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ON PLOTTING THE EXEGETICAL-HERMENEUTICAL LANDSCAPE[1]

Dr LC Jonker
University of Stellenbosch

Abstract

In recent years many scholars have ventured the quest towards an integrational or multidimensional approach to Biblical exegesis[2]. The present methodological environment in which exegetical strategies proliferate at an alarming rate, has become untenable. In a recent dissertation[3] I have indicated how the reading and interpretation of Biblical texts are hampered by the haphazard variety of exegetical strategies, in addition to the many exclusivistic claims that are made. In the last part of my dissertation I proposed that a hermeneutical framework with an adapted communication model as point of departure, should be formulated as the domain within which specialized exegetical methodologies and their interaction can be described multidimensionally. This framework should function as the 'map' on which exegetical-hermeneutical strategies can be 'plotted'. As an operative factor for this hermeneutical framework I have proposed a reading strategy which consists of two complementary levels, namely specialized reading and competent reading. The description and discussion of the proposed framework will commence with the clarification of certain theoretical issues. The first part of this article will thus deal with the following issues: (i) Synchrony and Diachrony, (ii) Text and Meaning, and (iii) Author, Medium and Reader. In the second part the proposed framework will be described and discussed. Thereafter certain guidelines for future research and discussion will be formulated.

1. Theoretical Issues

(i) Synchrony and Diachrony

In recent years, especially after the advent of several text-immanent methodologies, the relationship between synchrony and diachrony has become an important topic in sholarly discussions[4]. Partly as a reaction against the historical-critical exegetical

1 An adapted version of this article was read as a paper at the annual congress of the Southern African Society of Semitics (SASSEM) in Stellenbosch on 15 September 1993.

2 Rendtorff (1992, 19-20) hints in this direction: 'At this point I want to say again that we should try to relate new, mainly synchronic aspects to older, mainly diachronic insights, for what was observed in careful studies during the last two centuries was not entirely wrong.' Cf. also Clines (1990, 51): 'I am impressed in this study by the value of as many strategies as possible for reading a text. As a critic of the text, I should hate to be restricted by a methodological purism. What I have noticed is that different strategies confirm, complement or comment on other strategies, and so help develop an integrated but polychromatic reading.'

3 Jonker, LC 1993. *Exclusivity and Variety: A Typological Study Towards the Integration of Exegetical Methodologies in Old Testament Studies.* Stellenbosch: Unpublished dissertation.

4 Understandably, because of the influence of the historical-critical methodology, this discussion has not aroused much interest in German exegetical circles. In the Netherlands, however, this debate

practice, and partly as an extension of De Saussure's model for linguistic studies, these text-immanent methodologies have emphasized the value and priority of synchrony in exegesis. In practice the diachronic aspect of the biblical text has received decreasingly little attention, or has been totally neglected. This trend is particularly noticeable in American and British biblical scholarship. In the wake of this development, Boorer (1989, 195ff.) indicates the importance of a diachronic approach, and argues for a synthesis of the synchronic and diachronic aspects[5].

Boorer addresses two related questions in her article: 'What is the relationship between the interpretation of the final text resulting from a diachronic approach, on the one hand, and a synchronic approach, on the other?' (1989, 195), and 'Does a consideration of the diachronic dimension have a place at all, or, since the present text per se is the only certain subject of interpretation available, can it not be maintained that a synchronic approach alone is not only sufficient but the most appropriate?' (1989, 196).

From her investigation Boorer deduces the following principle: '... the diachronic reading will affect the interpretation of the text. This involves two aspects: different diachronic readings will result in different final readings of the same text; and the interpretation of the present text that results from a diachronic reading is likely to be different from a synchronic reading of that text' (1989, 204-205)[6]. In the light of this principle she warns against an exclusively synchronic approach. She does not want to negate the valuable contribution to biblical interpretation which resulted from the movement towards a synchronic approach. However, because of the fact that consideration of the diachronic dimension affects the interpretation of the present text, it should not be neglected in the interpretational process[7]. Rather, what is called for, is a complementary focus on the diachronic dimension. 'It is precisely in the interest of opening up other possible interpretations of the present text that consideration of the diachronic dimension should not be excluded' (Boorer, 1989, 207)[8].

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arises much interest. Cf. e.g. the dissertations of Talstra (1987) and Van der Meer (1989). In his study of the structure of the book of Joel, Van der Meer (1989, 38) argues: *'Met deze formele benadering blijft men dus niet alleen op de lijn van de synchronie, maar ook het diachrone aspect gaat een rol spelen. Beide momenten zijn noodzakelijk om tot de betekenis van teksten te komen.'*

5 Cf. also Deist (1989a) and the more recent article by Noble (1993).

6 She refers to Ricoeur's *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, 1976). 'As the interpreter using a diachronic approach interprets each level, and thus appropriates the 'world' of each of these, the way-of-being-in-the-world, the very 'self' of the interpreter will change from level to level. Consequently, the 'self' that encounters the final form of the text will be different after a diachronic reading, because of the successive appropriations of these 'worlds' opened up at each level, from the 'self' who interprets the final form directly' (Boorer, 1989, 205).

