunn, "Raymond Brown," 544.

"unique author of revelation" as the "principal author," while the human authors receive an accommodated revelation as "instrumental authors."[74] However, there is dispute over *sensus plenior*, as Osiek suggests that the author receives revelation transcending their consciousness[75] or whether, as for Bierberg, who maintains that anything further than the limits of human intention is not inspiration.[76] Is there a multiplicity of meanings in the text that transcend the human author's consciousness?

Kaiser quotes C.S. Lewis, and though he is arguing against multiple meaning and disputes Lewis' point, the quote is an excellent support for *sensus plenior* in the text:

> "If the Old Testament is a literature thus taken up,[77] made a vehicle of what is more than human, *we can of course set no limits to the weight or multiplicity of meanings* which may have been laid upon it. If any writer may say more than he meant, then these writers will be especially likely to do so. And not by accident."[78]

Indeed, the Scriptures are deeply meaningful, they are unlike any other book. God's creativity is revealed in the multiplicity of instantiations of the Holy Spirit speaking through a finite series of words. The fact that this finite word can speak so clearly and actively, through different ages, civilizations, and epochs, attests to its unique nature. Rollo Mays says, "Creativity arises out of the tension between spontaneity and limitations, the latter (like the river banks) forcing the spontaneity into the various forms which are essential to the work of art or poem."[79]

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[74] Rudolph Philip Bierberg, "Does Sacred Scripture Have a *Sensus Plenior*?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 10 no.2 (1948): 185.
[75] Carolyn Osiek, "Catholic or catholic? Biblical Scholarship at the Center," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 1 (2006): 21. Cited in Dunn, "Raymond Brown," 546.
[76] Jack R. Riggs, "The 'Fuller Meaning' of Scripture: A Hermeneutical Question for Evangelicals," *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (1986): 215.
[77] C.S. Lewis, *Reflections of the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1958), 116-117. Lewis relates the "taking up" of human beings, of being made in God's image, the "lower nature, in being taken up and loaded with a new burden and advanced to a new privilege, remains, and is not annihilated" (116). In the quote here, Lewis relates this 'taking up' to OT Scripture.
[78] C.S. Lewis. *Reflections of the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1958), 117. Quoted by Walter C. Kaiser Jr. et al., *Three Views on the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament*. (Edited by Stanley N. Gundry et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 76. Kaiser's italics.
[79] Rollo Mays, quoted in "Creativity Quotes," The Emily Silverstein Fund, Inc., accessed Jan 28, 2014, http://www.doonething.org/quotes/creativity-quotes.htm.

God has chosen to limit the majority of His communication to a finite book. The mystery is that it contains all of the truth that all believers collectively need to stay in the right path according to the doctrines identified through historical-grammatical exegesis, while also speaking to individuals in a living and active way through *sensus plenior*.

Examples of Sensus Plenior

To identify examples of *sensus plenior* in Scripture, one must find OT utterances quoted in the NT, where the reader of the OT could not arrive, without further revelation, at the interpretation that the NT authors gave the utterance. In other words, the historical-grammatical hermeneutic could not have led to the NT reading on its own; it would need additional illumination.

The nature of *sensus plenior*, according to Brown, is that it "draws out the potentialities of the literal sense," an example being Psalm 8, quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8, where the original OT text refers to a human as lord of creation, while in Hebrews Christ is appointed king of all.[80] God inspired the OT passage to be such that it could refer to both humanity and Christ, the latter of which is expressed by the writer of the Hebrews. The human authors of Scripture, according to Tuya, are not limited to an expression of what they know God wants to communicate, but can be inspired beyond their knowledge.[81]

A good example of *sensus plenior* is found in Matthew, who quotes Hosea 11:1 (Matt. 2:15). In the original context, God's son is the nation of Israel, and disobedient Israel at that. However, Matthew takes this passage and applies it to Christ, perhaps based on the loose

[80] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 128.
[81] Manuel de Tuya, "Si es posible y en qué medida un *sensus plenior* a la luz del concepto teológico de inspiración," *La Ciencia Tomista,* 80 (1953): 395. Quoted in Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 133. Brown includes his translation for Tuya's quote in footnote 135.

association of both having come out of Egypt, and the concept of son. Blomberg considers that this passage is an example of "pure typology."[82] Brown, in his formulation of the categories of *sensus plenior*, would probably consider this to be an example of the "typical *sensus plenior.*"[83] Whatsoever interpretation one takes on this passage, one could not arrive at the interpretation that Matthew gives simply from a historical-grammatical analysis of the OT text and "Hosea could not have intended [the interpretation] in any sense of the word *intend*."[84] In Paul E. Brown's view, there is also justification for *sensus plenior* in 1 Peter 1:10-12, where it is apparent that the prophets knew some things about their prophecies, but they wanted to know more of which they did not know: a desire that could only be fully met in the coming of Jesus.[85]

Polysemy

There is a fundamental polysemy to the nature of Scripture, which is found both in the nature of the revelation, and of the One revealed. Umberto Eco describes this unlimited nature as follows: "Moreover, in this beautiful case of unlimited semiosis, there was a puzzling identification among the sender (the divine Logos), the signifying message (words, Logoi), the content (the divine message, Logos), the referent (Christ, the Logos) – a web of identities and differences, complicated by the fact that Christ, as Logos, insofar as he was the ensemble of all the divine archetypes, was fundamentally polysemous."[86] From such a Lord, whose universality is expressed by Paul as the One in whom all things hold together (Col. 1:17) and his multi-

[82] Gregory K. Beale and D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 8.
[83] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 99-101.
[84] Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009), 36. Leithart's italics.
[85] Paul E. Brown, *The Holy Spirit and the Bible* (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, England: Christian Focus, 2002), 147.
[86] Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 11.

faceted nature as the One in whom all wisdom and knowledge are found (Col. 2:3), it only makes sense that His message would also be polysemous and indescribably rich.

Connection to Right Brain

One advocate of the "single meaning principle," Robert L. Thomas, connected the issue of *sensus plenior* and the right brain. He quoted Pinnock, "'Interpretation is an unfinished task and even the possibility that there may not be a single right answer for all Christians cannot be ruled out'" and then went on to lament that he felt that Pinnock's position leads to a situation in which "the right brain has clearly gained the upper hand and the rationality of traditional interpretation crumbles into ashes."[87] This dismissal of the right brain could come from the dynamic suggested by McGilchrist, whereby the interpreter who operates primarily by the left hemisphere begins to believe that they do not need the right brain anymore, seeing it as a threat to a world which can otherwise be controlled.

There is a vast world of potential meaning both in Scripture and in the ways that Scripture has been read down through the centuries. Eco makes this point through his comment on the work of Gadamer in the realm of interpretation, "Once again we feel here something which recalls the modern fascination of an open textual reading, and even the hermeneutic idea that a text magnetizes on it, so to speak, the whole of the readings it has elicited in the course of history."[88] It is into this wide world of interpretation that one is able to draw distinctions in the idea of *sensus plenior*.

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[87] Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), 144.
[88] Eco, *The Limits*, 12.

1.4 Introduction to Ordinary Theology and Inculturation Theology

Definition of Ordinary Theology

In the phrase "ordinary theology" the term 'ordinary' is not disparaging, it does not mean 'ignorant' or 'uninteresting,' it simply means that this theology is coming from laypeople without academic experience in theology.[89] Astley defines ordinary theology as "the theological beliefs and processes of believing that find expression in the God-talk of those believers who have received no scholarly theological education."[90] To define it further, Astley states that it is the "*content, pattern, and processes of ordinary people's articulation of their religious understanding.*" The contributions of such laypeople and their "theology in context" have been largely ignored in academia.[91] Recently in the Western world, a growing number of scholars are investigating this theological field of study, including Cartledge, Astley, Village, and Christie.[92] There is also literature on ordinary readers coming out of Africa. Ordinary theology is related to the idea of inculturation theology, which will be described next.

Definition of Inculturation Theology

Inculturation theology is becoming increasingly important in Africa. It is the "on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures," which results in a "creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures."[93] Odozor distinguishes three senses of inculturation. The first is initial evangelization, and the second is a "process in

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[89] Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay People: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 1.
[90] Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening, and Learning in Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2002), 1.
[91] Astley, *Ordinary*, 1.
[92] For further reading on ordinary theology, see Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening, and Learning in Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2002); Mark Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Burlington, Vt. : Ashgate Pub., 2010); Ann Christie, *Ordinary Christology: Who Do You Say I Am? Answers from the Pews* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012); and Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay People: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2008).
[93] Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 11.

which the faith embodied in one culture encounters another culture and becomes embodied in it."[94] For the third sense Pedro Arrup defines it as

> the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than superficial adaptation) but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation.[95]

The application of inculturation theology in Africa has resulted in new instantiations of the Christian message, as its transforming message applies itself to other cultures and engenders new interpretations and perspectives that are true to both the nature of the gospel, and the nature of the receiving culture. Christianity, by its very nature is incarnational, and this relates to translation, for as Walls points out, "Incarnation is translation. When God in Christ became man, Divinity was translated into humanity, as though humanity were a receptor language."[96]

Inculturation and ordinary theology interact with one another, because ordinary readers, being members of a particular culture, will bring their own culture and perspective to bear as they interpret the Scriptures. The meanings and interpretations they derive from Scripture may not always align with those who advocate a 'one-meaning, one-interpretation' approach. It is to the question of how readers are actually interpreting the Scriptures that we now turn, before the topics of *sensus plenior,* Relevance Theory, and hermeneutics are discussed in more detail.

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[94] P. I. Odozor, "An African Moral Theology of Inculturation: Methodological Considerations," *Theological Studies* 69, no. 3 (2008): 585.

[95] P. Arrupe, 'Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation,' 1978, in *Other Apostolates Today: Selected Letters and Addresses of Pedro Arrupe SJ,* (ed. J. Aixala; vol. 3; St. Louis, 1981): 172. Quoted in Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 11, and in P. I. Odozor, "An African Moral Theology of Inculturation: Methodological Considerations," *Theological Studies* 69, no. 3 (2008): 585

[96] Andrew Walls, 'The translation principle in Christian history', in *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church - The last 200 years* (ed. Philip C. Stine; Leiden: EJ Brill), 24-39. Quoted in Kwame Bediako. *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience*. (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 39.

Chapter 2: Ordinary Theology and Ordinary Readers

This section will focus on the hermeneutic and characteristics of ordinary readers who are situated in both the West and Africa. In the West, a number of different authors have investigated the subject of ordinary readers in a variety of contexts, including a Pentecostal church in England,[97] a variety of Anglican churches in England[98], and a sample of 45 churchgoers in rural North Yorkshire in England.[99] Also, Astley has looked at the subject of ordinary readers in an attempt to generalize.[100] Where information pertained to both evangelicals and non-evangelicals this thesis is most interested in the characteristics of evangelicals. An example of this distinction is found in Christie's work, where only 9 out of 45 identified Jesus Christ as "God," and those 9 included all 6 of the evangelicals in the group. Christie cites Pinnock who claims that the assertion that "Jesus is God" is "the shibboleth for distinguishing orthodoxy from liberalism." This thesis is interested in ordinary belief from an evangelical perspective, including Pentecostals and charismatics, but not including those readers who do not hold to the historic tenets of the faith or do not see the need for evangelism or the nature of the Bible as God's authoritative Word.

In Africa, Kinyua investigated the situation of the Agĩkũyũ (the Kikuyu people) of Kenya as it unfolded in the early half of the last century. Kinyua makes the claim that there is an applicability of this case study to other situations for ordinary readers in Africa as "hermeneutical problems and questions about the right or appropriate interpretation of religious

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[97] Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2010).
[98] Andrew Village, *The Bible and Lay People: An Empirical Approach to Ordinary Hermeneutics* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007).
[99] Ann Christie, *Ordinary Christology: Who Do You Say I Am? Answers from the Pews* (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).
[100] Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening, and Learning in Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2002).

texts are universally experienced."[101] Insights from a number of other authors on approaches to hermeneutics in Africa will also be cited.

All of these diverse situations combined will contribute insights resulting in an attempt to generalize to an 'idealized' ordinary reader. This theoretical construct will enable discussion of ordinary readers in general, as many of the same attributes appear across cultures.

Ordinary Theology and Readers in the West with Respect to Hermeneutics

Before the specific hermeneutic of ordinary readers is investigated, it is important to look at a few characteristics of ordinary theology. Astley mentions the nature of religious learning – that it involves affective states ("feelings of dependence, contingency, gratitude, and awe") which result from genuine religious understanding and move the ordinary learner from a third person approach ("learning about a religion") to a first person approach (actually "learning the religion").[102] Ordinary readers move from a "belief-that" to a "belief-in," and the final state constitutes an "attitude" towards their faith and God, not merely a belief.[103] This belief state is fundamentally subjective and relative to each individual, as each will experience God's salvation differently.[104] Astley argues that the "difference between ordinary theology and academic theology is only a matter of degree…. We may describe ordinary theology as being closer to religion – learned and embraced religion – and therefore more connected with our spiritual concerns and our life concerns, and with our emotions."[105] Ordinary theology involves "envisioning" as the Centurion did who saw Jesus die, as believers experience "onlooks" and

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[101] Johnson Kiriaku Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary African Readers' Hermeneutics: A Case Study of the Agikuyu Encounter with the Bible* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 3.
[102] Astley, *Ordinary*, 7.
[103] Astley, *Ordinary*, 29.
[104] Astley, *Ordinary*, 135.
[105] Astley, *Ordinary*, 124.

"experiencings-as" as they attribute religious meaning to circumstances they experience.[106] Ordinary theology is "more directly concerned with the perceived meaningfulness of the speaker's own life than is much of the theology of the academy."[107]

There are various attributes of evangelical ordinary theologians. In the sample of 45 Anglicans, the 6 evangelical Anglicans uniquely understood the cross as being an act of substitutionary atonement.[108] They also understood their relationship with Jesus to be a personal one, having a personal conversion, with the need to be "born again."[109] Christie emphasizes the personal aspect of this relationship by citing Inbody, who states that for evangelicals there is a "direct, immediate awareness of God as a loving and forgiving God," and that believers consider Jesus to be an "immediate and constant companion in one's heart."[110] Their "direct, intuitive awareness…goes beyond the bonds of any kind of 'normal' knowledge."[111] Finally, evangelicals also uniquely claimed that Jesus alone saves, and that this salvation is reserved for Christians.[112]

Village found a blatant difference between the Anglo-Catholics and the evangelicals in his study, the former being more liberal and the latter being more conservative theologically.[113] He discovered that there is a positive correlation between church attendance and a biblically conservative viewpoint.[114] Ordinary evangelicals are also more strongly steeped in the word of God, as 69% read the Bible weekly, compared to only 32% of broad-church Anglicans.[115] In Village's sample, evangelicals maintained a view of high literalism (by literalism, it is meant that the events the Bible describes actually took place) regardless of level of education, contrasting

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[106] Astley, *Ordinary*, 85.
[107] Astley, *Ordinary*, 70.
[108] Christie, *Ordinary Christology*, 112.
[109] Christie, *Ordinary Christology*, 116.
[110] Christie, *Ordinary Christology*, 117.
[111] Christie, *Ordinary Christology*, 117.
[112] Christie, *Ordinary Christology*, 137.
[113] Village, *The Bible*, 39.
[114] Village, *The Bible*, 41.
[115] Village, *The Bible*, 42.

with the Anglo-Catholic and broad church population, who showed decreasing levels of literalism with more education.[116] This effect was more pronounced "among those who practise charismatic gifts and it is associated with frequent Bible reading."[117] Village notes that one must not view the evangelicals as having a "'blind' literalism," but that it was "aware of differences in biblical material" and assigned "a high probability of literalism to anything that is not specifically labelled as a story."[118] To discuss horizons, namely horizons of author, text, and reader, Village used three criteria: "horizon separation, applicability and horizon preference."[119] Horizon separation refers to the "strangeness" of a text or how distant one perceives it to be, applicability is whether one can apply the passage to one's life, and horizon preference describes which horizon the reader prefers to dwell on.[120] Ordinary readers in Village's study were found to prefer the text and reader horizon to that of the author and this fits with the perception that "lay people are less interested in the historical background or origins of biblical texts and more interested in the meaning of the text or its application."[121] For horizon separation, those who had a high degree of literalism (i.e. evangelicals) did not perceive a high degree of separation of horizons for the passage used by Village and those who believed in supernatural healing had a low horizon separation.[122] Those with higher levels of education were more likely to choose the author horizon as their preference.[123] Ordinary readers did not employ the author horizon, instead applying the text to their lives. [124] Interestingly enough, education did not necessarily result in a higher horizon separation, but the factors of belief in "biblical literalism and supernatural healing were more directly important, as was the religious practice of belonging to a church healing

[116] Village, *The Bible*, 68.
[117] Village, *The Bible*, 68.
[118] Village, *The Bible*, 68.
[119] Village, *The Bible*, 82.
[120] Village, *The Bible*, 81-82.
[121] Village, *The Bible*, 85.
[122] Village, *The Bible*, 86, 87.
[123] Village, *The Bible*, 87.
[124] Village, *The Bible*, 89.

prayer group."[125] As mentioned however, education resulted in readers preferring the author horizon, and not identifying with the reader horizon.[126]

Village also found some interesting findings with respect to Charismatics, namely that they were "positively correlated with biblical literalism, Bible-reading frequency, belief in supernatural healing, conservative attitudes to morality and negatively with religious pluralism"[127] and that charismatics were associated with being more "conservative and evangelical."[128] With respect to charismatic practise, "those who frequently experienced speaking in tongues, words of prophecy, religious dreams or visions were most likely to interpret the Bible literally and more likely to interpret the test passage literally."[129] Village's possible explanation for this fact is that:

> charismatic belief shapes both the way that Christians interpret their present-day experience and the way that they interpret the Bible. There is coherence between God experienced personally, God at work in the world and God revealed in scripture, but the key factor is personal experience. This would certainly accord with the distinctive way in which personal experience is primary within Pentecostalism.[130]

Village found that "those who reported an experience of miraculous healing were more likely to interpret literally (generally and specifically for the test passage), and had a lower sense of horizon separation than those who had not had this experience."[131] According to Cartledge, there is a resonance within "Pentecostal and Charismatic spirituality, which sees the whole of life as a search for an intimate and empowering relationship with God through the Holy Spirit."[132] Ordinary theologians within Pentecostalism have a "theology of encounter, as Pentecostals 'meet

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[125] Village, *The Bible*, 89.
[126] Village, *The Bible*, 89.
[127] Village, *The Bible*, 147-148.
[128] Village, *The Bible*, 148.
[129] Village, *The Bible*, 149.
[130] Village, *The Bible*, 150.
[131] Village, *The Bible*, 150.
[132] Cartledge, *Testimony*, 78.

God' in their worship."[133] Cartledge brings up Davis' work, who investigated "'non-cognitive' and 'cognitive' views of religious experience," whereby the former includes experiential phenomena which "lacks any form of interpretive content."[134] This discussion of charismatic characteristics is a fitting introduction to the next section covering the church in Africa, as the factors discussed above, of miraculous healing, and a spirituality which relates to God and all of life, will prove to be important.

Ordinary Theology and Readers in Africa with Respect to Hermeneutics

Although there has not been as much work done on ordinary readers in Africa, various theologians have made generalizations about how Africans approach the Scriptures. West has discussed some examples in an attempt to characterize ordinary readers in Africa.[135] Also, Kinyua's work on ordinary readers in Kenya will be cited.

Before looking at these analyses of ordinary readers, it is important to note some aspects of the African cultural worldview, as one's hermeneutic will be affected by how one views the world. There is no superior worldview. If one wants to look at things from a biblical perspective, the African worldview is actually "closer to the biblical paradigm than Western rationalistic scepticism" in terms of its view on spiritual forces and their interactions with humanity as in the New Testament. [136] In fact, Kahl has stated that we are obliged to "take seriously non-academic and particularly unheard-of approaches to Scripture" in the Global South, as its cultures and contexts are more similar to the Biblical world, and they therefore have a "hermeneutical

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[133] Cartledge, *Testimony*, 45.
[134] Cartledge, *Testimony*, 89.
[135] Gerald West, ed., *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities (*Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 30.
[136] Kabiro wa Gatumu, *The Pauline Concept of Supernatural Powers: A Reading from the African Worldview* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Paternoster, 2008), 89.

advantage."[137] The African worldview further differs from a Western one in that it is more "holistic,"[138] in that there is no spirit/matter or sacred/profane dichotomies, instead a "unity with visible and invisible aspects" where God interacts with His creation, and "identity is defined in terms of belonging to a community."[139] Instead of the famous Western dictum coined by Descartes, "I think therefore I am," in an African context the dictum is "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am."[140] Even the way we reason can differ around the world as DomNwachukwu notes that the Igbo, and most African peoples, reason from "the known to the unknown," instead of from the abstract, as one might in a Western way.[141] These differences in worldview result in different aspects of life being valued. In paraphrasing Scripture for the African context van der Walt states, "If Paul could have known Africa, 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 might have sounded like this: "For the Jews require a sign, the Greeks seek after wisdom and the *African seeks strength*, but we preach Christ crucified."[142] This 'strength' has been expressed elsewhere as "*force vitale*"[143] or 'life force.' Another difference between worldviews is that the African worldview retains the "numinousness" of God, the intense mystery of His being, which Setiolane argues has been lost in the West.[144] As will be noted later, McGilchrist connects this

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[137] Werner Kahl, "Intercultural Hermeneutics--Contextual Exegesis: A Model for 21st-Century Exegesis," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (2000): 426.
[138] Adekunle Oyinloye Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa: Towards Holistic Empowerment," *Black Theology* 8, no. 2 (2010): 160.
[139] Justin S. Ukpong, "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World, (*ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006), 60.
[140] J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford:Heinemann, 1969), 105. Quoted in Keith Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context* (Carlisle England: Paternoster Press, 1999), 23.
[141] Peter Nlemadim DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity: An Inculturation Model for the Igbo* (New York: P. Lang, 2000), 204.
[142] B. J. Van der Walt, *The Liberating Message: A Christian Worldview for Africa* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, Institute for Reformational Studies, 1994), 210.
[143] P. Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959), 6. Quoted in Keith Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1999), 19.
[144] G.M. Setiloane, *The Image of God among the Sotho-Tswana* (Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema,1976), 229. Cited in James Kombo, "The Trinity in Africa," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 3, no. 2 (2009): 131.

mysterious 'Other' in our pursuit of God with the function of the right hemisphere.[145] This absence of 'numinousness' from the West and its presence in Africa reveal that we have much to learn from the unique theological perspective of Africans.

In Chapter 1, it was noted in Table 1.2 that the right hemisphere tends to deal with intuition. There are a number of scholars who associate the African worldview with intuition. It is this intuition that fosters "knowledge of the noumenal," where intuition is defined as being "closely connected to emotional sense or feeling" and is a "form of immediate knowledge…gained without recourse to reason."[146] This intuitive aspect of understanding God is immediately applicable to the worship styles and proliferation of African Instituted/Indigenous/Independent Churches (AICs), which emphasize, as Pentecostals do, the "immediate personal experience of God's power by the Spirit" which results in experience that is "more intuitive and emotional" and recognizes "charismatic leadership and indigenous church patterns wherever they arose."[147] In a specific case of charismatic leadership, describing the healers that operate within traditional Zulu culture and prophets who operate in the AICs, Oosthuizen described the difference between Western and African worldviews: "the western world which is primarily scientific, rational and ego-oriented, versus the world of the black healer, which is non-rational, intuitive and human instead of object-oriented."[148] Intuition itself is neutral, it can be used for either good or evil. Walls has suggested that God "speaks directly" and that "this is the conviction of innumerable Christian prophets, healers, holiness leaders, reformers; that they have heard the voice of God," whether it be in a dream, vision, or a

[145] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 93. See Chapter 4 for this quote in full and further discussion.
[146] Chukwunyere Kamalu, *Foundations of African Thought: A Worldview Grounded in the African Heritage of Religion, Philosophy, Science, and Art* (London: Karnak House, 1990), 52.
[147] Anderson, Allan, "The Gospel and African Religion," International Review of Mission 89, no. 354 (2000): 373.
[148] M.P. Johnson, "Called to be: Isangoma or Prophet," in *Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies* (eds. G.C. Oosthuizen et al.; Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 165.

voice."[149] This is the realm of the right hemisphere, and is not only an undeniable part of the experience of Africans, but it is also the testimony of the Scriptures as well, which contain ample examples of dreams, visions, trances, and other spiritual phenomena.

In describing the AICs, who often have such 'experiencers' in their congregations, Jehu-Appiah described their "strongest asset," which is "their very high awareness of the operations of the Holy Spirit," and their ability to "do serious theology with the aid of intuitive reception, which for most of them is the one valid source of spiritual knowledge."[150] Such an endorsement of the intuition in religious life speaks volumes as to its importance in the African context. Even the process of inculturation, which is the ground basis for an ordinary hermeneutic, depends on the intuition as Magesa states that it is "first of all and fundamentally an intuitive process of finding one's faith and religious identity in the context of one's cultural world."[151]

This intuitive process results in what is a "lived theology," that is to say, the theologies of African peoples in all walks of life and in all of the contexts they find themselves in their everyday lives.[152] Different aspects of theology will resonate more with Africans and the Christian meta-narrative will look differently from the perspective of African soil. An example of this is found in the conception of the atonement. Whereas in Protestant hermeneutics the focus is on justification, Kahl argues that this "hardly makes any sense in Africa," and that instead,

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[149]Andrew F. Walls, "African Christianity in the History of Religions," Studies in World Christianity 2, no. 2 (1996): 197.
[150] Jerisdan H. Jehu-Appiah, "The African Indigenous Churches and the Quest for an Appropriate Theology for the New Millennium," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (2000): 420.
[151] Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), 153.
[152] D. Stinton, 'Africa, East and West' in J. Parratt, *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2005), 107. Cited by T. Derrick Mashau, and Martha Frederiks, "Coming of Age in African Theology: The Quest for Authentic Theology in African Soil," *Exchange* 37, no. 2 (2008): 118.

"Jesus is plausible above all as Christus victor and saviour in concrete, desperate situations"[153] the one who gives protection and deliverance from witchcraft.[154]

Kinyua argues, in establishing his "African hermeneutic theory" that "both scholarly readers and the ordinary readers are capable hermeneuts,"[155] and even though ordinary readers may be "approaching the Bible pre-critically, they have unique and logical ways of interpreting biblical texts."[156] This stems from their traditional African worldview, which John Mbiti tried to integrate with the biblical worldview when developing African theology.[157] Through comparative study, Mbiti showed that "African cultures were closer to the biblical world than the patronising western cultures."[158] Inculturation theology relates to this interrelationship, as Mbiti inspired other African theologians to argue that "contextualisation or inculturation through cultural hermeneutics bridges the gap between biblical meaning and the contemporary cultural setting."[159] Indeed, as Kanyoro argues, the "culture of the readers has more influence on how the biblical text is understood and used in African communities than historical facts about the text."[160] Thus, in Africa, the horizon of the reader is more preferred than that of the author among ordinary readers. In addition, Kanyoro notes that:

> African Christians hold the Bible in awe as the word of God written directly to them and specifically for them. They do not dwell on a passage as somebody else's text to be read and analyzed; rather, they see the text as intended to provide them with a framework to look at their own lives. They immediately appropriate a particular text and situate themselves inside of it, trying to understand what it expects of them. In the texts of Jesus' healing miracles, the women see themselves as "those who came to Jesus bringing their sick or their own sickness" (Luke 7:l-10; Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:31-38). Thus, discussing a text really means discussing the life of the people

[153] Kahl, "Intercultural," 431.
[154] James C. Okoye, "Inculturation and Theology in Africa," *Mission Studies* 14, no. 1 (1997): 77.
[155] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary.* 2.
[156] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary,* 1.
[157] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary,* 12.
[158] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary,* 12.
[159] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary,* 12.
[160] Musimbi Kanyoro, "Reading the Bible from an African Perspective," *The Ecumenical Review* 51, no. 1 (1999): 20.

> without making any great distinction between method and content. Reality and the biblical text merge, each shedding light on the other and competing for attention.[161]

This is further evidenced by this anecdote told by Kanyoro, where the passage 1 Cor. 16:21-24 was read in the Turkana community in Kenya, and the community, at the end of the reading "responded in unison, 'Thank you, Paul'" and they went on to discuss how to ensure that no one in the community would be accursed (Paul had spoken a curse against anyone who does not love the Lord). This immediate connection with the original author, "this appropriation of the biblical text," is very telling.[162] Regarding these Africans who are making such interpretations, Kinyua states that "the hermeneut must have the knowledge of the nuances of the culture into which the Bible is read. This requires that the experience of rural communities and of women be included in the meaning of the texts of the Bible"[163] which suggests that "hermeneutics must as well be accountable to the marginalised and not just to the academia."[164] If one accepts Terry's version of hermeneutics and his various "qualifications, both natural and acquired" within the "sound and self-evidencing science of hermeneutics," then "illiterate and semi-literate readers… are technically excluded from doing biblical hermeneutics."[165] However, as will be now discussed, these readers *are* doing biblical hermeneutics, just not in the 'right' way, 'right' that is, according to some Westerners. African Bible readers, in approaching the text, would "identify specific dimensions of the texts that were of interest to them as interpreters" and look upon the "conditions (mainly those of deprivation, poverty, poor housing, surveillance, brutality and racism) both in the villages and in the city" which "became the main concerns and

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[161] Kanyoro, "Reading," 21.
[162] Kanyoro, "Reading," 18.
[163] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 15.
[164] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 16.
[165] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 16.

commitments that motivated the Africans to come to the Bible for answers."[166] Indeed, "how the bible affects their lives is very important" for ordinary readers.[167]

West asserts that ordinary readers in Africa are not as "constrained" compared to scholars, and quotes Wimbush in noting that that their hermeneutic involves "a looseness, even playfulness vis-à-vis the biblical text themselves."[168] The Igbo treat the Bible as a "living book,"[169] with the question which encapsulates their perspective, "Is it in the Bible?"[170] Citing field research, Ukpong characterizes the literal approach to the Bible of African ordinary readers as "rather naïve and dogmatic."[171] However, this is perhaps better expressed as representing a faith in God that takes His word seriously. Attention will now be turned to some of the specific characteristics of the hermeneutic approach ordinary readers in Africa are taking. Kinyua describes the hermeneutics of the African ordinary readers in Kenya as being a "simplistic, literalistic, and highly selective common sense hermeneutics" that involved three factors, treating the Bible as the 'Word of God', engaging in a "hermeneutical tool" called *allusion,* and making use of "African cultural resources as tools for interpreting the Bible."[172]

In terms of viewing the Bible as God's Word, the Africans encountered the Bible as an "object of strange power."[173] They treated it in the same way that the colonial powers were insisting that it be read, as having "infallibility" and deeming that the authors of the various

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[166] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 167.
[167] Justin Ukpong, "Popular Readings of the Bible in Africa", 582-594, in Gerald West and Musa W. Dube, eds., *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 591.
[168] Vincent L. Wimbush, "The Bible and African Americans: An Outline of an Interpretative History," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, (ed. Cain Hope Felder; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991):88, quoted in in Gerald West, "Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch," Pages 29–53 in Gerald West and Musa W. Dube, eds., *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (ed. Gerald West; Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 39 &43.
[169] Anthony O. Nkwoka, "The Role of the Bible in the Igbo Christianity of Nigeria," 326-335, in Gerald West and Musa W. Dube, eds., *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 327.
[170] Nkwoka, "The Role," 326.
[171] Ukpong, "Popular Readings," 587.
[172] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 168.
[173] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 167.

books of the Bible were as tradition had handed down.[174] Kinyua, citing Sugirtharajah, describes one of the chief interpretive methods of an African ordinary reader, *allusion*: whose goal is to create "intimate feelings as well as heightening communication between the reader and the author, the reader and the text, and between the reader and the interpretive community."[175] The reader engaging in allusion will identify "herself with the biblical personalities and portrays such characters in such a way that establishes a real connection between the reader and the biblical characters" resulting in the reader being able to "connect the differences and similarities between his own history and biblical narratives."[176] It is the opinion of this author that the aspect of allusion resulting in a subversion of "the original meaning of an activated text by trying it in a new context"[177] should be treated with caution, as evangelicals would not want to subvert their own Scriptures. Finally, allusion is also employed when "a reader echoes a "memorable phrase" as an authoritative text to serve as evidence to support a claim."[178] Finally, the common-sense hermeneutic employed African cultural resources, including "songs, dances, occasional mime, and use of proverbs and poetry."[179]

The translation of the Bible into the various mother tongues of the Africans was crucial for their emergence as hermeneuts, as "imagination and innovation took centre stage" and they could "utilise the resources they had as ordinary readers" in the languages they knew best.[180] Although the ordinary readers in these situations "deal with biblical texts 'pre-critically' since

[174] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 168.
[175] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 169-170.
[176] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 170.
[177] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 170.
[178] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 170.
[179] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 170.
[180] Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 163.

the reader lack the technical training of a biblical scholar", this does not mean, as Gerald West observed, that they read without "a critical consciousness."[181]

Because of the overwhelming Pentecostal and Charismatic presence in Africa, and the growth of the AICs, it is important to look at the hermeneutic Pentecostals employ, as many ordinary readers in Africa will employ it. According to Davies, the primary reason Pentecostals read Scripture is not academic, or related to "intellectual comprehension," but instead relates to "divine self-revelation"[182] with the goal being to "meet God in the text, and to provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak to our spirits."[183] This results in a spirituality of "encounter more than exegesis" stemming from the "value of knowing by perception over knowing by proof."[184] We should read Scripture with the goal that "God might grasp us" and not to "grasp it," resulting in the Word having "taken hold in our hearts."[185] Davies notes that a Pentecostal's goal is to give space for the Holy Spirit to speak however He would through the text, in any context that He would choose, and that this is experienced frequently by Pentecostals throughout the world. What results is a dialogue between ordinary readers and the Holy Spirit, as they bring their personal context, and the Lord brings His own purposes, and there is little regard for the "surface meaning of the text" or "original intention of the author."[186] Davies boldly states that the "giant" of historical-grammatical criticism has been felled by "progressive scholars"[187] and recommends putting it to death – however, this thesis will not argue for so drastic a position, instead, it will value the various perspectives one can bring to the Word, and in this diversity see

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[181] Gerald West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publication, 2003), 73-74, quoted in Kinyua, *Introducing Ordinary*, 243.
[182] Andrew Davies, "What Does It Mean to Read the Bible as a Pentecostal?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18, no. 2 (2009): 220.
[183] Davies, "What Does," 219.
[184] Davies, "What Does," 221.
[185] Davies, "What Does," 223.
[186] Davies, "What Does," 221-222.
[187] Davies, "What Does," 222.

it in its fullness and learn from others' perspectives. According to Anderson, it is specifically in "an African Pentecostal context that 'it is meaningless to discuss the interpretation of the text by itself"[188] but it only becomes valuable when it relates personally to readers in their context.[189] Davies insists that there is "no such thing as a universal interpretation," a result of the movement of emphasis from intent of the original author to the individual reader's context in "encounter with the text."[190] Many African Pentecostals share the above hermeneutical approach of 'encounter.' Archer notes that Pentecostals believe that it is "the Holy Spirit [who] enables the interpreter to bridge the historical and cultural gulf between the ancient authors of the Scriptures and the present interpreters."[191] Their approach to Scripture comes out of their worldview.

Generalizations about Idealized Ordinary Readers

Now that ordinary readers perspectives and worldviews have been outlined, it would be helpful to summarize the findings with a theoretical generalization: that is, an attempt will be made to construct an 'idealized' ordinary reader, drawing on characteristics delineated in this chapter taken from both Western and African groups. It is understood that this generalization will not fit any one group out in the world perfectly, but this profile will prove useful to describe generally the phenomenon of ordinary readers. When a factor seemed to fit more specifically with Pentecostals, it was mentioned in the lower part of the table below. This table outlines the details, and the ideas found in it are cited earlier in the chapter.

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[188] Allan Anderson, "The Hermeneutical Processes of Pentecostal-type African Initiated Churches in South Africa," *Missionalia* 24, no. 2 (1996): 1. Quoted by Davies, "What Does," 224.
[189] Davies, "What Does," 224.
[190] Davies, "What Does," 225.
[191] Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture & Community*. (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 196. Cited in Davies, "What Does," 228.

Table 2.1 Characteristics of an idealized ordinary reader.

Category	*Characteristic of idealized evangelical ordinary reader*
Faith perspective	Holds to fundamentals of Christian faith though this may look slightly different depending on home culture
Belief	Belief-in rather than belief-that
Disposition with respect to Scripture	Emotive, affective, highly personal
Relationship to God	Direct, intuitive awareness, personal and intimate
View of Scripture	High regard, seen as God's Word, powerful
Horizon preference	Prefer reader horizon, then text, disregard author horizon
Personal application	Personally apply Scriptures, use *allusion* to apply Word
Theology	Lived rather than theoretical
Literalism	Highly literal
Approach to text	A 'looseness' towards the interpretation of the text
The categories below refer to a Pentecostal/Charismatic approach	
Means of approaching God	Encounter instead of doctrine or cognitively based
Right hemispheric associations	Open to dreams, vision, voice of God, intuitive reception
Charismatic literalism	Charismatic practices associated with literalism.

Now that ordinary readers and their theology have been described, it is now time to look at the idea of *sensus plenior*.

Chapter 3: *Sensus plenior,* Revelatory Communication, and Balance

3.1 Distinctions in Sensus Plenior *and Intuitive Associations*

Types of Sensus Plenior *and Revelatory Communication*

Distinctions will be drawn between different types of *sensus plenior*. Brown, who popularized the idea, divided *sensus plenior* into three types: 'General *sensus plenior*,' which is how one passage interact with the rest of Scripture;[192] 'Typical *sensus plenior*,' the relation that typological applications (i.e. David as a type of Christ) project onto other texts that involve the same type;[193] and 'Prophetical *sensus plenior*,' the meaning found in a prophecy after it has come to pass.[194] Brown leaves the possibility of there being other types of *sensus plenior* [195] and a different division will be suggested here.

This thesis will divide the types of *sensus plenior* into domains: the domain of the original revelation and the fuller meaning the authors gave with respect to the OT; and the domain of the text and its interrelationships. There will also be another domain introduced, but not quite with the same terminology of *sensus plenior*. It is the domain of the Holy Spirit's quickening of the words of Scripture to the heart of the believer, through either hemisphere or both, with the meaning not "hidden"[196] in the text, but rather in the person of the Holy Spirit who uses the text to accomplish His purposes. Now, these domains will be covered in greater detail.