7 Noort (1989, 22), in his proposal of 'kongeniale uitleg', regards the synchronic approach as primary. However, he qualifies this statement by admitting '*... dat een diachronische benadering onopgeefbaar is. Alleen een diachronische benadering is in staat de broodnodige sociaalwetenschappelijke vraagstellingen letterlijk in kaart te brengen. Alleen een diachronische benadering is in staat het reliëf, de diepte*scherpte van de teksten te beschrijven, waarmee variatie en eenheid van het Oude Testament kunnen worden naverteld.'

8 A complementary focus on the synchronic AND diachronic dimensions of the text naturally opens up the possibility of multiple interpretations. This inevitably leads to the question of legitimacy of interpretations. Boorer argues '... that the issue of which interpretation of the present text is to be

(ii) Text and Meaning

In a previously published article[9] I have provided a short overview of the developments which took place in recent literary and biblical studies with regard to the concepts 'text' and 'meaning'. I came to the conclusion there that the answers to the questions 'What is a text?' and 'What constitutes meaning?' are crucial in the formulation of a multidimensional exegetical approach. For an elaboration on this conclusion, refer to the afore-mentioned article.

(iii) Author, medium and reader

In recent years an increasing number of scholars have indicated that the study of the interpretation of texts should be conducted within the parameters of a communication theory. It has increasingly been argued that texts function as part of communication. *'Textinterpretation ist nicht Gegenstandserkenntnis, sondern Kommunikation und Reflexion. Die sogenannten Gegenstände, die Texte, reden selber. Sie sind keine Objekte, sondern Subjekte. Besser: jeder Text ist Ausdruck eines menschlichen Subjekts. Im Lesen kommuniziere ich mit ihm. Und genau darin liegt der Sinn der Beschäftigung mit alten Texten' (Schweizer, 1982, 82-83). Not only the text, but also the interpreter is being regarded as part of this communication process. 'Die These läßt sich aber auch im Blick auf mich, den Interpreten formulieren. Das ist dann nur die andere Seite der gleichen Münze. Wenn ich richtig lese, detailliert, aufmerksam, dann geschieht zwangsläufig etwas in mir'* (Schweizer, 1982, 83). The biblical text and exegete are subsequently regarded as no exceptions. Biblical exegesis should thus be done within the framework of communication theory.

This interest in communication can also be related to the influence of and interaction with textual linguistics and textual theory. In Hardmeier's research (1978), for example, the influence of SJ Schmidt's textual theory is quite obvious[10]. SJ Schmidt (1972, 10) distinguishes between textual linguistics and textual theory: *'... während die Textlinguistik beim Text als primärem sprachlichen Zeichen haltmacht, also innerhalb sprachsystematischer Forschung verbleibt, geht Texttheorie aus vom Text als funktionierendem Faktor in kommunikativen*

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preferred cannot necessarily simply be reduced to a choice between a synchronic reading and interpretations resulting from diachronic readings' (1989, 207). Rather, the possible diachronic readings of the text should be examined intentionally to determine whether any of these readings are implicitly disclosing the interpreter's supposed synchronic interpretation. 'If one's synchronic interpretation does correspond to an interpretation of the final text resulting from a particular reading of the diachronic dimension, the further step must be taken of deciding if this specific diachronic reading is the most convincing, or if one of the other possible views of the diachronic dimension, and therefore an alternative interpretation of the present text that results from it, is to be preferred. Only if one's synchronic interpretation is quite different from any final interpretation of the text resulting from any conceivable diachronic reading does the choice need to be made between diachronic and synchronic interpretations. However, in that case also, consideration of the diachronic dimension would be necessary to be able to conclude that the synchronic interpretation was in fact unique' (1989, 208).