The original inspired interpretations that the apostles made, which go beyond the historical-grammatical techniques of interpreting according to context, reveal a deeper meaning hidden in the riches and depths of God. The apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit, receiving

[192] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 97.
[193] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 99-101.
[194] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 102.
[195] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 103.
[196] Vern S. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," The Westminster Theological Journal 48, no. 2 (1986): 273.

direct revelation from God, and communicated this revelation through their writings. This will be called *inspired revelation sensus plenior*. These inspired messages developed into the accepted canon, and now all of these messages interact with one another, in ways that the original authors could not have foreseen. This will be called *intertextual sensus plenior*. The final domain is that of 'quickened' understanding. It includes two types, based on the emphasized hemisphere. The first type is *quickened propositional truth.* The Holy Spirit may speak through the clear meaning of the text, in such a way that the understanding is quickened and the truth of the text is made manifest in an undeniable way that the subject recognizes as very significant. Good examples of this in Christian history include Augustine at his conversion[197] or Luther in understanding the gospel for the first time.[198] The second type is associated with the right brain and the intuition of those who read Scripture. Its derived meanings will stem from *intuitive associations*. As discussed in Chapter 2, many of the 'inculturated' and personal or 'loose' interpretations made by ordinary readers will fall under this designation. The associations are found not within the text itself, but within the intention of the Holy Spirit for the text. That is, there are no "secret meanings"[199] hidden in the text, but the Holy Spirit sometimes uses the text as He sees fit, by the historical-grammatical method or often by the ordinary reader using intuitive associations. Both types of *sensus plenior* along with intuitive associations and quickened propositional truth will together be referred to as *revelatory communication*.

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[197] Garry Wills, *Augustine's Confessions: A Biography - Lives of Great Religious Books* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 72-73.
[198] Martin Luther and John Dillenberger, *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York: Anchor Books, 2011), 10-12.
[199] Roy B. Zuck, *Rightly Divided: Readings in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 207-208.

Interaction of Intuition, and Right Hemisphere

Clearly, truth is derived from the historical-grammatical method, but to bring into balance the importance of the hemispheres, this thesis will focus on right brain communication, as, if McGilchrist's thesis is correct, it has been neglected. With respect to intuitive associations, the reader of Scripture may follow an impression, 'hear' a particular word speaking right to their situation, find themselves being 'read' by the word, or feel some sort of effect from the word that is not strictly linear and logical, but spiritual and intuitive. People often say something like, "the Scripture just leapt off the page at me," and this could be indication that the Holy Spirit is 'speaking.' These intuitive associations are received through the mind, and can come in being recognized in a mutually manifest way as a message from God. As will be discussed further, non-scholars often interpret in this manner, using a "host of other pathways of analogy, all of which may be pathways for discovering the truth of God."[200] Poythress expresses these intuitive practices of non-scholars, that "all 'leaps' from one biblical truth to another, however strange they may appear to scholars, have their ontological basis in the unity of God's plan and the unity of his wisdom. Every truth is concurrent with every other one, on the basis of the omnipresence of God and his self-presence to himself through the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10)."[201]

When genuinely inspired by the Holy Spirit, these intuitive associations or intuitive 'leaps' are products of illumination, and it is unclear how or whether it was different in the minds of those who God inspired to write the books of the Bible, simply because we cannot ask them what they experienced. One thing is for certain however, there is a profound difference in authority. The Scriptures carry within them intrinsic authority due to the inspiration of God, which has bound centuries of believers together. On the other hand, those who employ intuitive

[200] Poythress, *God-centered*, 87.
[201] Poythress, *God-centered*, 88-89.

associations, or find examples of intertextual *sensus plenior*, do not carry anywhere near the same amount of authority. The thoughts received may have bearing on their own personal life, but they should not dare to change any of the great truths that the Scripture authors wrote down. This will be discussed further in the section on constraints.

The function of the right hemisphere relates to all revelatory communication: for intertextual *sensus plenior* involves associations that occur within the context of the entire canon, where certain Scriptures will interact with others and provide a multitude of cognitive benefits for the hearer. Inspired revelation *sensus plenior* is a bit more mysterious – how God was able to achieve such a magnificent word with fallible human beings as instruments, and we cannot go back and ask them how it was done. Whereas for intuitive associations the insight or message is received in the mind through the right hemisphere which will then process that revelation and its implications through both hemispheres. McGilchrist summarizes this capacity of the right hemisphere, claiming that it, "with its greater integrative power, is constantly searching for patterns in things."[202] Cognitive benefits also come about through insight, which is particularly relevant to the right hemisphere, as "insight is also a perception of the previous incongruity of one's assumptions," and it is the right hemisphere which has the "capacity for detecting an anomaly."[203]

Apostles' Use of Scripture and Revelatory Communication

The apostles, in writing the Scriptures, made extensive use of insight and inspired exegesis of the Old Testament passages. However, some choose to hold the apostles to a modern standard of exegesis. Leithart chides Longenecker for basically arguing, with regard to how the

[202] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 47.
[203] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 65.

apostles use the Old Testament, that "when the apostles do what we do, we can follow their example. When they do not, we cannot."[204] Leithart also notes that Enns thinks that we can follow the apostolic hermeneutic, but fails to answer the problem of how the apostles came up with the readings.[205] From the perspective of revelatory communication, the apostolic readings, including the ones which seem to wrest the verse out of context, or ignore the original referent in favour of a Christocentric reading, were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and were processed through the intuitive, revelation receiving capacity of the original writer. In the words of Ellis, "Paul does not hesitate to give his OT citations as interpretive renderings; and he is convinced that he conveys the true (i.e. the Spirit's) meaning best in this way."[206] Inspired writers do not always treat the text by the rules that those in Biblical studies demand. Modern interpretations communicated by God through intuitive associations certainly do *not* have the authority of the original applications of inspired revelation *sensus plenior* given to the apostles. But God is still quickening the message of Scripture to the hearts of the faithful through intuitive associations and quickened propositional truth.

Beyond 'One-Meaning' and Coinherence

There are those who insist that the sense of a passage is unique, that there is one meaning and one interpretation, Kaiser and Hirsch being among them. However, consider poetry, of which the Bible is full: one simply needs to have written it – or even read it – to realize that this is not realistic. Poems are often full of meanings that the writers did not expect, some of which they would say are valid: this is a result of the "multiple meaning of words when realized through appropriate contexts," which gives a "positive and structural complexity, the varied

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[204] Leithart, *Deep Exegesis,* 33.
[205] Leithart, *Deep Exegesis,* 36.
[206] Edward Earle Ellis, *Paul's use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 27.

fabric of organic unity."[207] According to Clark, Relevance Theory establishes that "relatively poetic or creative metaphors give rise to a *range* of weak implicatures rather than strongly implicating a small number of conclusions."[208] These weak implicatures make for a wide variety of interpretations depending on the individual. Another phenomenon that leads to multiple meanings, is prophecy – rather, a subtype of prophecy – namely, double fulfillments. Blomberg wrote an article on examples as such in the prophecies of Isaiah quoted in Matthew (but also including many examples[209] other than those in Isaiah) claiming that "double fulfillment plays an important role" particularly in quotes from Isaiah, as "Matthew regularly and with justification understands Isaiah consciously to have intended his oracles to refer to events both in the near and in the more distant future."[210] The classic example is Isa. 7:14 in Matt. 1:23, the prophecy of the virgin birth, which actually required the passage to be translated into Greek before the meaning of "virgin" could be firmly established, as the Hebrew term "*'almah*" does not necessarily imply virginity.[211]

If the Hebrew word contained that possible nuance of meaning, and the sense of what God intended could only be made clear through translation, then one can see therein a flexibility of meaning and interpretation. Poythress establishes that there is coinherence among the members in the triad of meaning (sense, application, and import), and that there is substantial "interplay" as they interpenetrate.[212] If these three "coinhere," then the support for the position of 'one-meaning' with many applications or significances falls apart. Poythress wants to have it

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[207] William K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 270.
[208] Clark, *Relevance*, 271.
[209] Craig L. Blomberg, "Interpreting Old Testament Prophetic Literature in Matthew: Double Fulfillment," *Trinity Journal* 23, no. 1 (2002): 32. These examples include Dan 7:13-14, cited in Matt 24:29-30 and 26:64, Ps 118:22-26 cited in Matt 21:5, 9, 42,0 and 23:39, and Zech 12:10 cited in John 19:37 and Matt 24:30 and Rev 1:7.
[210] Blomberg, "Interpreting," 33.
[211] Blomberg, "Interpreting," 20-21.
[212] Poythress, *God-centered*, 75-76.

such that "'application'… includes all inferences about the meaning of a biblical text."[213] However, he concludes that, in the realm of divine speech, "we do not need a rigid, precise distinction between meaning and application."[214] In terms of Relevance Theory, Poythress's view would have that all inferences derived from a communication from God would be included in application. However, if application coinheres with meaning, it cannot be this simple. Moreover, according to Gutt, who quotes Sperber and Wilson, "the fiction that there is a clear-cut distinction between wholly determinate, specifically intended inferences and indeterminate, wholly unintended references cannot be maintained," and that instead these inferences "vary along a continuum of relative strength."[215] This is where intuitive associations come in, as there is a wide range of inferences and implicatures that can be drawn from a given utterance, and God may choose to communicate a message using any particular part of that range. There are differences in meaning, new shades and nuances that can come into interpretation as the Holy Spirit speaks to the believer who is seeking the Shepherd's voice.

As discussed in Chapter 2, ordinary readers are employing allusion, and other personal interpretations in terms of their cultures, that go beyond the 'one-meaning' approach. To insist on one meaning alone is to disregard the way that God is speaking through His Holy Spirit and the Word.

Relationship Between Intertextual Sensus Plenior *and Relevance Theory*

There are associations between intertextual *sensus plenior* and Relevance Theory. For Relevance Theory, "interpreting an utterance involves more than merely identifying the assumption explicitly expressed: it crucially involves working out the consequences of adding

[213] Poythress, "Divine," 248.
[214] Poythress, "Divine," 251.
[215] Gutt, *Translation,* 90.

this assumption to a set of assumptions that have themselves already been processed."[216] In a similar way, interpreting Scripture involves more than understanding one passage in isolation, but understanding its meaning in the light of other parts of Scripture. Some of Gadamer's philosophical views are also quite conducive to an intertextual *sensus plenior* approach to Scripture, as, in particular, he provides for such a reading in the following quote. As he states, "more important than all hermeneutical rules is to be 'sensu plenus,'" which means that "the ideas found in Scripture and in the works of God are the more fruitful and purified the more that each can be seen in the whole and all can be seen in each."[217] This idea, similar to Brown's *sensus plenior*, provides a metaphysical basis for intuition, namely, "the structure of living, organic being in which the whole is in each individual" and that the "whole of life has its center in the heart, which by means of common sense grasps countless things all at the same time."[218] This intuition of the interpreter finds more meaning than the human author could have intended, and Gadamer states that "the real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience," and "not just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author."[219] Of course, for this thesis, this refers to the human author not the divine, as the understanding of the divine Author's communication can never be exhausted, finding new perspective in every generation. Gadamer's thoughts on hermeneutics will be discussed further in the chapter to follow.

[216] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 118.
[217] Gadamer, *Truth*, 29.
[218] Gadamer, *Truth*, 29.
[219] Gadamer, *Truth*, 296.

3.2 Sensus Plenior *as a Centering Balance Between 'One-meaning, One-interpretation' and Postmodern Multiple Meanings*

Thesis of a Balance Between Extremes

For this chapter, simply *sensus plenior* will be used which will refer to inspired revelation *sensus plenior* and intertextual *sensus plenior* but not intuitive associations, as these are not usually discussed in the literature. It will be argued here that *sensus plenior* provides a centered balance on the continuum of 'one-meaning' literalists at one end and postmodern representatives at the other. 'One-meaning' literalists deny *sensus plenior* and claim that the original intention of the authors contains all of the sense of what they intended to communicate, while postmodern reader-oriented representatives deny the possibility of significant authorial meaning at all, instead providing a myriad of reader-response analyses. The argument will be made that the position of *sensus plenior*, by providing a middle ground between literalism and postmodern analysis, represents the most viable approach to meaning, which respects both authors, human and divine, and provides evangelicals with a worthy hermeneutic.

'One-meaning' Approach

This idea of authorial intent introduces the first position on the theological spectrum, that of those with a 'one-meaning' perspective. Some who hold to a singular meaning approach, like Arp, hold the position that the author's conscious intention is what determines the meaning.[220] Ramm states this view succinctly, "But here we must remember the old adage: 'Interpretation is one, application is many.'"[221] The following discussion will cover two main proponents of the

[220] William Arp and Baptist Bible Seminary, "Authorial Intent," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 4 (2000): 38-9.
[221] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook on Hermeneutics* (3rd rev.ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 113. Quoted in Robert L. Thomas, "The Principle of Single Meaning," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 12, no. 1 (2001): 33.

'one-meaning' hypothesis, namely Hirsch and Kaiser, and a brief look at the Reformation tradition.

Erickson cites Hirsch as the foremost thinker who emphasizes authorial intent, influencing countless evangelicals in their hermeneutical instruction.[222] One of the key aspects of Hirsch's thought is his distinction between meaning and significance, where the former is the author's intentional communication, and the latter is any relationship between two concepts.[223] Erickson, in covering Hirsch's position, states that meaning is the "assertion of the author", but significance is the relation of that meaning to our situation.[224] The validity of any given application of the meaning of the author depends on whether it adheres to their intention.[225] Hirsch fundamentally rejects the subjectivism of postmodernism, believing that the rejection of the author as the source of meaning has resulted in "disarray."[226] Confronting the postmodern assertion of the impossibility of meaning, Hirsch maintains that it is a "logical mistake to confuse the impossibility of certainty in our understanding with the impossibility of understanding."[227] One can probably guess how Hirsch reacts to the *sensus plenior* proposal: he considers it "totally unnecessary," stating that in interpreting we ought not to mistake the author's text for God's.[228] However, as Glenny notes, Hirsch softened his position later in two ways, firstly, by stating that some documents, such as the Bible or the US Constitution, have meaning that goes beyond the author's intention,[229] and that his view of the realm of human consciousness in authorial communication was widely extended from the solitary author, to that of humans for all time.[230]

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[222] Millard J. Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993), 11.
[223] E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 8.
[224] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation,* 16.
[225] Edward W. Glenny, "The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations," *Jets* 38 (4) (1995): 488.
[226] Hirsch, *Validity*, 3.
[227] Hirsch, *Validity*, 16.
[228] Hirsch, *Validity*, 126.
[229] Glenny, "The Divine Meaning," 485.
[230] Glenny, "The Divine Meaning," 487.

Kaiser further developed the 'one-meaning' position, stating that whether a given passage is understood figuratively or literally depends on the author's intention, that intention establishes a word's referent.[231] As Oss notes, Kaiser uses Hirsch's theory of application in hermeneutics, dividing exegesis from application, otherwise the meaning would change with each new application.[232] Kaiser denies the existence of 'double fulfillments' of prophecy, instead affirming a 'multiple fulfillment' of the original singular sense, and rejecting the idea that another idea can spring forth from the original words, "concealed" as it were.[233] Glenny summarizes Kaiser's view with the concept of 'generic promise', that the "human author foresees all of the future fulfillments of his prophecy as one generic whole, and in his one prophetic statement he consciously includes all of the future fulfillments of that generic promise."[234]

These various 'one-meaning' approaches have their roots in the Reformation's return to the meaning of Scripture, the plain sense. The Reformers reacted against the allegorizing of previous interpreters, and Calvin, for example, wholeheartedly lent his weight to the importance of the literal sense.[235] The Reformers provided the basis for interpreters to use the historical-grammatical method to determine a singular meaning, and in this rejection of a plurality of meaning, they directly led to the development of the historical-critical method.[236] The reformers might have had misgivings about the Roman Catholic origins of the *sensus plenior* concept, as

[231] Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2007), 39.
[232] Oss, "Canon As Context," 125.
[233] Kaiser, *An Introduction to Biblical*, 208.
[234] Glenny, "The Divine Meaning," 482.
[235] Russell R. Reno, "From Letter to Spirit," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 4 (2011): 464.
[236] A.K.M. Adam, *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2000), 3.

some protestants could interpret it, as Robinson states, that it could simply be "merely a scriptural veneer for the will of the magisterium."[237]

Multiple Meanings Approach

Now that the 'one-meaning' position has been established, the other end of the continuum will be explored, that of multiple meanings. The two major positions in this regard are the four levels of meaning associated with exegesis earlier in Christianity's history, and the postmodern world, of which deconstruction and reader-response are two major aspects.

For the Church Fathers and medieval interpreters, the allegorical method was prevalent, represented by the Alexandrian school and Origen, who outlined three senses of Scripture, "the corporeal, or fleshly, the psychical, and the spiritual."[238] The multiple meanings approach of interpreters continued in the Western tradition, where four levels of meaning established, "literal, allegorical, tropological (moral), and anagogical (mystical or eschatological)."[239] As mentioned earlier, the literal sense gained preeminence through the Reformation, whose thinkers were skeptical of the allegorical practices of previous generations of Christians.

Now, in an era marked by postmodern thought, the idea of multiple meanings has taken on greater importance. The tendency is to either deny meaning, or to multiply meaning with a reader-centered rather than an author-centered approach. The position of deconstruction which denies meaning is best represented by Derrida, and basically entails that things, from texts to institutions, do not have "definable meanings and determinable missions," with meaning escaping the interpreter just as it is realized.[240] The postmodern agenda argues that texts are

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[237] James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutical Theology," *Christian Century* 83, no. 18 (1966): 580.
[238] Kaiser, *Introduction to Biblical*, 264.
[239] Kaiser, *Introduction to Biblical*, 267-8.
[240] Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1997), 31.

incomplete until the reader plays a role, in either their construction or deconstruction.[241] Vanhoozer establishes that postmodernism denies that there is a literal meaning, instead its proponents "undercut the very distinctions between literal and figurative interpretation."[242] Morevover, Vanhoozer relates that postmoderns reject any "universal standpoint," resulting in understanding which is "always contextual, never universal." [243]

Postmodern interpreters use a wide variety of methods and sources; pretty much any perspective is welcome and the more creative the interpretation the better. The fundamental method is either deconstruction, or construction of meaning through reader response. The implication for church ministry is that churches that have adherents who practice such perspectives must be careful to avoid straying into false doctrine or unbiblical viewpoints. Because *sensus plenior* is on a continuum between the two extremes it will face some of the same temptations. Thus, the later section on constraints on interpretation will be necessary.

Critique of 'One-meaning' Approach

The 'one-meaning' approach is well-critiqued by Erickson, who brings up a number of problems including: the definition of meaning and intent leading one to treat the Bible like any other work,[244] it does not match the practice of the NT writers,[245] it ignores passages in the Bible where the author states that he does not understand what he is saying (John 11:44-52, 1 Pet. 1:10-12), or where the NT author says that the OT author did not understand, and it has troubles with the definition of the dynamic that links the divine and human aspects of the Word, majoring

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[241] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? : The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998), 27-28
[242] Vanhoozer, *Is There*, 119.
[243] Vanhoozer, *Is There*, 168.
[244] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 13.
[245] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 14.

on its human aspects.[246] Erickson also differs with regard to Hirsch's categories of meaning and significance, concluding that it is an "inaccurate and unduly restrictive treatment."[247] Hirsch's conception of conscious intention includes unconscious intention, a rendering that is "virtually meaningless."[248] With such a focus on past meaning, the 'one-meaning' approach can neglect the significance of the Word for today's world.[249] With regard to prophecy, Erickson quite frankly brands the 'generic promise' of Kaiser, who tries to account for fulfillment of prophecy from singular meaning, as "a rather feeble attempt to avoid the problem."[250] Erickson also criticizes Kaiser for adopting Hirsch's approach, who treated the Bible as any other book because of his dealing with literature in general, because it denies the role of the Holy Spirit in inspiration, leaving out God's role, claiming that it is fully found in the human's intent.[251]

Payne examines the fallacy of equating meaning with the human intention, stating that the authors' awareness of their own intention cannot totally account for all of the meaning within the Biblical text, this being most apparent in poetic and prophetic passages.[252] Arp asks a number of pressing questions that can be reduced to one, which is likely to be answered affirmatively by the *sensus plenior* position rather than by the 'one-meaning' position, namely, 'Given the awesome nature of God, with His infinite knowledge and purposes, does it not make sense that He could inspire writers to a greater extent than they are aware, for His own purposes?'[253] It seems dangerous to limit God's expression to the level of a human being's understanding, and assume that he cannot communicate to a greater extent and to be relevant to more future possibilities than the human author could ever dream. Moreover, when application is divided

[246] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 15.
[247] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 19.
[248] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 23.
[249] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 26.
[250] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 29.
[251] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 30-31.
[252] Philip B. Payne, "Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20, no. 3 (1977): 243.
[253] William Arp and Baptist Bible Seminary, "Authorial Intent," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 4 (2000): 43.

from meaning, what results is a "loss of normativeness for the message of the Bible", and inevitable neo-orthodoxy, the division of content of the text and one's application.[254]

However, there are some positive aspects to the 'one-meaning' approach as well. It serves to counter subjectivism, which makes it a foil to the postmodern agenda.[255] Poythress commends the 'one-meaning' approach for its respect for the historical-grammatical method; however, it fails to account for the manifold nature of God's involvement in the Word, which is a weakness.[256] Stein has promoted the 'one-meaning' approach, stating that it represents the "common sense approach to all communication."[257] How does the other end of the spectrum manage, the postmodern approach?

Critique of Postmodern Multiple Meanings Approach

Postmodernism fares even worse than the 'one-meaning' approach when its strengths and weaknesses are examined. This is because the agenda of postmodernism strikes at the very heart of the gospel. The gospel is a message with a definite meaning, which must be believed with not only intellectual assent to ideas based in history, but also with one's whole life. The message of the gospel points to a definite reality, of which Jesus Christ, as the way and truth and life, is the center. When postmodernism attacks the heart of meaning it erodes the foundation on which faith is based. This is perhaps why Erickson starkly stated that if postmodernism has its way, the "gospel will deteriorate into a virtual solipsism," and this has great consequences for which worldview wins, as "the very future of Western culture may depend on the outcome of this struggle."[258] Groothuis acknowledges that there have been problems in the past resulting from

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[254] Oss, "Canon As Context," 125.
[255] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 13.
[256] Poythress, "Divine," 255.
[257] Robert H. Stein, "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," *Journal-Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 3 (2001): 462.
[258] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 104.

misinterpretations of Scripture within an encompassing meta-narrative of Christianity, however, he continues to argue for absolute truth, and also makes the claim that the "hermeneutic of suspicion cannot properly function without the concept of objective truth and its desirability."[259] In addition, postmodernistic deconstruction fails as a system of thought, because it fails to abide by criteria of logic, including the law of contradiction.[260] Stein makes a good point when he imagines will executors applying the postmodern techniques to a will, saying that they are not interested in what the person who made the will wanted, but only what they read into it![261] This is humorous…. why do postmodern adherents do the same to the biblical text?

Middle Position of Sensus Plenior

Now that the two extremes of the meaning spectrum have been looked at, it is time to suggest a modified theory of *sensus plenior*, looking at its strengths and weaknesses, a theory that will take the best from both extremes, while maintaining a biblical, evangelical hermeneutical agenda.

This hermeneutical agenda is timely; Bloesch, right before discussing *sensus plenior*, states that currently there is a change, as many more people are exploring again the possibility of a spiritual meaning that goes further than just the natural meaning.[262] There is validity to the ancient practices of seeing both letter and spirit. Steinmetz declares that spiritual meanings do not hijack the text, but come out of it naturally, and that in the encounter with human imagination, one can exert a methodical exegetical technique to avoid the "Scylla of extreme

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[259] Douglas Groothuis, "Why Truth Matters Most: An Apologetic for Truth-Seeking in Postmodern Times," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 3 (2004): 448-449.
[260] Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation*, 113.
[261] Stein, "The Benefits," 455.
[262] Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994). 187-8.

subjectivism on the one hand and the Charybdis of historical positivism on the other."[263] This corresponds to the continuum of meaning which has been explored in this paper, a continuum which provided the material for dialectical analysis.

The chief aspect of this *sensus plenior* perspective is to put God in His rightful place as the ultimate source of revelation, thought and inspiration. The 'one-meaning' approach overemphasizes the human aspect of the Word of God. As Reno states, God, in His infinity, knows all possible thoughts of all time, which explains the "expansive allegorical interpretations" of the Church Fathers, stemming from the Word of God, which "contains all truth."[264] Arp gives a clue as to the nature of God's communication, as he looks at the prepositions in Matt. 1:22, which states that words were spoken by God through the prophet, with the Greek preposition '*hupo*' indicating God's direct agency, and '*dia*' representing the indirect agency of the human author.[265] God's communication is primary over the human communication, including more latent meaning, as he knows the future entirely.[266] This supernatural care of God provides the context for the "organic unity" of all Scripture, and the expansion of the meaning in *sensus plenior* as the canon developed.[267] This fact alone should put to rest the idea that the author consciously knew all of the intended meaning, as God would have had to let the author in on all of His plans![268] As O'Rourke states, God, as the "prime agent" of Scripture need only be "true to Himself."[269]

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[263] David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis," in *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation (*ed. Donald K. McKim; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 76. Quoted in Bloesch, *Holy Scripture,* 188.
[264] Reno, "From Letter to Spirit," 466.
[265] Arp, "Authorial Intent," 37.
[266] Poythress, "Divine Meaning," 247.
[267] Oss, "Canon as context," 111.
[268] Oss, "Canon as context," 115.
[269] John J. O'Rourke, "Marginal Notes on the *Sensus Plenior*: *Sensus Plenior* and the Understanding of the Human Author," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1959): 65.

And as God is true to Himself, in His manifold nature, it is right to expect the Word of God to also have a manifold character. Oss makes an interesting analogy to a painter, who can create a masterpiece out of brush strokes, colours, and shapes.[270] These components can be looked at individually, but also meld together to form something that is greater than the sum of its parts. The canon is multidimensional in this nature, and the relationships among books and passages therein are very rich, much richer than any of the authors could have imagined.[271] This type of richness within the canon and the possibility of deeper meaning should increase our respect for the perspectives and contributions of the early church, and Erickson suggests that we have much to learn from them.[272] It suggests humility when we can learn from others who are of a different epoch. The same spirit of humility can be employed in our current era, by recognizing that much of the grammatical-historical method is based on Western principles, which often results in an anti-supernaturalist worldview.[273] There are other ways of viewing the Bible; notably, Adamo states that many Africans, particularly those in the African Indigenous Churches, view the Scriptures from a "Bible as power" perspective, believing its promises for "protection, healing and success" and respecting it without apology or defense.[274] The Western perspective and the 'one-meaning' perspective also seem to favor a particular aspect of human psychological nature, one that favors linearity and reason over intuition and imagination. Stone and Duke introduce the notions of parallel synthetic and sequential thinking, the former more intuitive and the latter more rational, which could be compared by analogy, to the 'reader-

[270] Oss, "Canon as Context," 116.
[271] Oss, "Canon as Context," 115.
[272] Erickson, *Evangelical Hermeneutics,* 79.
[273] Oss, "Canon as Context," 122-123.
[274] David Tuesday Adamo, "Historical Development of Old Testament Interpretation in Africa," in *Biblical Interpretation in African Perspective* (ed. David Tuesday Adamo; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2006), 18-19.

response' postmodern approach and the 'one-meaning' approach.[275] The *sensus plenior* approach would necessitate a truly creative effort on behalf of the interpreter, for it would involve both of these types of thinking. One cannot help but wonder how many quarrels over theological matters would have been alleviated if people simply recognized different personality types and their effect on interpretation.

In establishing a *sensus plenior* hermeneutic one recognizes that it must be devotional in nature. Pinnock suggests that one "listen to the text (meaning) and live in front of the text (significance)" not neglecting historical exegesis, but fostering an atmosphere in which we "open ourselves to God."[276] This relates to Osborne's concept of the hermeneutical spiral, which he considers to be an open cycle between the horizons of reader and text.[277] This spiral is only truly open to those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, because illumination involves "the *significance* of Scripture and its *application to life*."[278] Poythress argues that scholars who practice historical-grammatical rigour need to consider the devotional reading practices of non-scholarly believers and not denigrate them; because these readers also have the Holy Spirit, and what sometimes may seem to scholars like fanciful ignorance may actually be the hand of God in that believer's spiritual life.[279] This is where intuitive associations can be introduced, and they are found in the everyday spiritual experience of the faithful, who find God encouraging, exhorting, and speaking to them in their daily devotional as they appropriate promises in Scripture. These meanings are found, not hidden in the text, but present within God and His purposes as He speaks forth His word.

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[275] Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 64.
[276] Clark Pinnock, "The Role of the Spirit in Interpretation," *Journal-Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (1993): 497.
[277] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 6.
[278] William W. Klein, et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville, Tenn: Nelson, 2004), 139. Italic's Klein's.
[279] Poythress, *God-Centered*, 83.

The Holy Spirit utilizes intuitive associations to give a fuller sense in a relational communion with the believer. The priority of this approach is to truly understand what God is saying to His believers in every generation, and to allow the Word to speak afresh. The litmus test is whether interpretations line up with Scripture, the body of Christ, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. This is a key objection to the *sensus plenior* approach; that it will lead to eisegesis. These fears are somewhat founded, and it is a risk that one must be willing to take in order to appreciate the Word of God in its fullness. LaSor offers a counter to this point, stating that *sensus plenior* is an outworking of exegetical methods, not a replacement for them.[280] The *sensus plenior* approach seems to do the best of all the positions at both recognizing the divine and human nature of Scripture while providing a framework in which exegesis can be done with the goal of personal spiritual growth and an appreciation for the richness of God's Word. However, another key objection is the charge that those who practice *sensus plenior* are engaging in New Age related beliefs.[281] Obviously this will have to be judged on a case-by-case basis, as there might be some who are engaged; however, I think that is a pretty sweeping accusation, especially given the fact that the early church regularly practiced the additional meanings approach.

Now that *sensus plenior* has been established as a viable middle ground, it is time to turn to a hermeneutical approach that makes use of all of revelatory communication.

[280] William Sanford LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 59.
[281] Robert L. Thomas, "The Principle of Single Meaning," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 12, no. 1 (2001): 34.

Chapter 4: Hermeneutics and Its Relation to Relevance Theory, *Sensus Plenior,* and the Hemispheres of the Brain

4.1 Hermeneutical Approaches

Universality of Hermeneutics and Gadamer

The theme of universality repeatedly appears among the different aspects of this thesis. There is the universality of Relevance Theory's claim to account for all communication, as Sperber claims that "all human communication… is essentially inferential."[282] Pilkington notes that "relevance theory makes a claim about 'how the mind functions' – that 'the mind is preset for maximal relevance.'"[283] This universality of Relevance Theory with respect to the functioning of the human mind meshes well with the universality of hermeneutics suggested by Gadamer, and the all-encompassing communicative potential found in the divine Author. Gadamer, in his major work, *Truth and Method*, asserts that hermeneutics is basically the "art of understanding," incorporating all communication in its scope.[284] He views this understanding as "essentially historical" and therefore subject to change as the situation in which a text is read changes.[285] He argues that interpreters belong to a historical tradition, and that there has been an "alienation of the interpreter from the interpreted by the objectifying methods of modern science."[286] His view of the effect of science and the Enlightenment fits in well with what McGilchrist has argued with respect to the battle between the hemispheres and the outworking of

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[282] Dan Sperber, "How do we communicate?" in *How Things Are: A Science Toolkit for the Mind*, (ed. J. Brockman and K. Matson; Morrow, NY), 199. Quoted in Billy Clark, *Relevance Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 345.
[283] Adrian Pilkington, "The Literary Reading Process: A Relevance Theory Perspective." Empirical Studies of Literature: Proceedings of the Second IGEL Conference, Amsterdam, 1989. (ed. Elrud Ibsch et al.; Amsterdam and Atlanta, Georgia: Rodopi, 1991), 117-123. Quoted in Michael Kearns, "Relevance, Rhetoric, Narrative." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2001): 75.
[284] Gadamer, *Truth*, 188.
[285] Gadamer, *Truth*, 309.
[286] Gadamer, *Truth*, 314.

that battle in Western civilization. Gadamer also suggests that as one can see a similarity between the Enlightenment view and the functioning of the left hemisphere: "science attempts to become certain about entities by methodically organizing its knowledge of the world. Consequently it condemns as heresy all knowledge that does not allow of this kind of certainty and that therefore cannot serve the growing domination of being."[287] Gadamer is clear "to describe the task of hermeneutics as entering into dialogue with the text," [288] a conversation which involves question and answer, as the "question to which the interpreter construes the text as an answer is of utmost importance,"[289] and the "question raised by the text merges with the interpreter's own questioning in the dialectical play which Gadamer calls the fusion of horizons."[290] This fusion of horizons and more of Gadamer's views will be discussed further as the proposed hermeneutic is introduced.

Spectrum of Interpretation, Scholarly and Non-Scholarly

Eco outlines two extremes for the history of interpretation: one, that a text means precisely what the original author intended, independent of the modern interpreter; and the second, that there are infinite interpretations.[291] This tension is often experienced in Bible study groups, where some people attempt to understand what the original author intended to communicate, while others are more interested in what the text means to them.[292] Although a simplification, the distinction made by Poythress between scholars and non-scholars is quite helpful practically speaking as he compares their approach to reading Scripture.[293] His

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[287] Gadamer, *Truth*, 476.
[288] Gadamer, *Truth*, 368.
[289] Joel Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 210.
[290] Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's*, 210.
[291] Eco, *The Limits*, 25.
[292] Zuck, *Rightly Divided,* 5.
[293] Poythress, *God-Centered*, 83.

perspective fits with the ordinary reader, who would obviously be included as the non-scholar (non-scholar in theology that is). Poythress's description of the scholar/non-scholar distinction was the inspiration for comparing these two hermeneutical approaches: historical-grammatical for scholars, and personal-devotional for non-scholars. These two categories, scholar and non-scholar, simply give the ends of the interpretive spectrum, and undoubtedly, since they are generalizations, there will be exceptions. Still this chart gives the general flavour of the differences between the two hermeneutics, delineating their respective approaches to the different categories.

Table 4.1: Comparison of historical-grammatical and personal-devotional hermeneutics

Category	*Historical-grammatical hermeneutic*	*Personal-devotional hermeneutic*
Hermeneut's background	Theologically trained	Ordinary readers
Author emphasized	Human	Divine
Horizon focus	Authorial	Reader
Approach to the text	Diligent intellectual study – original languages, study aids etc.	Meditative, reflective, personal application, relationally focused
Insight obtained	Exegesis of texts leads to measured and repeatable insights, impersonal cognitive effects unless specifically applied	Intuition and divine revelation lead to flashes of insight, God "speaking" through His word, rich personal cognitive effects
Effect on reader	Cognitive focus	Non-cognitive experiential focus
Associations	In context interpretation carefully delineated	"Loose,"[294] intuitive, use intuitive associations
Dominant hemisphere	Left	Right
Modus operandi	Logic, reason	Intuition, revelation
System	Contained, repeatable, controlled	Open, unrepeatable, Holy Spirit beyond our control
Type of reading[295]	Informational	Formational
Mode of thinking[296]	Sequential	Parallel synthetic
Preferred beginning context of exegesis[297]	Individual book and historical context[298]	All of Scripture[299]

[294] Poythress, *God-centered,* 85.
[295] Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville, Tenn.: Upper Room Books, 2000), 49ff.
[296] Stone, *How to Think*, 64.

Many of the distinctions between the two hermeneutics in the above table are self-explanatory. However, a few need further explanation. For the category of 'mode of thinking,' parallel thinking operates using the totality of awareness or *Gestalt* and finds connections therein, whereas sequential thinking is linear.[300] Both are essential, and truly effective creative thinking requires both to be working together.[301] For the characteristic of 'type of reading' above, there is need for further explanation. Mulholland makes the distinction between informational and formational reading. This distinction links to McGilchrist's thesis, for in this "functional" approach to human culture, people "seek new information in order to improve their functional control of the world"[302] and have been "trained primarily to seek information when it comes to reading."[303] This is the left brain domination that has affected Western culture. Since this is a critical distinction between the ways of reading, another table below will summarize the differences between the two ways, where the categories and descriptions are covered in a chapter by Mulholland.[304]

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[297] Poythress, "Divine," 267.
[298] Poythress, "Divine," 272.
[299] Poythress, "Divine," 274-275.
[300] Stone, *How to Think*, 64.
[301] Stone, *How to think*, 64-65.
[302] Mulholland, *Shaped*, 50.
[303] Mulholland, *Shaped*, 51.
[304] Mulholland, *Shaped*, 51-61.

Informational vs. Formational Reading

Table 4.2: Comparison of informational and formational reading

Category	*Informational Reading*	*Formational Reading*
Rate	As much as possible, as fast as possible	Quality, not quantity
Movement	Linear	Deeper, multiple layers
Control	Master the text	Be mastered by the text
Text placement / Subjective or Objective	External to us – we are subject the text is object	We are the object, the text is the subject which shapes us
Approach	Analytical, critical, judgmental	Humble, detached, receptive, loving
Mentality	Problem-solving	Openness to mystery

As Mulholland makes clear however, this is not to say that informational reading is 'bad', and formational reading is 'good', rather, that there can be a "fruitful interplay" between the respective approaches, as we note information about the text to help us understand, but also allow it to provide space to "experience an encounter with God."[305] In keeping with McGilchrist's perspective, the proper functioning of the brain is to return to the holistic right after focussing with the left brain, but the perspective in the West has been reversed.[306] Mulholland believes that the relational is to have priority over the functional, and particularly for the believer in God, our function must stem from our relationship.[307]

One might ask, "What is an example of formational reading?" Mulholland gives a personal example[308] where he was reading through a lectionary, and wasn't getting much out of the passages in Exodus that he was reading. Eventually however, God spoke to his heart, and showed him that he was being like Pharaoh, insisting, "You are Pharaoh!" God showed him that

[305] Mulholland, *Shaped*, 61.
[306] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 178.
[307] Mulholland, *Shaped*, 93.
[308] Mulholland, *Shaped*, 58.

there needed to be a death of his "desires to use God's gifts for [his] own purposes" and that he needed to engage in a struggle with his false self.[309] Examples of formational reading will be highly personal, and for this reason cannot be extrapolated to apply to others. When experiencing God speaking formationally through His living word, one might find quite often that when one shares the experience with others, or puts it under 'left brain' scrutiny, it loses the original impact because the others hear about it but lose the effect of it due to an analytical slant taken towards it.[310] This is another sign that these experiences are for the individual, and not to be applied to all believers. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

When considering the two hermeneutical approaches in Table 4.1, it is clear that they are very different from one another. Comparing how the two hermeneutical approaches work with respect to Relevance Theory, will lead to a better understanding of why people employ the two hermeneutics. The specific mechanics of the interpretive process in both approaches will be compared using Relevance Theory. First, the mechanics of God's speaking in the historical grammatical framework will be analyzed.

Historical-grammatical Approach

The diagrams below are adapted from a Powerpoint presentation given in 2004 by Richard Brown, who has summarized the process quite succinctly and graphically.[311] The following diagram represents the manner in which the message of the Scriptures is understood using the historical-grammatical method, analyzing the communication from original authors and finding their intentions.

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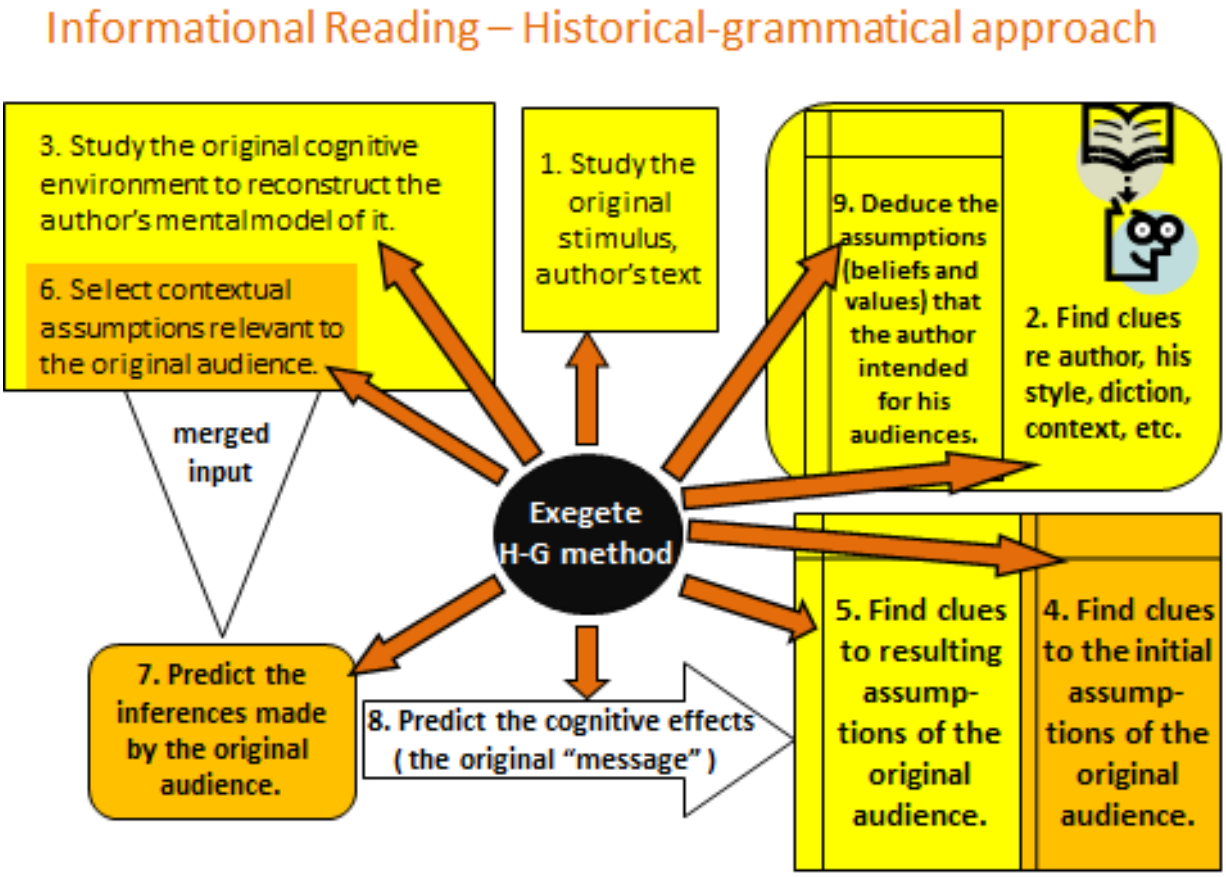
[309] Mulholland, *Shaped*, 58-59.
[310] McGilchrist, *The Master*¸ 209.
[311] Rick Brown, Powerpoint presentation, "New Directions in Bible Translation Strategy," 2004. Accessed Jan 28, 2014, https://mail.jaars.org/~bt/files.htm.

Figure 4.1: Historical-grammatical Hermeneutic

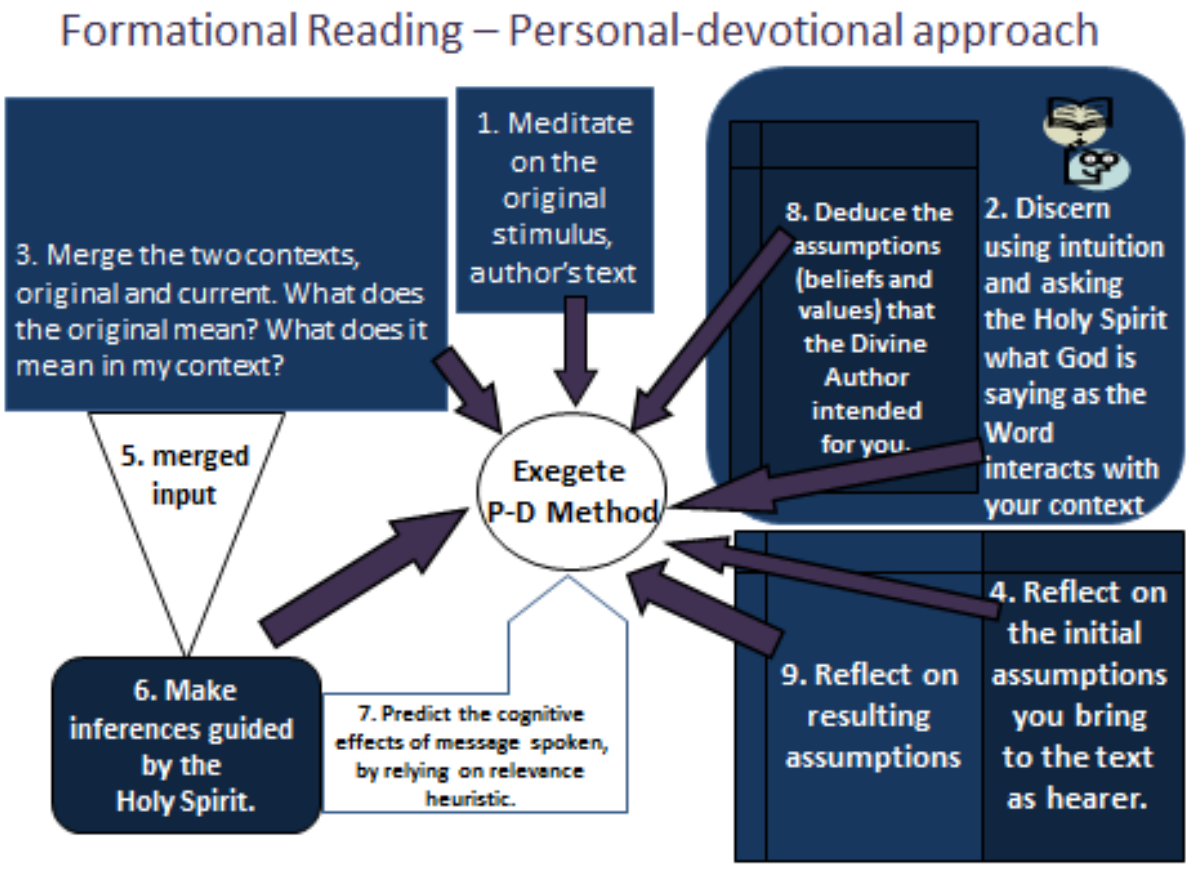


This historical-grammatical hermeneutic will be familiar to seminary students and scholars.

Personal-devotional Approach

The following diagram represents the manner in which the modern-day ordinary hearers/readers understand what God is speaking through a personal-devotional hermeneutic.

Figure 4.2: Personal-devotional Hermeneutic



Description of Divine Communication through Personal-devotional Reading

This hermeneutic is reader-oriented and it involves "situating the text in such a fashion that it is able to speak to the reader in his or her contemporary idiom."[312] When comparing these two hermeneutical approaches, it is important to recognize that God is sovereign over every type of analogy that can be drawn in Scripture. Poythress expresses this dynamic well:

> The Holy Spirit uses texts as a springboard to enlist and stimulate believer's spirits. As Creator and the sovereign ruler over language, he establishes and superintends all associations and analogies. He includes in his domain not only the "tight" analogies

[312] Edgar V. McKnight, *Post-Modern use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 174.

> used when scholars reexpress the sense of a passage, but the loose metaphoric analogies that we associate with the function of spiritual intuition… If people are attuned to loving God, and if the Holy Spirit guides them, people arrive again and again at biblical conclusions. Scholars may say that these conclusions are unsound. But the Holy Spirit is Lord, ruling over scholars as well as everyone else.[313]

When God communicates with people, because of His omniscience, He knows exactly how to lead the person, as He knows "an individual's cognitive environment [and] can infer which assumptions he is likely to entertain."[314] Unlike when we communicate with other humans, when we communicate with God we can know certainly that He has knowledge of every aspect of our context. This is why communication from God is perceived to be so highly relevant and therefore why devotional reading is so pervasive – due to the excellency of God as a communicator. Sperber and Wilson define optimal relevance as a statement which is "relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it" and "the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences."[315] Clearly, God's efforts at communicating with people are optimally relevant.

Hill, in her dissertation, graphically shows that the reader who interprets the biblical stimulus immediately in the secondary context (the context of the reader) will have a 'naïve interpretation.'[316] She may have a point if the reader simply haphazardly interpreted the text however they wanted to. However, due to the presence of the divine Author – who shaped the word in order to communicate, who knows all contexts perfectly, and who can give an interpretation of the word by the power of the Holy Spirit – what often results is not a naïve interpretation. Hill is right in asserting that "understanding the meaning intended for the first receptors can deepen the secondary receptors' understanding, and can provide a corrective to

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[313] Poythress, *God-centered,* 86.
[314] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance,* 46.
[315] Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber*, Meaning and Relevance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 177.
[316] Harriet Hill, "Communicating context in Bible translation among the Adioukrou of Côte d'Ivoire," (PhD Diss. Fuller Theological Seminary, 2003), 66.

illicit interpretations"[317]; however, it should not be then concluded that God cannot use the immediate application of the word to the reader's horizon without a full understanding of the original context. God does not wait until the reader has two degrees and years of Bible study before He speaks through His word. Jobes states that emphasizing the "speaker's or author's intention to communicate brings a welcome corrective to the reader-response hermeneutic"[318]; however, this fails to acknowledge that the divine Author – who is just as, if not more important than the human author – has intentions for His word. It is the role of the divine Author that legitimizes *sensus plenior*, personal-devotional reading, and ordinary readers.

Gadamer's Perspective on Hermeneutics and Relation to Hemispheric Function

Before the diagram for the proposed centered hermeneutic is introduced, it would be beneficial to consider some of Gadamer's ideas relevant to the subject. Firstly, he establishes the notion that one's prejudice is not necessarily negative, and that "all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice."[319] This word need not have a negative connotation, although it is often used with such a sense in 21st century English. Gadamer states that "the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power."[320] Some in biblical scholarship circles express this 'fundamental prejudice', such as, Zuck, who states that one must be as "objective in his approach to the Bible as possible, without coming to the Scriptures with prejudice or preconceived notions."[321] Gadamer would say that this is an impossibility. This ruling out of prejudice by the Enlightenment perspective is in line with the left brain outworking itself in Western civilization described by McGilchrist. Another

[317] Hill, "Communicating," 65.
[318] Karen H. Jobes, "Relevance Theory and the Translation of Scripture," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 50, no. 4 (2007): 782.
[319] Gadamer, *Truth*, 270.
[320] Gadamer, *Truth*, 270.
[321] Zuck, *Rightly*, 27.

connection between McGilchrist's assessment of the brain's functioning and the work of Gadamer is described well by Weinsheimer. He states that "the logic of question and answer is special to the hermeneutical sciences. They do not build generalizations from particulars in a linear, incremental, and inductive manner, but rather begin with the whole, the general, the prediction, and work toward the part and then return to the whole again."[322] This manner of hermeneutical functioning mirrors the proper functioning of the brain mentioned earlier, from right to left and then back to the right again. The hermeneutic of Gadamer also requires the functioning of the right brain, which is open to new information, in contradistinction to the left, which prefers what it already knows.[323] Weinsheimer makes this clear, stating that "one of the expectations we project is that the text has something to say to us, something we do not already know and which is not already familiar," and thus "we read with an openness to the unexpected."[324]

Fusion of Horizons

Gadamer introduces the concept of 'horizon,' defining it as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a certain vantage point."[325] Through his argument that "the horizon of understanding cannot be limited either by what the writer originally had in mind or by the horizon of the person to whom the text was originally addressed,"[326] Gadamer argues for an enhanced hermeneutic, stating that we not only rightly bring our prejudices to bear in interpretation, but that "*understanding is always the fusion of these horizons* [text horizon and reader horizon] *supposedly existing by themselves*"[327] and the fact that this takes place is the

[322] Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's*, 22.
[323] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 40.
[324] Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's*, 167.
[325] Gadamer, *Truth*, 302.
[326] Gadamer, *Truth*, 395.
[327] Gadamer, *Truth*, 306.

"*achievement of language.*"[328] Although he does not mention revelatory communication explicitly, Gadamer supports it indirectly, as well as making room for a personal-devotional approach, by claiming that "what is fixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships."[329] Gadamer argues that to "acquire a horizon of interpretation requires a fusion of horizons," and thus establishes the need to join the worlds of the text and of the reader.[330]

In defense of incorporating a personal-devotional hermeneutic into one's reading, Gadamer, following Oetinger, argued that "more profound than all knowledge of hermeneutical rules is the application to oneself."[331] Gadamer further argues that "*understanding is ultimately self-understanding*" whereby a person understands by "projecting himself upon his possibilities."[332] Allowing the text to 'read' oneself is critical for spiritual growth as a disciple of Christ. As Cowan states, "it is not merely a question of my interpreting the text, but also of my willingness to let my life be interpreted by it."[333] Does not the word of God lead to tangible, personal change in individuals?

Divine Help in Interpretation

However, the interpreter of Scripture, and more specifically, the believer in Christ, is not left to their own devices to understand and interpret Scripture. Instead, Christ and His work "prepares the way for a new philosophy of man, which mediates between the mind of man in its finitude and the divine infinity."[334] Christ is the link between our mind and God's, for the

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[328] Gadamer, *Truth*, 270. Gadamer's italics.
[329] Gadamer, *Truth*, 395.
[330] Gadamer, *Truth*, 397.
[331] Gadamer, *Truth*, 29-30.
[332] Gadamer, *Truth*, 260. Gadamer's italics.
[333] Michael A. Cowan, "Conversation with a Text," *College Teaching* 42, no. 2 (1994): 69.
[334] Gadamer, *Truth*, 428.

Scriptures attest that "we have the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 2:16) This is perhaps the closest that one can come to having a 'mutual cognitive environment' (which is defined by Pattemore to be a "shared set of assumptions which participants in an act of communication are *capable* of making"); but this environment does not imply that "the communicator and audience *will make* a symmetrical choice of context and code to use in a communication situation."[335] For the believer, this is the goal of the spiritual life – to "increase the mutuality of cognitive environments"[336] with God, growing in His likeness and reflecting His image.

Christotelic Reading

This idea that Christ is the critical factor in our understanding of how to interpret Scripture and God is not new. The message and life of Jesus brought about a substantial shift in the lives and perspectives of the apostles, and through them, changed the world. Earlier, in the chapter on *sensus plenior*, the manner which the writers of the NT used the OT was mentioned. They did not always use the OT in the manner in which modern scholars consider to be correct, that is, according to the historical-grammatical method. Enns ably demonstrates that the current three main approaches to understanding how the NT authors used the OT miss the mark. The approaches include arguing that 1) the apostles actually do affirm the context; 2) the NT authors only apply the text, and not interpret it; 3) they could do as they wish due to inspiration and apostolic authority.[337] Instead of one of these three options, Enns suggests a different conclusion, that "1) the New Testament authors were not engaging the Old Testament in an effort to remain consistent with the original context and intention of the Old Testament author. 2) They were indeed commenting on what the text *meant*. 3) The hermeneutical attitude they embodied should

[335] Stephen Pattemore, "Is there a Fish in this cognitive environment? Relevance theory, interpretive communities and the Bible," (paper presented at the SBL International Conference, Singapore 2005), 3.
[336] Pattemore, *"Is there,"* 4.
[337] Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 115.

be embraced and followed by the church today."[338] Enns' approach both accounts for the glaring departures from the historical-grammatical hermeneutic that the NT authors take in their approach to the OT, and also simultaneously values and respects their contribution, without condescendingly intimating that we somehow know better today than they did. Enns explains their hermeneutic in terms of the "*interpretive world in which the New Testament was written.*"[339] After going through many examples of Second Temple hermeneutical techniques, Enns argues that though it appears that the apostles are taking the OT quotations out of context, they actually are not: instead, they are working with two contexts, taking from the original context and placing it into the new context, the new context being that of the eschatological direction in which salvation history had been moving.[340] Enns calls this eschatological hermeneutic "christotelic," saying that to "read the Old Testament 'christotelically' is to read it *already knowing* that Christ is somehow the *end* to which the Old Testament story is heading."[341] In the example of Matthew quoting Hosea 11:1, Matthew did not receive his insight about this passage by reading Hosea; rather, he considered the "*reality of the risen Christ that drove him to read Hosea in a new way.*"[342] The application vs. meaning distinction covered earlier allows one to not denigrate the apostles' hermeneutic, but Enns feels that it concedes too much – he would rather hold that the "NT authors are *subsuming* the OT under the authority of the crucified and risen Christ…in whom God's people… now find their coherence."[343] Enns' position seems to

[338] Enns, *Inspiration*, 115-116.
[339] Enns, *Inspiration*, 116.
[340] Enns, *Inspiration*, 153.
[341] Enns, *Inspiration*, 154.
[342] Kaiser et al., *Three Views*, 201. Enns' italics.
[343] Kaiser et al., *Three Views*, 206.

respect the hermeneutic of the apostles to a greater extent than Coppens for example, who stated that the NT authors are "hardly a norm for indiscriminate imitation."[344]

Dual-hermeneutic Approach

The ideas discussed above, namely, the fusion of horizons and the christotelic reading of Scripture, will be incorporated into the proposed double-edged hermeneutic.[345] Other authors have also discussed a fusion of horizons, including Thiselton, who argued for "*distance*" but also as "close a *fusion* of horizons with the text as the relation between text and interpreter will allow"[346] in the pursuit of a hermeneutical spiral, an "ongoing movement and progressive understanding"[347] in interpretation. Thiselton cites Gadamer in claiming that the "horizon is not closed and fixed, but moves as the interpreter himself moves."[348] The following diagram represents the manner in which God speaks using both hermeneutics simultaneously, for a full reading of the Scriptures.

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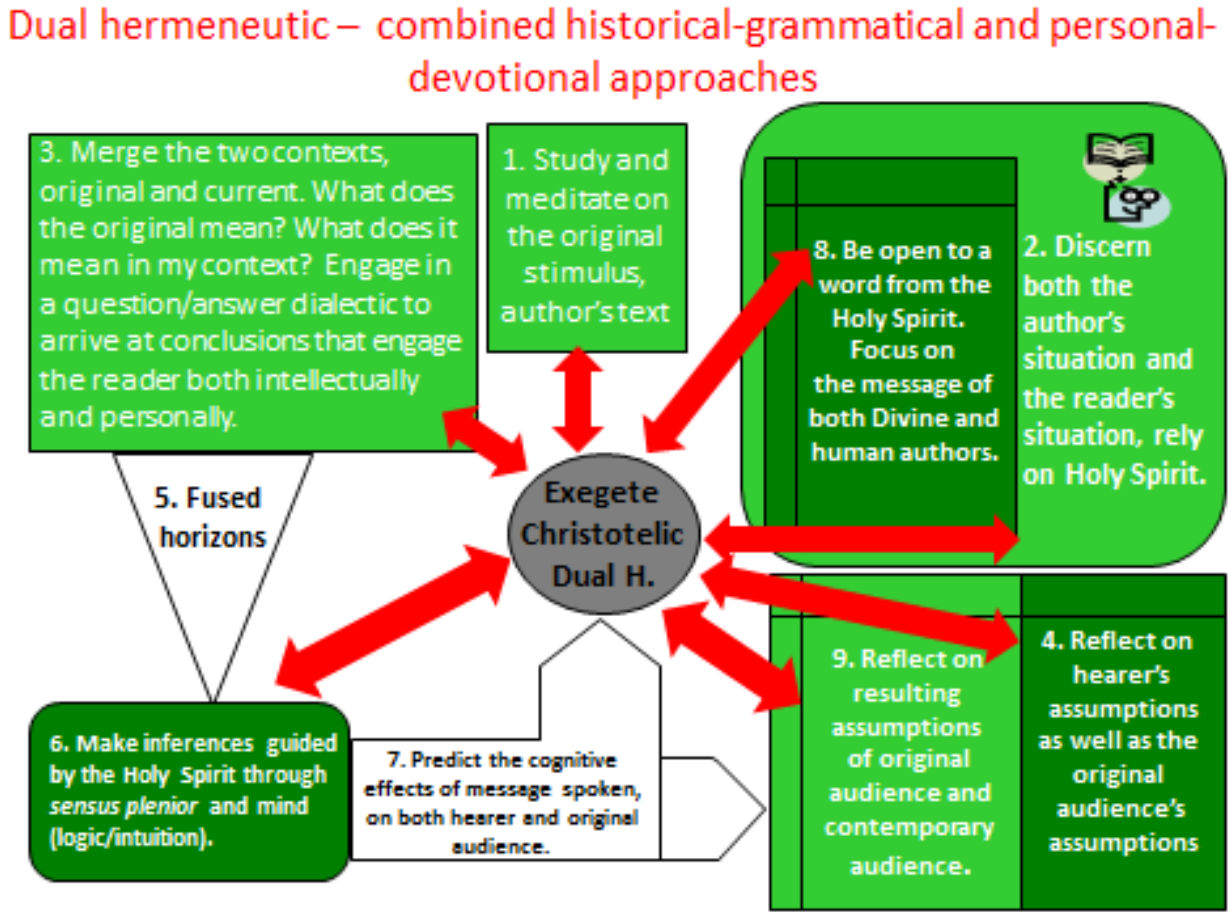
[344] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 69.
[345] For an alternative formulation of a similar hermeneutical approach, see Werner Kahl, "Intercultural Hermeneutics - Contextual Exegesis: A Model for 21st-Century Exegesis," *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (2000): 421-433.
[346] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), 440. Thiselton's italics.
[347] Thiselton, *The Two*, 104.
[348] Thiselton, *The Two*, 307.

Figure 4.3: Dual hermeneutic – combined historical-grammatical and personal-devotional



Further Discussion on Fusion of Horizons

Brown connects the fusing of horizons to the work of the Holy Spirit in the context of Thiselton's work, viewing "understanding in terms of the merging, or fusing, of the horizons of author and reader; though this is not viewed as something final, but rather leading to an ongoing, ever more refined understanding, sometimes understood in terms of a hermeneutical spiral."[349] Brown also quotes Thiselton, who summarizes the dynamic present in the above diagram, "in a co-operative shared work, the Spirit, the text, and the reader engage in *a transforming process*,

[349] Brown, *The Holy*, 179-180.

which enlarges horizons, and creates *new horizons*."[350] The fusion of horizons achieved between the world of the interpreter and that of the text is "ontological," in the sense that "when horizons are so fused that the interpretation belongs to what it interprets, the resulting whole is, as it were, greater than the sum of its parts."[351] As one allows the horizons of the original context and the modern context to exist in fusion, there will be a rich dialogue of questions and answers, as described by Gadamer,[352] which will bring personal and devotional insights as well as historical and grammatical comprehension.

Now that the hermeneutical approaches have been discussed, it is time to investigate with greater detail the mechanics of their relationship to Relevance Theory, *sensus plenior*, and the hemispheres of the brain.

4.2 Further Discussion of Relevance Theory and Dual-hermeneutic

Hermeneutical Approaches and Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic

The historical-grammatical exegetical approach and the personal-devotional approach can be compared in their function. The major difference between the heuristics for the two approaches is that the determination of what the message is – i.e., the most relevant interpretation of the passage – is based on either intrinsic criteria present in the ordinary reader, for the personal-devotional approach, or extrinsic criteria present in the constructed perspective of the original audience, author, and world, for the historical-grammatical approach. The relevance-theoretic heuristic mentioned earlier states that one must take the first interpretation that is consistent with the principle of relevance. The criterion of orientation provides the critical

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[350] Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992), 619. Brown's italics.
[351] Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's*, 251.
[352] Gadamer, *Truth*, 375 & 377.

distinction between the two hermeneutical methods, whether the text is being externally recognized (historical-grammatical – extrinsic) or internally interpreted and applied (personal-devotional – intrinsic). Only when both directions are embraced can the Word of God speak in its fullness to the student of Scripture.

Relation of Hermeneutics to Brain Function

One can suggest a comparison between the application of the historical-grammatical hermeneutic and function of the left brain, and the application of the personal-devotional hermeneutic and function of the right brain. The "left hemisphere favours analytic, sequential 'processing', where the right hemisphere favours parallel 'processing' of different streams of 'information' simultaneously," a "brick by brick approach" for the left hemisphere and a sudden recognition, or an "aha!" moment, for the right hemisphere.[353] In terms of the brain's activity with respect to religion, McGilchrist cites Trimble, who claims that "there is a slow accumulation of evidence in favour of religious experience being more closely linked with the 'non-dominant' hemisphere, especially the posterior right hemisphere."[354] Although not expressed in terms of God, McGilchrist summarizes the relationship between the hemispheres and the 'Other':

> the essential difference between the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere is that the right hemisphere pays attention to the Other, whatever it is that exists apart from ourselves, with which it sees itself in profound relation. It is deeply attracted to, and given life by, the relationship, the betweenness, that exists with this Other. By contrast, the left hemisphere pays attention to the virtual world that it has created, which is self-consistent, but self-contained, ultimately disconnected from the Other, making it powerful, but ultimately only able to operate on, and to know, itself.[355]

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[353] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 228.
[354] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 92.
[355] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 93.

This is why the role of the right hemisphere is crucial in how we interpret and relate to Scripture, because it connects us to God – one can replace McGilchrist's 'Other' with God when speaking of Christianity. If one neglects the right hemisphere and is dominated by a left hemispheric perspective, one risks missing the relational aspect of the Christian life. Vedder comments that a "person who thinks that religion and the history of religion must be studied exclusively in a *positivistic* way, *sponges on an event* of which he denies its effect on himself, although he bases himself on it in his choice of a research object because, after all, before his choice of an object of research, he had already been affected by the phenomenon of religion."[356] Ordinary readers are far from making this type of mistake, as the interpretation of the word is closely linked to their personal context.

Even the Scriptures themselves, according to Brown, came about as a result of prophetic intuition, where the prophets see beyond their own horizon, and attain a divine vision that includes future fulfillment as well as contemporary.[357] Intuition is even necessary for the translator, as Gutt maintains: translators use intuition to make decisions about their text to reflect the audience and what would be relevant to them.[358] God, the ultimate Author of Scripture, is calling believers to look beyond, to perceive.

For the historical-grammatical method, interpretations must be tested by a wide variety of criteria – theological, linguistic, and cultural. The most relevant interpretation will be arrived at only through quite a time intensive effort, which may include word studies, consultation of commentaries, various translations, Bible software tools working in the original languages, and other resources. Selecting the most relevant interpretation requires caution, for there is always

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[356] Ben Vedder, "Religion and Hermeneutic Philosophy," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 51, no. 1 (2002): 41. Italics mine.
[357] Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior, 46-47.
[358] Gutt, *Translation*, 118.

the possibility that one has misunderstood some aspect of the passage in its original context, thus arriving at a principle that seems relevant, but may be untrue. Many people come to entirely different interpretations from the same passage, all having arrived at their conclusions according to the principles of Relevance Theory (knowingly or unknowingly). The right hemisphere "acknowledges the importance of ambiguity," whereas the left hemisphere "may be unreasonably, even stubbornly, convinced of its own correctness."[359]

For the personal-devotional method, often the interpretation that is most relevant will come suddenly, in a flash of insight, through "intuitive reception."[360] Often when God speaks, there is a depth (Jer. 23:29), a weightiness, resulting in a communication that is full of life. Communication from God brings a rich array of cognitive benefits. There are intuitive associations that one may make related to the words. McGilchrist states that "close lexical semantic relationships rely more on the left hemisphere, looser semantic associations rely on the right."[361] The "right anterior temporal region is associated with making connections across distantly related information during comprehension," and the right hemisphere brings together unrelated words frequently, thus appearing to be more 'creative.'[362]

Role of Implicatures

The creativity involved in interpretation of Scripture is related to the implicatures derivable from the text. Furlong concludes that "the writer herself does not consciously entertain all the possible implicatures of her text."[363] Furlong conveys that the "writer provides her reader with the evidence needed to construct the context which will yield an interpretation which she

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[359] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 80.
[360] Jehu-Appiah, "The African," 420.
[361] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 41.
[362] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 41.
[363] Anne Furlong, "A Modest Proposal: Linguistics and Literary Studies," *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics / Revue Canadienne De Linguistique Appliquee* 10, no. 3 (2007): 341.

intended, or at least foresaw" which may not be "*identical* to that conceived by the writer."[364] This is true with respect to the human authors of Scripture, who could have not foreseen all possible God-intended interpretations of their words. The divine Author links the two hermeneutics, for His intention includes the implicatures derived from the intention of the human author analyzed through the historical-grammatical method, as well as the additional implicatures interpreted through the personal-devotional hermeneutic which could not have been foreseen by the human author. Many of these implicatures will be weak ones, as "there is no firm boundary between the strong implicatures and… weak ones," and though the weak implicatures are authorized by the communicator, they are not specified.[365] However, they are nonetheless part of the palette, which God, as the artist of the canvas of Scripture, can paint a masterpiece with, to use Oss's analogy again.[366] Weak implicatures are "assumptions about what is meant which go beyond the explicit propositional meaning and for which there is not much 'conclusive evidence' but which are open to interpretation."[367]

These weak implicatures form a world of associations particularly important for the poetic and prophetic passages of Scripture, forming the "essence" of the text which "make the reader work."[368] The right hemisphere allows for "understanding of the indirect, connotative language of poetry" and in general, the understanding of metaphor, which the left hemisphere struggles with, but this is crucial because metaphor "*underlies all forms of understanding whatsoever,* science and philosophy no less than poetry and art."[369] Metaphor is a source for wideness in meaning. When communicating concepts, "a word may be narrower (more specific)

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[364] Furlong, "*A Modest,*" 341.
[365] Stephen Pattemore, "A Drift on a Sea of Implicature: Relevance Theory and the Pragmatics of Translation," *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 22 (2008): 2.
[366] Oss, "Canon as Context," 116.
[367] Jean Boase-Beier, "Saying what Someone Else Meant: Style, Relevance and Translation," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 14, no. 2 (2004): 278.
[368] Boase-Beier, "Saying," 282.
[369] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 71.

or broader (more general) than the lexical meaning (or it may be narrower in some respects and broader in others, as is often the case in metaphor)" and "there is a continuum of cases of broadening, ranging from strictly literal use, through various shades of approximation to hyperbole and metaphor, with no sharp cut-off point between them."[370] Scripture is full of the use of metaphor, as God chose to communicate to His people with a rich array of literary effects. The meaning found in this relationship is a result of the "creative involvement of the reader" which, when not obstructed by narrow conceptualizations of how God's word can be employed, will allow for the "reality of the reader's use of imagination in interpretation."[371]

Nature of Communication with God and How It Works in Relevance Theory

Although there may be significant, long-term effort being put into studying the word of God and prayer by the one employing this approach, when the flash of insight, obtained either through human intuition or prompted by the Holy Spirit, is received, the perception is that it required minimal effort to receive. This insight might often relate to the personal context of the ordinary reader. The right brain of the interpreter is constantly looking for a message, something new, but it is largely doing this unconsciously, meaning that there is not a greatly perceived processing effort. The hearer receives these messages, and, particularly when it is perceived to be clearly God the Holy Spirit who is the source of the message, there are multi-layered implications, often deep and profoundly personally transformative. God may speak into situations in the hearer's life; He may confirm something that He did in their past which will result in a modification of the hearer's cognitive environment, as they recognize the cognitive effect His word is having. These rich cognitive benefits, accompanied by a perceived lower

[370] Deirdre Wilson, "Parallels and Differences in the Treatment of Metaphor in Relevance Theory and Cognitive Linguistics," *Intercultural Pragmatics* 8, no. 2 (2011): 181.
[371] McKnight, *Post-Modern*, 68.

expenditure of processing effort in comparison to the historical-grammatical method, explains why people interpret in this personal-devotional way. The right hemisphere is what gets them to these benefits, for "it is the task of the right hemisphere to carry the left beyond, to something new, something 'Other' than itself."[372] One of the elements that a personal-devotional reading of Scripture brings is an emphasis on obedience. Peterson expresses the importance of a "participatory reading" of Scripture which results in obedience, stating, "the most important question we ask of this text is not 'What does this mean?' but 'What can I obey?' A simple act of obedience will open up our lives to this text far more quickly than any number of Bible studies and dictionaries and concordances."[373]

God achieves this communication according to the principles of Relevance Theory as well, as He desires to have His "informative intention recognized," (consider all of the commands to "listen!" and "hear!" in Scripture and the "thus says the LORD" passages); and He communicates so that "the first interpretation that will come to the hearer's mind and that he will find optimally relevant will indeed be the intended one."[374] For there to be "successful" communication between God and the hearer, the "text or utterance produced must be inferentially combined with the right, that is, speaker-envisaged, contextual assumptions."[375] The realization of the hearer that God is speaking and the determination of what He is speaking are processed through the intuition, largely in the right brain, as it is new information. The left brain will begin to analyze the revelation and bring it into the realm of understanding. Various Biblical characters received revelation through dreams or visions without understanding, for the left brain

[372] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 164.
[373] Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat this Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006), 71.
[374] Gutt, *Translation,* 34.
[375] Gutt, *Translation*, 76.

could not dissect the revelation. Both hemispheres are vital in understanding revelation from God.

When God communicated to the Old Testament prophets, the message came with a distinct and marked fulfilment of the informative intention; the hearer understands assuredly that God was speaking something, a "thus says the Lord." This is where Relevance Theory's nuanced definition of ostensive communication, as opposed to mere 'informing' communication, becomes important; as "communication alters the mutual cognitive environment of the audience and communicator" making for "possibilities of interaction" and "further communication."[376] Not that God changes, or is altered, but the space of His relational interaction and the 'history' that the believer has with Him changes.

Once a message has been received from God through the right brain, it will be processed through the entire mind (both left and right brain) of the recipient, in order to fully assess and understand the inferences and cognitive benefits that stem from the message. Due to the spiritual nature of this communication, there perhaps needs to be a caveat added to the Relevance Theory framework. Gutt states that there is "no other, more direct means of knowing what the speaker meant" than by the "criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance."[377] However, the reality of a relationship with God can only be described spiritually, and the spirit to Spirit communion that takes place between the believer and God transcends the limitations of Relevance Theory, and the believer does have access to God through the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16) discussed earlier.

[376] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 61-62.
[377] Gutt, *Translation*, 197.

Relation to Sensus Plenior *as a Dual-authored Text*

Again, God's infinite nature basically requires all types of *sensus plenior* and an understanding of communication which acknowledges that He, being the ultimate source of Scripture's meaning, can inspire a multi-layered text. Gutt leads us back to the example of Matthew 2, stating that Matthew created a "layered" text, rich and "open-ended," and advises translators to, at minimum, include the surface meaning of Matthew's text, but to also strive to do justice to the richness of his allusions.[378] *Sensus plenior*, as discussed in Chapter 2, provides a middle ground between two extremes with respect to meaning. It also provides a framework in which God makes full use of the creative potential of His word as He communicates to His people through the Scriptures.

According to Furlong, there is a common misconception with respect to Relevance Theory that leads some astray. She states that the criterion related to CPR2 within Relevance Theory "is powerful enough to exclude all but at most a single interpretation, so that having found one that satisfies it, the reader can stop, for there is never more than one;" however, this does not mean that "a text has a single unique meaning," as claimed by Kaiser and others.[379] This principle may come into question when taking into account the nature of Scripture as a dual-authored text: when God communicates there is certainly often a multi-layered interpretation possible. Enns gives an example of this type of dynamic in describing "innerbiblical interpretation" in the OT.[380] Daniel learns from Jeremiah's writings that the exile was to last 70 years, and after praying, receives revelation as to the deeper meaning, resulting in the 'seventy

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[378] Gutt, *Translation*, 75.
[379] Furlong, *"A Modest,"* 333.
[380] Enns, *Inspiration*, 118-119.

sevens' prophecy.[381] This insight came through divine revelation, a "deeper meaning contained in Jeremiah's words, meaning that Jeremiah himself neither intended nor could be expected on his own to understand."[382] This is a good example of a fuller meaning that required revelation to unpack.

A Balance Between Methods

To receive such revelation, one needs to be attuned to heavenly things, as Daniel was. But there needs to be a balance between the Spirit and the word, as many notable Christians teach. Millard Erickson quotes an anonymous pastor, "If you have the Bible without the Spirit you will dry up. If you have the Spirit without the Bible, you will blow up. But if you have both the Bible and the Spirit together, you will grow up."[383] This is expressed in another way by Mulholland, who stated that "Wesley clearly saw that the cognitive and the affective dimensions of human existence must be conjoined in mutual interdependence if Christians were to avoid falling into the extremes of sterile intellectualism on the one side or mindless enthusiasm on the other."[384] Similarly, Vern Poythress teaches that when either of the hermeneutical approaches to ascertaining the message of the Bible is used exclusively and without the other, there is stultification.[385] These three authors are all witnesses to the fact that the extremes are not useful in biblical hermeneutics. However, when the extremes fuse in the middle, guided by the Holy Spirit as they work together, there can be a synergy:

> what is offered by the right hemisphere to the left hemisphere is offered back again and taken up into a synthesis involving both hemispheres. This must be true of the processes of creativity, of the understanding of works of art, of the development of the religious sense. In each there is a progress from an intuitive understanding of this

[381] Enns, *Inspiration*, 118.
[382] Enns, *Inspiration*, 119.
[383] Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 80.
[384] Mulholland, *Shaped*, 66.
[385] Poythress, *God-Centered,* 83.

> whole, now transformed by the process that it has undergone… there has been a tendency for the left hemisphere to see the workings of the right hemisphere as purely incompatible, antagonistic, as a threat to its dominion – the emissary perceiving the Master to be a tyrant.[386]

The interpreter must learn to appreciate both hemispheres, and to avoid the extremes when either approach is overemphasized. For those less comfortable with the right hemispheric dynamic, one way to approach the use of these hermeneutics, particularly if one is used to the historical-grammatical method, is to simply employ that hermeneutic until one senses that God is speaking something personal through His word, and then to pay attention to what He is saying. In Deere's experience, he has found that all that is required to hear God is "availability, willingness, and humility."[387] For those less comfortable with the left hemispheric dynamic, one could take greater care to take the time to analyze the different ways of 'cubing' the text, in the manner that Corley describes.[388] Those more accustomed to operating in the left hemisphere need to take caution when judging or discerning the right hemisphere's workings, for

> many important aspects of experience, those that the right hemisphere is particularly well equipped to deal with – our passions, our sense of humour, all metaphoric and symbolic understanding (and with it the metaphoric and symbolic nature of art), all religious sense, all imaginative and intuitive processes – are denatured by becoming the object of focused attention, which renders them explicit, therefore mechanical, lifeless.[389]

Also, one must recognize that judging someone's personal-devotional hermeneutic as eisegetical is simply a matter of degree, as Leithart notes that "even the most rigorously exegetical readers are eisegetical, or might be called so by someone more rigorously exegetical. Everyone brings information to the text that is not in the text, and seeks to illuminate the text with light from outside;" he argues that this is necessary to complete the picture, and is

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[386] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 206.
[387] Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God: How God Speaks Today through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1996), 309.
[388] Steve W. Lemke et al., *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 10-18.
[389] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 209.

"inescapable."[390] Not only is there disagreement about what meaning to bring in to the text, but Powell makes an important distinction in interpretation, noting that meaning can be viewed as either message (described cognitively as points made) or effect (described emotively or affectively, recognizing its impact on the reader).[391] This 'effect' explains the dichotomy between scholarly/non-scholarly or academic/ordinary approaches to the Scripture.

Why People Interpret in a Personal-devotional Way

Would it not be tragic to deny people the cognitive benefits they receive from Scripture interpreted affectively in this way, or does the Holy Spirit only speak to hearts when the context is adequately accounted for? There needs to be a centering of both extremes. Those on the historical-grammatical end can learn to value how the Holy Spirit speaks affectively through His word, while those on the personal-devotional end can learn to appreciate the effect of original context. The verse Jer. 29:11 is often quoted as a promise to a Christian, in order to encourage them. If one reads primarily from a personal-devotional perspective as an ordinary reader, perhaps one could get a fuller understanding by studying some of the original context to understand the divine discipline that was taking place in the context of the exile, and that there is suffering as well as blessing in the lives of God's people as a result of their actions. If one reads primarily from a historical-grammatical approach, one could gain an appreciation for God's personal promise of faithfulness and the emotive and personal affect this promise has. The two viewpoints can sharpen one another (Prov. 27:17) as the extremes learn to come to the middle.

There are some principles that relate to how people tend to read the Scriptures devotionally, which explain the popularity of Jer. 29:11 and other verses. Gordon Fee provides

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[390] Leithart, *Deep Exegesis,* 117.
[391] Mark Allan Powell, *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 23.

the background questions for this section by looking at how some verses tend to be more "culture and specifically bound" than others: he gives the example of 1 Tim. 5:23 as being such a bound case.[392] He also explores the nature of particularity vs. eternality, which provides the background for the following discussion.[393] Consider two spectra, that of 'contextual freedom' and 'promise potentiality.' 'Contextual freedom' is the degree to which an utterance can be divorced from its context, the degree to which it can speak 'universally' and across time. For example, Jer. 29:11-13 is often quoted out of context as a word of encouragement, however, in verse 14 it mentions being brought "back from captivity" and in verse 10 it mentions the seventy years of captivity. These following and preceding verses which mention Babylon and captivity reduce the extent to which the verse can be taken out of context. However, the middle section (v. 11-13) is often used as a verse of encouragement to a believer, and its lack of contextual limiting words and phrases allows for this. The other spectra is that of 'spiritual or promise potentiality.' Applied to this verse in Jeremiah, it is clear that this verse is a promise, and has potential to be used by believers for their encouragement. Table 4.3 below illustrates this dynamic, and verses which have high contextual freedom and promise potentiality are more likely to be interpreted devotionally by the reader. Of course, the Holy Spirit can apply any verse as He sees fit, but verses which are highly free and full of promise are more likely to be used so. A few verses are given as examples of the different possibilities.

[392] Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 3.
[393] Fee, *Gospel*, 52-65.

Table 4.3: Contextual Freedom and Spiritual/Promise Potentiality Quadrant

Categories	- Low Contextual Freedom	+ High Contextual Freedom
+ High Spiritual or Promise Potentiality	Col. 1:3-8; Col. 2:16-18; 2 Cor. 8:1-8; Phil. 4:18-19	Jer. 29:11-13; Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 6:10-18; Phil. 4:13
- Low Spiritual or Promise Potentiality	1 Tim. 5:23; Acts 15:36-41; Col. 4:14-16; Rev. 1:11	2 Cor. 10:17; Psalm 2:1-3; Job 5:7; Psalm 49:10

Another example of a section of text that changes in its interpretive classification from one verse to another is the section 2 Cor. 10:1-6. This section of text has both high spiritual or promise potentiality as well as high contextual freedom when considering verses 3-5, but this is reduced when adding verses 1-2 or 6. Of course, this is not to argue that some portions of Scripture are inspired and some are not, rather, that some passages are more likely to become popular and applied by more believers to their lives. As Scripture itself states, all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). This table perhaps gives some insight into why some verses are more popular than others (Bible search sites can quantify this popularity by noting the most-looked-up verses in any given year) and are more likely to be interpreted affectively.

Control and the Left Brain

One important point to mention, when considering the ways in which God speaks, is that we cannot control the Holy Spirit. We don't know what He will say, when He will say it, or how He will say what He says. It is largely a matter of control. Must all our experience be carefully delimited or is God able to take us out of our comfort zones, and speak as He wills, how He wills? Poythress states that there should be warnings about some of the excesses of those who appreciate the freedom of the Spirit, like "aberrations and doctrinal confusion." However, critics "should not ignore the strengths resulting from the charismatics' appreciation of the presence of

the Holy Spirit and the priesthood of all believers."[394] An overcritical mindset is a sign of a dominating left hemisphere: it "needs certainty and needs to be right;"[395] everything must be boxed, weighed, and measured, and anything outside of the realm of one's understanding is 'out of bounds.' Another example of this mindset is expressed by Roy Zuck, who claims not only that "the place of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Bible means that He does not normally give sudden intuitive flashes of insight into the meaning of Scripture," but also that "the Spirit's part in hermeneutics does not suggest some mysterious work that is unexplainable and unverifiable."[396] In order to interact with spiritual truth and spiritual reality, however, one must be open to that which is 'unexplainable and unverifiable.' Although one lacks control in this situation, this is an unavoidable reality. In his book, Jack Deere describes the transformation he underwent, expressing how he used to be a 'Bible deist,' where he valued the word of God, the Bible, more than the Word of God, having a living relationship with Jesus Christ.[397] The fundamental issues at play for him were control, pride, and past hurts.[398] The testimony about Scripture as related by Deere recognizes God's manifold communication which makes clear how misplaced 'Bible deism' is: God spoke through "visions, dreams, symbols, angels, natural events, prophetic ecstasy, the pillar of fire, or even face to face."[399]

The focus will now turn to a particular verse which describes the nature of God's communication through His word, and its effectual perfection.

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[394] Poythress, *God-centered*, 112.
[395] McGilchrist, *The Master,* 82.
[396] Zuck, *Rightly*, 27.
[397] Deere, *Surprised*, 251-256.
[398] Deere, *Surprised*, 254-256.
[399] Walter M. Dunnett, *The Interpretation of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1984), 31.

Chapter 5: Guiding Metaphors, Verses and Constraints on Hermeneutics

5.1 Guiding Metaphor and Verse

Key Verse

The following verses in Isaiah describe how God accomplishes His purposes through His Word.

> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, **so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it**. (Isaiah 55:8-11)

I began to think about this thesis before the summer of 2013 and recognized that this verse contains key principles related to how God communicates through His Word. The Canada Institute of Linguistics (CanIL) selected Isaiah 55:10-11 as the theme verse for that summer. The context of the chapter is someone coming to God to have life (v. 1-3), turning in repentance to God (v. 6-7), all the while reminding the reader how God's ways are higher than our ways (v. 8-9). Verses ten and eleven "form a single sentence of unusual length in Hebrew composition," in which the first part "contains the comparison," and the second "makes the application."[400] The comparison is metaphorical, and looks at how God's will is accomplished through His word. The "consequential power of Yahweh" is very palpable and, like the rain and snow, are "real, forceful powers," just like God's word, which is a "substantive utterance carrying with it the full weight of Yahweh's majestic rule" and giving hope to a people in exile.[401] The hope is based on God's

[400] Joseph A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (ed. John Eadie; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 332.
[401] Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 161.

word, which will "achieve the purpose for which I sent it." According to Watts, this 'word' which God speaks in this passage is a word of restoration, His "promise to defend Jerusalem," and His "announcement of his plan and the appointment of Darius."[402] This is a good example of where the priorities of ordinary readers (personal-devotional hermeneutic) and Biblical scholars (historical-grammatical hermeneutic) are at odds, the latter focusing on the details of the original context, on understanding the history and culture of the context as well as the linguistic structure of the text, and the former interested in what God is saying through this passage about His character and how it affects them relationally with respect to His purposes and promises for their lives.

God's purposes for His Word

His purposes are found in His intent for the word: and this intent is foundational for Relevance Theory, which assumes that "speaker's intention and speaker's meaning are the same thing" due to the informative and communicative intentions made manifest.[403] This brings in *sensus plenior*, for although the human author saw only a certain horizon, God, seeing all horizons, communicates with people through this intention – which according to Relevance Theory is also the meaning – described in Isaiah 55:10-11. Because of God's omniscience, He knows all possible future applications and uses of His words, and all situations in which His Spirit will inspire, illuminate, and quicken His word into the hearts of His followers as they seek to know Him better. He knew that the verse in Romans 13:13-14 would transform the life of Augustine as he read this passage, seemingly flipped to randomly upon the advising of children who were singing, "Take it and read," for Augustine would feel the relevance of the passage to

[402] John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 818.
[403] Oswald, "Towards," 192.

his personal situation.[404] God knew the first verse from the forgotten Scriptures which would be read by Josiah (2 Kings 22:10-11) resulting in his repentance and the reestablishment of the importance of God's word. He knew how Matthew would apply the Hosea 11:1 passage to the Son of God, and, although it cannot be justified on historical-grammatical grounds, how it is a part of the eternal word of God. All past, present, and future Spirit-inspired and quickened uses of God's word have been known from eternity past, residing in the mind of God. Blenkinsopp, quoting Hermisson, relates that "the creative word of Yahveh is the central theological motif of the preaching of Second Isaiah" and that verses 10 and 11 are "one of most powerful and telling expressions of prophetic agency in the Bible, and it is no wonder that they have proved so influential throughout Jewish and Christian history."[405] Oswalt suggests that throughout Isaiah, "God's preexistent purpose and the certainty of its accomplishment have been a central idea," and that God has "spoken in intelligible terms," which when put together, "constitute the basis for the biblical doctrine of special revelation."[406] Goldingay describes the nature of Yahweh's creative word, that it is "not merely an outward sign, a way of referring to some reality. It brings that reality with it, brings about that reality."[407] From this perspective, and looking at communication stemming from a God whose ways are beyond our ways, is it really realistic to imagine that the only way God can speak through His word is through the historical-grammatical hermeneutic, which would provide the one-meaning, one-interpretation for every passage? Since

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[404] Klaus Bockmühl, *Listening to the God Who Speaks : Reflections on God's Guidance from Scripture and the Lives of God's People* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1990), 103-4.
[405] H.-J. Hermisson, *Studien zur Prophetie und Weisheit*. (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 129-30. Quoted in Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 372.
[406] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids Mich; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 446.
[407] John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 554.

His ways are beyond our ways, does it not make sense that He is not limited to the human-created rules of interpretation that we impose upon the text?[408]

Additional Metaphors – Living Stones

Though he does not necessarily abide by our human-made rules of interpretation, God often creates pictures using imagery we as humans are familiar with. The following passage, 1 Cor. 3:9-17, links the people of God to two images, the field and the building. Isaiah 55 is connected to the field imagery, where God's good word is seen to shower down and provide growth. In this passage and earlier (1 Cor. 3:6-7), Paul shows that it is God who brings about the growth in the field. Paul appeals to the image of the people of God as a building as well – a temple – which we must take care in how we build and on what foundation we lay it. The foundation must be Jesus Christ, who has already been laid down as the cornerstone (1 Cor. 3:11). Paul lets the congregation in Corinth know that they are God's temple, all taken together. This introduces the metaphor that believers are part of God's temple. Now, it is not being argued that this use of the metaphor is the meaning of the passage, but instead that it is simply a helpful analogy to characterize the different results of the hermeneutical approaches, as well as how it helps to constrain the meaning, which will be shown in the next chapter. In 1 Peter 2:4-7, one can see that Peter also takes up this theme in addition to Paul, and compares believers to "living stones" built up together in a "spiritual house." Christ Himself is the foundation of this house, and He also should be the foundation of the hermeneutic that one uses, as in Enns' christotelic approach. Within the individual life of each stone in this building, God's purposes are accomplished through His word. Each stone is unique, and different verses from the bible will prove critical in the life of various believers. Such is seen in Augustine's life for example, as

[408] Pinnock, "The Role," 496.

described above, where Romans 13:13-14 proved critical. Christian readers may be able to recall some verses in their own life which have been instrumental in shaping their own life path. These particular applications of God's word can take place through various hermeneutical means, either historical-grammatical, personal/devotional, or a combination thereof. The Holy Spirit uses His Word as He sees fit, and one can meet Him in the space of that encounter. Each individual stone is carefully crafted by God, through His purposes and divine will for the word as it is played out in their individual lives.

Dual-hermeneutic

The proposed dual hermeneutic can be fruitfully applied due to the unique nature of God's word. It is unlike any other book. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews describes the word of God as follows;

> "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Heb. 4:12-13)

This verse contains within it the principle of God speaking to individuals and their situations through His word. God's Word divides the soul from the spirit, enabling discernment between what is of God and what is not, and even goes so far as judging the attitudes and thoughts of our heart. This intimacy of judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart firmly places this verse as being related to the ways in which God speaks devotionally and personally through His word.

Scripture speaks in two ways like the double-edged[409] sword of Heb. 4:12: firstly, it speaks collectively and at the level of the universal Church superstructure, declaring the great truths of the Christian faith which bind all true believers together. Secondly, it speaks individually and personally, fashioning the individual believer through unique ways and interpretations which God has foreseen in his Isaiah 55:10-11 purposes from before the foundation of the world. These two ways of speaking are like the two blades of scissors; one will not cut as effectively without the dual action of the blades. This dual hermeneutic is not the only duality that has been discussed; there is also the dual nature of the left and right brain. Whenever one side of a duality has been emphasized at the expense of the other, there is a loss of life and vitality. Again, as McGilchrist argued, Western civilization has overemphasized the left hemisphere to the detriment of the valuing of the right hemisphere, and a cooperative balance needs to be restored,[410] not to a right hemisphere only vantage point, but to a centered balance between the two. Valuing the personal devotional hermeneutic, with its reliance on intuition and hearing God speaking, will do much to restore this balance.

5.2 Constraints on the Combined Hermeneutic

Operating together, the historical-grammatical and personal-devotional hermeneutic will interact and prevent extremes of either dry formalism, or wild imagination. However, as the personal-devotional hermeneutic is added, there will still need to be constraints put in place to ensure that Biblical interpretations and godly resulting actions from those interpretations are made. There will be many believers in the West, Africa, and elsewhere in the world, who will

[409] Vernon Jenkins is writing a book called "The Second Edge: A Role for Number in the Pursuit of Truth." In this forthcoming book, Jenkins uses the metaphor of the double-edged sword to describe two ways in which Scripture speaks. I am indebted to him for this idea, and with his permission to borrow that metaphor, I would like to modify his 'double-edged' conception to this proposed hermeneutic.
[410] McGilchrist, *The Master*, 14.

continue to function as ordinary readers, and interpret accordingly. What constraints can be put in place to avoid excess and error?

1st Constraint – Living Stones

The guiding metaphor discussed in the last section provides an important first constraint on the application of the proposed combined hermeneutic. The living stones are held together in the aggregate temple by the things that we all share in common as believers. This common 'cement' would include the great truths of the faith "once for all entrusted" to the saints (Jude 1:3). Any interpretation taken from any hermeneutic must agree with the historic teachings of faithful believers throughout the centuries. Doctrines such as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, those expressed in the Apostle's Creed and other important doctrines are non-negotiable truths of Scripture that must not be contradicted by further interpretations. The glorious gospel, which Paul describes in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, is the foundation of our faith, and new 'revelation' which contradicts it is, simply put, another gospel and rightly condemned by Paul himself even if it were to come from the lips of an angel (Gal 1:6-9). Some of these basics of the faith that build on the gospel are described in Hebrews 6:1-2. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews outlines some basics of the faith that the believers to whom he was writing needed to be reminded of, even though they should have known them already. The verse states, "Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement." (Heb 6:1-2) Although these certainly do not exhaust the basics of Christianity, they are a good representative sampling. These great truths of the faith are the cement which holds the super structure of the body of Christ together, as mentioned in the "living stones" metaphor

mentioned earlier. No interpretation which blatantly takes one outside of the fold of historic, faithful-to-the-gospel Christianity will be acceptable, no matter which hermeneutic it stems from. God can certainly apply a word from the Bible specifically designed to shape and fashion a particular stone, and this word may meet that believer in the midst of their individual, personal context, but it will never wrest that stone out from the cemented superstructure. If a supposedly God-given interpretation is discerned to be straying from the faith once entrusted to the saints, it should be viewed with much suspicion, and should be tested thoroughly.

Even if an interpretation does not stray from orthodoxy, and is producing beneficial cognitive effects (Fee gives the example of a dedication for a Regent College facility in an empty lot, where 1 Kings 8, Solomon's prayer of dedication was read), one should not "dare to believe that such moments are intended to be universally applicable to all other believers."[411] The individual stone may be encouraged by such specific instantiations of the living Word, and this is precisely a devotional reading.

2nd Constraint – Agreement with Scripture

A second check and balance that will keep people from getting off-track stems from the question: does a given interpretation agree with the clear teaching of the rest of Scripture?[412] Does it plainly contradict clear teaching of Jesus and the word? An example that Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard give is of a woman who explained to her therapist that she was going to leave her husband for another man, due to the word the Lord had given her from Ephesians 4:24, namely, "put on the new man."[413] Clearly, this contradicts the plain teaching of Scripture elsewhere, and thus would be eliminated from consideration as a valid interpretation. The Holy

[411] Fee, *Gospel*, 39.
[412] Poythress, *God-centered*, 86.
[413] William W. Klein et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville, Tenn: Nelson, 2004), 7.

Spirit will never contradict His word, so every revelation, prophecy, and interpretation must align itself with the word of God and face the scrutiny of the discernment of believers.

3rd Constraint - Testing

A third constraint is that the interpretation must be tested. What type of fruit does it result in? Is there a holiness and a godliness that results in the person's life through the outworking of the interpretation, or is it destructive and unholy? Does it align itself with the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Gal. 5:22-23, or does it match up with the works of the flesh described in Gal. 5:19-21? Similar to the injunction to weigh and test prophetic words (1 Thess. 5:20-22) and to hold on to that which is good, interpretations of Scripture must also be tested, to see if they are from God.

4th Constraint – Language

A fourth constraint is the constraining influence of language itself, and how it was used in the past. Vedder describes a phrase such as "Lamb of God," that "new relations between the old familiar elements….reveal something new" as "interpretation emerges from the similarity and dissimilarity between the elements of the interpretative statement."[414] Just as there is a blending of horizons in the overall hermeneutical approach, so is there a "blending of various horizons of meaning" in phrases such as "Lamb of God," resulting in no "unambiguousness," but also the elimination of other possible future relations (i.e. "donkey of God" which would be considered blasphemous).[415] The more the interpreter of Scripture learns about the concepts within the Bible, the more constrained their potential interpretations will become, provided they are submitted to the word of God.

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[414] Vedder, "Religion," 51.
[415] Vedder, "Religion," 51.

5th Constraint – Expanding Knowledge

A fifth constraint is somewhat similar to the fourth, it is the growing knowledge of the believer of the things of God. As they grow in their knowledge of God, believers will come to share more and more of the context, that is, "a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world."[416] As they are gradually transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) their context with God will continue to increase, and false interpretation will be discerned by them as such, false.

6th Constraint – Witness of the Holy Spirit and Rooted in Christ

A sixth constraint is the witness of the Holy Spirit within both the originator of the interpretation, and of other Spirit-filled believers who also become aware of the interpretation. Does it ring true to them? Does it match their knowledge of Scripture and the character of God? Does it bring a sense of peace, the kind only God can provide or does it foster anxiety? (Phil 4:6-7) Does the interpretation agree with the character, mission, and person of Jesus Christ? For those who practise a personal-devotional hermeneutic, staying rooted in Christ is absolutely key. Within the crucible of life, out of which that relationship with Christ is formed and tested, staying close to the Holy Spirit and to Christ and obeying the word of God is the way to avoid going off in an ungodly direction in interpretation.

7th Constraint – Interaction of Two Hermeneutical Approaches

A seventh constraint, as mentioned earlier, is the interaction of the two hermeneutical approaches. Poythress states that either the historical grammatical, or the purely devotional will

[416] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 15.

lead to "stultification"[417] on their own, as the former can be dry, lifeless and judgemental, while the latter is arbitrary and speculative at times. However, when combined together, in concert with the leading of the Holy Spirit, a powerful synergy can occur and the word can be spoken and ascertained with power. Ordinary readers will encourage those who employ the historical-grammatical hermeneutic to pay attention to how God is speaking, and in return, the ordinary readers will be encouraged to understand aspects of the original human author's intention.

8th Constraint – Awareness through Assessment of Intuition

An eighth constraint is making the assessment that intuition has both strengths and weaknesses. Myers covers a variety of these strengths some of which include: creativity, intuitive expertise, social and emotional intelligence, automatic processing, intuitive learning, and right-brain thinking.[418] He also mentions weaknesses some of which include: overconfidence, misreading our own minds, mispredicting our own feelings and behaviour, and illusory correlation.[419] This last weakness, illusory correlation, is particularly important to be aware of when considering the associations that one makes when interpreting Scripture in a personal-devotional way. As Poythress states, "we do not just accept anything… but we can acknowledge that the Holy Spirit sometimes teaches people in mysterious ways, through associations as well as through self-conscious logic."[420] Being aware of the nature of intuition and its strengths and weaknesses will help those who employ a personal-devotional hermeneutic to avoid error.

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[417] Poythress, *God-centered*, 83.
[418] David G. Myers, *Intuition: Its Powers and Perils* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 127.
[419] Myers, *Intuition*, 128.
[420] Poythress, *God-centered*, 86.

9th Constraint – Eco's Intention of the Text

A ninth constraint is found in Eco's principle of the intention of the text: allowing for multiple correct interpretations, and not requiring one meaning, as well as acting as a "constraint upon the free play" of the "intention of the reader." This eliminates the difficulty of determining the intention of the author, which is "very difficult to find out." By stipulating that the reader should be "sensitive to the intention of the text," Eco avoids "overinterpretation (an improper interpretation of the text)." Eco asserts that the text's intention "operates as a constraint upon the free play of the *intention lectoris* (intention of the reader)."[421] When the intention of the text is recognized, it can help to eliminate some interpretations that are extreme.

10th Constraint – The Body of Christ

Finally, a tenth constraint is the corporate body of Christ, and the benefit that one obtains from being in community with other believers. This tenth constraint differs from the first, in that the first relates to historical truths of Christianity remaining unchanged, while the tenth relates to the action of the body of Christ to constrain and correct the interpretations of other members in the body of Christ. Perhaps this distinction could be likened to the distinction between synchronic and diachronic analysis, whereby the first constraint relates to diachronic, and the tenth to synchronic.

As Archer relates for his Pentecostal hermeneutic, but which would be applicable for other denominations as well, there should be a "tridactic negotiation for meaning between the biblical text, the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal community."[422] Through being in close community with other believers, one will have a chance to weigh experiential knowledge and

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[421] Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture, and Community* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 160.
[422] Archer, *A Pentecostal*, 157.

revelation, which "must be *revealed* by the Holy Spirit, *validated* by Scripture, and *confirmed* by community."[423]

[423] Archer, *A Pentecostal*, 106. Italic's Archer's.

Chapter 6: Significance and Impact

Why is this issue of working out how a personal-devotional hermeneutic and the historical-grammatical hermeneutic would function important? And what impact does it have on Bible translation and the work of SIL and other Bible translation organizations?

Global Growth in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches

First of all, there has been explosive growth in the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches globally. Some estimates have the number of these Christians at around 584 million.[424] This is a total of more than a quarter of the world's Christian population (26.7%[425]). The growth rates of the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and independent Charismatic churches have been approximately 4.5, 10.5, and 4.5% respectively over the period 1970 estimated to 2020.[426] As discussed previously, this section of the body of Christ tends to be freer in their application of the Scriptures, and the number of scholars represented by these movements is fewer, although some notable ones include Gordon Fee and Wayne Grudem. Pentecostals and Charismatics are more likely to seek out the experience of God speaking to them, both through the word and otherwise. They have a reputation, self-admitted by Gordon Fee, of a "tradition [which] has lacked both hermeneutical sophistication and consistency"[427] and Fee wryly states that a "Pentecostal New Testament scholar is considered by many a contradiction in terms."[428] They are also more open to spiritual gifts, and the revelatory and sign gifts, which deal with revelation and power from God, among which are included tongues, interpretation of tongues, the gift of prophecy, and

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[424] Conrad Hackett and Brian Grim, "Global Christianity - A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population," (Washington, DC: 2011), 17. Accessed Jan 19, 2014, http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf.
[425] Hackett and Grim, "Global Christianity," 17. Accessed Jan 19, 2014.
[426] Todd M. Johnson, "Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020 - Society, Religion, and Mission," (South Hamilton, MA: Gordon Conwell, 2013), 18-19. Accessed Jan 19, 2014, http://wwwgordonconwell.com/netcommunity/CSGCResources/ChristianityinitsGlobalContext.pdf.
[427] Fee, *Gospel*, x.
[428] Fee, *Gospel*, xi.

miracles. Many of these gifts depend on revelation from God, and thus go beyond what human logic is capable of constructing. They are received spiritually through the intuition, and spiritually discerned. Because of the widespread nature of this movement, and the hermeneutic they tend to embrace, it is all the more important to have an understanding of how God speaks devotionally and personally through His word, and to be able to both engender good fruit from that experience, but also constrain it, so as to avoid the difficulties that may be associated with excess. The significance of this thesis would also be the upholding of the priesthood of all believers, and the upholding of concerns of Pentecostals, who "find the Historical Critical methodology to be oppressive and alienating to the common laity" and potentially liable to take "the Bible out of the hands of the Christian community, out of the hands of the ordinary person… and… in[to] the laboratory of the expert who alone has the proper tools and training to interpret Scripture."[429] But as was stated earlier in discussing ordinary readers in Africa, there is much to learn from them.

Relevance in Postmodern Culture

In addition to being more relevant to a growing Pentecostal/Charismatic subculture within Christianity, such a hermeneutic would be of value in our world increasingly affected by postmodern ideas and trends. McKnight wrote on postmodernism, particularly for "those who, on a personal level, have become less and less satisfied with the meanings that historical criticism is capable of discerning."[430] For the church to stay relevant, it must become aware of the questions people are asking, and have biblical answers which can point people in the direction of Christ. A dual-edged hermeneutic, as proposed here, is an example of what McKnight describes: "the interpenetration of approaches is vital for full appreciation and

[429] Archer, *A Pentecostal,* 145.
[430] McKnight, *Post-Modern,* 14.

application of any one approach"[431] as the "worldview does not dictate one perspective and approach."[432]

The recognition of the absolute truth of the Christian message and worldview is also significant, as it is often discounted in postmodern thought. Powell, unlike many of his postmodern colleagues, believes that one can evaluate expected and unexpected readings and regard them "positively or negatively"[433] and that the claims of Jesus Christ are exclusive and "foundational."[434] The absolute foundation of Christianity consists of

> necessary interconnected strands of a unique and unified system of thought… a unique historical and eschatological story/meta-narrative, which places all humanity within an epic cosmic drama of creation – fall – redemption – consummation with a particular focal point. This history of redemption and redemptive history is thoroughly Christocentric…. It is the transcendent uniqueness of his person and his work that distinguishes Christianity from all other 'faiths' and gives Christianity its exclusive or particular claims.[435]

Anything added to them must be of the same Spirit. The idea is to keep the benefits of postmodernism, while not jettisoning the meta-narrative. Similarly, one wants to keep the benefits of the left hemisphere, by not throwing out the historical-grammatical method and its contribution to understanding. Simply put, a necessary balance needs to be accomplished. Relevance Theory has contributed to the stemming of the subjective aspects of postmodernism by making "discussion of the author respectable again," as it "tells us that an inferred author…. is necessary for communication."[436] Whereas postmoderns view the author as inaccessible, translators realize that they must "construct an author" in order to faithfully try and pass on the

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[431] McKnight, *Post-Modern,* 151.
[432] McKnight, *Post-Modern,* 150-151.
[433] Powell, *Chasing*, 8.
[434] Powell, *Chasing*, 9.
[435] Daniel Strange, "For their Rock is Not as our Rock: The Gospel as the 'Subversive Fulfillment' of the Religious Other," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 2 (2013): 386.
[436] Boase-Beier, "Saying," 279.

message, which originally came from a human mind, rendering as irrelevant the theoretical discussions which discount the author.[437]

Bible Translation

Some of the ideas expressed in this thesis are also relevant to the work of SIL and Wycliffe, and Bible translators in general. An important caveat must be made in this regard. This thesis does not suggest that Scripture translation should be carried out according to a model of revelatory communication, whereby the translator tries to change the text according to some supposed revelation from God. The original inspiration of the Holy Spirit on the writers of the Bible must be respected and their meaning as best as we can understand it. Every effort must be made to convey the original message as it was penned, so that the meaning remains, even though heaven and earth pass away (Matt. 24:35). It was the original revelation from the Holy Spirit that fashioned the text with its identity as inspired revelation *sensus plenior* and its ability to engender intertextual *sensus plenior* and intuitive associations that are derived are due to this primary inspiration. Thus, the historical-grammatical method as opposed to the personal-devotional method should be employed when attempting to translate from the original languages. As modern believers we have illumination in interpreting Scripture, not inspiration, and should therefore respect the text and try to arrive at as close as we can come to the original meaning. So, the distinction between illumination and inspiration in the areas of revelation and hermeneutics must be maintained in considering the work of translation.

The Bible translation effort has been shown to be crucial for the growth of the church. In Africa, statistics have demonstrated that "one of the greatest factors in the rise of independent churches in Africa is having the scripture in the language of the target ethnic group" which

[437] Boase-Beier, "Saying," 279.

results in "a living personal relationship with God, and facilitates the growth of the church."[438] Yorke regards Bible translation as "the key to the inculturation process in Africa" in that it "provides appropriate tools for contextualised Christian liturgy, life and theology."[439] There is a difference between the African and Western mind[440] and Muzorewa proposes the idea that "African theologians must reinterpret the gospel because the way in which it was taught by most missionaries and some conservative Westernized Africans no longer speak [sic] effectively to the African."[441] Inculturation can be seen as a critical step in defining the African approach to Scripture. Ukpong suggests that inculturation results in a "specifically African contribution to global biblical scholarship" and that African theologians must break free from viewing the "format of Western scholarship" as "the only legitimate mode of reading the Bible" which would make them "prisoners of colonialism."[442] However, Dada argues that "we cannot ignore the two thousand years of Christian heritage of the West and the enormous contributions of Western Christian scholars to the growth and development of Christian ideas and theology."[443] The proposed dual hermeneutic provides two different perspectives that complement one another. One can learn from both the Western tradition, as well as the growing African tradition.

How Christians have viewed translation over the centuries in both worldviews is a subject of great interest. Africans became aware that "*God speaks our language too,*" as the faith of Christianity and its "logic of… translatability" resulted in the "emergence of a significant

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[438] Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke and Peter M. Renju, *Bible Translation and African Languages* (Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2004), 122.
[439] Yorke, *Bible Translation*, 124.
[440] DomNwachukwu, *Authentic,* 176.
[441] Gwinyai H. Muzorewa, *The Origins and Development of African Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985), 93. Quoted in Peter Nlemadim DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity: An Inculturation Model for the Igbo* (New York: P. Lang, 2000), 176.
[442] Justin S. Ukpong, "Development in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, (eds. G. West and Musa Dube; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 46-47. Quoted in Adekunle Oyinloye Dada, "Repositioning Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa Towards Holistic Empowerment," *Black Theology* 8, no. 2 (2010): 167.
[443] Dada, "Repositioning," 167.

African theological tradition in the 20th century" which will hopefully be expressed more deeply in the many African languages of people's hearts.[444] According to Franklin, the "Pentecost event establishes the translatability of the gospel and the importance God places on the vernacular language as a primary means of communicating the truths of God" with the goal of seeing people of every culture before the throne of God (Rev. 5:9).[445]

Gadamer's Perspective on Translation

Although Gadamer focused on hermeneutics largely in *Truth and Method*, he also had some ideas that have important implications for translation. He places a high value on translation, stating that

> the translation process fundamentally contains the whole secret of how human beings come to an understanding of the world and communicate with each other. Translation is an indissoluble unity of implicit acts of anticipating, of grasping meaning as a whole beforehand, and explicitly laying down what was thus grasped in advance.[446]

Gadamer also does away with the notion of a neutral translator, who can objectively produce a translation that is free from any interpretation. In fact, he says, "For every translator is an interpreter."[447]Another significant issue for translation brought up by this thesis is the importance of lexical choice. The words that translators choose will be the basis, the grounds for the associations and interpretations that will result. At minimum, translators should spend significant amounts of time in prayer and conduct their work with a holy reverence for God's word and a dependence on the Holy Spirit for guidance in the work, as their choice of words will determine the ways in which God uses His word through intuitive associations and the personal-

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[444] Bediako, *Jesus and*, 58.
[445]Kirk J. Franklin and Cornelius J. P. Niemandt, "Vision 2025 and the Bible Translation Movement: Original Research," *HTS : Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 3
[446] Gadamer, *Truth*, 548.
[447] Gadamer, *Truth,* 387.

devotional hermeneutic. What a privilege and serious task! As God says, those who translate ought to "tremble at my word." (Isa. 66:2)

Wycliffe's Work and Trusting God to Be Effective through His Word

And the work continues to progress as Wycliffe moves ahead in Vision 2025; as of October of 2013, there are still 1919 language groups that do not have any Scriptures in their heart language.[448] These language groups represent approximately 180 million people. Most of these groups are small, and some of them are pre-modern in their worldview. In many parts of the world where these groups are, there are no seminaries, no churches, and limited infrastructure. As the gospel goes out among these people groups, is one to assume that they will only begin to understand the Scriptures after years of study? Are we imposing our Western lens on the Bible they read, and insisting that they understand the Scriptures in our way, the historical-grammatical one? Or can the Holy Spirit be trusted to guide these people into all truth, teaching them the relevance of the Word of God to their daily lives and confirming the preaching of the gospel by New Testament manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power? Can we trust that their belief in Christ, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit can keep them on track spiritually, as they grow in their understanding of the Scriptures? Because the Scriptures are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14), the moment a person is born again, they will have access to the voice of Jesus Christ, and the witness to truth that the Holy Spirit brings. Of course, this does not mean that the historical grammatical hermeneutic is no longer needed. It is crucial for church growth and the elimination of cults to have a solid biblical foundation and an understanding of the original meaning of the text as intended by the human authors. Through discipleship, and the

[448] Wycliffe, "Scripture and Language Statistics 2013," accessed Jan 25, 2014, http://www.wycliffe.net/resources/scriptureaccessstatistics/tabid/99/Default.aspx.

honouring of the value and place of the Word of God, sound doctrine and Biblical fruit will be passed on from generation to generation of believers.

Dye's Principle of Personal Relevance

As Gutt suggests, in mentioning Wayne Dye's work, the most important aspect for people who were receiving a Bible translation was the principle of personal relevance – how the word affected their daily lives.[449] Dye relates that this principle largely results in practical ways that translators can bring the truth about Jesus Christ and His word to bear on a situation – through a "Good News encounter," which has four characteristics, "it requires love, it is done 'on the spot,' it is relevant to the need and it points people to God and/or the Bible."[450] Dye uses Maslow's hierarchy of needs in his analysis; however, he found that the idea of the "hierarchy of strength" did not really apply to the cultures he was aware of.[451] Thus, the various levels of Maslow's hierarchy could all be relevant, and whatever draws people closer to God through a "Good News encounter" is valuable. A hermeneutic which draws people into relationship with God and speaks to them in a personal way, would contribute greatly to the perception that the Word of God is indeed living and active, and that it can transform their lives. Dye found that people's comments with respect to their desires for the role of Scripture and spirituality in their lives were not fully explained by theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs.[452] Another insight was necessary – that people's desire for God was most important, their desire to have a right relationship with their Creator.[453] The combined hermeneutic fulfils both of these needs – grounding people in the truth of what Jesus has done, and what that means, and drawing them

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[449] Gutt, *Translation*, 96.
[450] T. Wayne Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of its Spiritual Impact* (Dallas, Texas: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1985), 45.
[451] Dye, *The Bible,* 80.
[452] Dye, *The Bible,* 80.
[453] Dye, *The Bible,* 80.

into a personal relationship with the Creator. Experiencing God speaking through His word in a personal way is a powerful motivation for spiritual growth and a key to seeing the personal relevance of the word.

Relevance Theory Implications for the Spread of the Gospel

There are also some interesting implications of Relevance Theory for the spread of the gospel. As people make inferences (where "inference is a process by which an assumption is accepted as true or probably true on the strength of the truth or probable truth of other assumptions") on the basis of hearing the gospel message, they are undergoing "a form of fixation of belief."[454] This topic of belief and regeneration upon hearing the gospel (Rom. 10:8-10, 17) is a rich area for further contemplation. Fundamentally, some propositions (to be heard, believed, and derivative inferences made) are more important than others, as they lead to salvation in a mysterious interplay with the Holy Spirit's work.

[454] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 68.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued for a balanced approach to Scripture interpretation, that mirrors the balance in the human personality as discussed by McGilchrist – regarding the 'how' of the brain operation, for the left, analytical, sequential, focused and linear, and the right brain, intuitive, associative, open, and parallel. Relevance Theory was introduced, and provided the basic framework in which to understand communication in Scripture. The realm of textual meaning was explored, with an argument for the validity of *sensus plenior*. Distinctions were drawn within revelatory communication, between types of *sensus plenior* and also intuitive associations. Ordinary readers and their theology as well as inculturation theology were discussed, with examples from Africa and the West. The characteristics of an idealized ordinary reader were established. *Sensus plenior* was then proposed as a middle ground between 'one-meaning' literalism, and postmodern multiplicity. McGilchrist's thesis was applied to the Biblical studies hermeneutical paradigm, through a comparative look at the way scholars and non-scholars read the Bible. Relevance Theory was employed to highlight some of the differences between two ways of reading, historical-grammatical and personal-devotional. A balance in interpretation was advocated, with the goal of Gadamer's "fusion of horizons." Isaiah 55:10-11 was proposed as a significant passage in understanding God's purposes for His word, and the guiding metaphor of living stones in 1 Peter 2 also played a role, among other factors, in constraining the proposed dual-hermeneutic (from the double-edged sword, Heb. 4:12). The significance of the need for balance was shown through a number of issues, including the growth of the Pentecostal/Charismatic church, and the need for relevance of the Scriptures to people's lives in communities where translation is happening. How Bible translation is affected by these ideas was also discussed.

So the call has gone out, “Come to the middle!”…. a centered place that is representative of the full spectrum of human personality, takes into account the perspectives and approaches of ordinary readers (the majority of the Christian population!), is justified by the *sensus plenior* of Scripture, portrayed and explained through Relevance Theory, constrained appropriately and significant for the body of Christ and the translation of Scripture. In such a position, a variety of resources will be at our disposal, so as we go about interpreting God’s word, may “whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Rev 3:22) It is in hearing and following Him that there is true freedom.

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