9 Jonker, LC 1993. ''Text' in a multidimensional exegetical approach', *Scriptura* 46, 100-115.

10 The 'kommunikative Handlungsspiel (KHS)' thus plays a significant role in his research.

Handlungsspielen ..., also vom Text in kommunikativer Funktion[11]*. Textlinguistik bleibt zeichenorientiert, Texttheorie ist darüber hinaus funktionsorientiert.'* Together with the insight that texts should be studied inside text theoretical parameters, a new interest in pragmatics[12] arose. SJ Schmidt (1972, 11) states: *'Der Ruf nach einer expliziten Pragmatik wird unüberhörbar. ... Der Ruf nach einer Pragmatik besagt aber nichts anderes als die Forderung, von der gesprochenen Sprache in faktischen Kommunikationssituationen auszugehen, also den Sprecher, die Kommunikationssituation und die Voraussetzungen, Effekte und Wirkungen des Gebrauchs von Sprache ausreichend mit zu berücksichtigen.'*

It cannot be denied that any text, the biblical text included, is a manifestation of human communication. In establishing the implications of this fact to biblical exegesis, the exegete has to bear in mind:

(i) The biblical text is a written (Hebrew / Aramaic) text.
(ii) The biblical text originated in religious communities; its written fixation took place in religious communities; it was transmitted by religious communities; it is interpreted in and by religious communities (*inter alia*).
(iii) The biblical text is an ancient text, with a complex history of development and transmission.
(iv) Various (levels of) 'senders'[13] and 'receivers'[14] should be distinguished.

The afore-mentioned guidelines should be followed in the evaluation of various exegetical methodologies. For each case it should be determined to what extent the exegetical methodology concerned accounts for the communication process in which the text operates. These criteria should be used to establish whether communication theory somehow provides a common denominator for the incorporation of these methodologies into a multidimensional model.

2. A Multidimensional Framework for 'Plotting' the Exegetical-Hermeneutical Landscape

In formulating a framework for the 'plotting' of the exegetical-hermeneutical landscape I came to the conclusion that an integrational model would not be a suitable solution to the complex problem. By integrational model the following is meant: One methodology is taken as basis, and it is complemented by the results of another methodology or methodologies (without questioning or modifying the epistemological point of departure of the basis methodology). In such an integrational model, the theoretical presuppositions of the methodologies whose results are used to complement another methodology, are negated. For example, if a

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11 Interpretation is then seen by S.J. Schmidt (1989, 198) *'als Form der engagierten Teilnahme an literarischer oder religiöser Kommunikation ..., also als eine textbezogene Kulturtechnik oder eine spezielle Diskursform (=Textverarbeitung), die zwischen den Polen 'naiv' und 'expertenhaft' ausgeprägt sein kann.'*

12 Schweizer (1986) also incorporates pragmatics in his exegetical design.

13 Rousseau (1988, 37) has indicated that, for example, *'die oorspronklike senders (die skrywers) hulle identiteit laat opgaan het in hulle geskrifte wat sodoende die 'sekondêre' senders word.'* 'Sender' and 'medium' have thus become intermingled.

14 The 'receivers' on one level of the tradition history may act as 'senders' on another level.

narrative methodology serves as the basis into which certain aspects of a historical-critical methodology are integrated, the epistemological presuppositions of the last-mentioned methodology are negated in the process. It became obvious that another mode of interaction between these methodologies was necessary. This led to the formulation of a multidimensional 'map'. The venture was not driven by the question 'How could one formulate a 'super method' by integrating the 'strong points' of various existing strategies?', but rather 'How could the landscape within which exegetical methodologies interact multidimensionally, be mapped?'

With due awareness of the implications of the above-mentioned theoretical issues, the presuppositions on which the formulation of the exegetical-hermeneutical framework is based will now be discussed. Thereafter a description of the framework will follow.

2.1 Presuppositions

(a) The principle of a pluralism of exegetical methodologies is accepted in the formulation of this framework. The proliferation of theories[15] is a fact which cannot be ignored or avoided.

(b) The hermeneutical framework[16] in which the plurality of exegetical methodologies operate is an adapted[17] communication model. The three basic elements of the communication process (namely sender, medium and receiver) constitute this model.

(c) The synchronical, as well as diachronical aspects of exegesis should be taken into consideration in the formulation of each of the elements of the adapted communication model which functions as hermeneutical framework[18].

(d) The historical and religious[19] dimensions of biblical texts cannot be ignored in the formulation of a hermeneutical framework in which exegetical methodologies operate. Not only does each element in the communication

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15 Cf. e.g. Feyerabend's two principles of scientific activity: (i) Proliferation: 'Invent, and elaborate theories which are inconsistent with the accepted point of view, even if the latter should happen to be highly confirmed and generally accepted' (Feyerabend, 1965, 223-224); (ii) Tenacity: '... the advice to select from a number of theories the one that promises to lead to the most fruitful results, and to stick to this one theory even if the actual difficulties it encounters are considerable, ...' (Feyerabend, 1970, 203).

16 Although a distinction is made between exegesis and hermeneutics, these procedures can never be separated. Exegesis forms an integral part of the hermeneutical process.

17 An exact description of this adapted model is provided in the next section.

18 The complementarity of synchronical and diachronical structures has already been emphasized. It is argued (with Crossan, Boorer and others) that synchronical and diachronical procedures should not be followed in isolation.

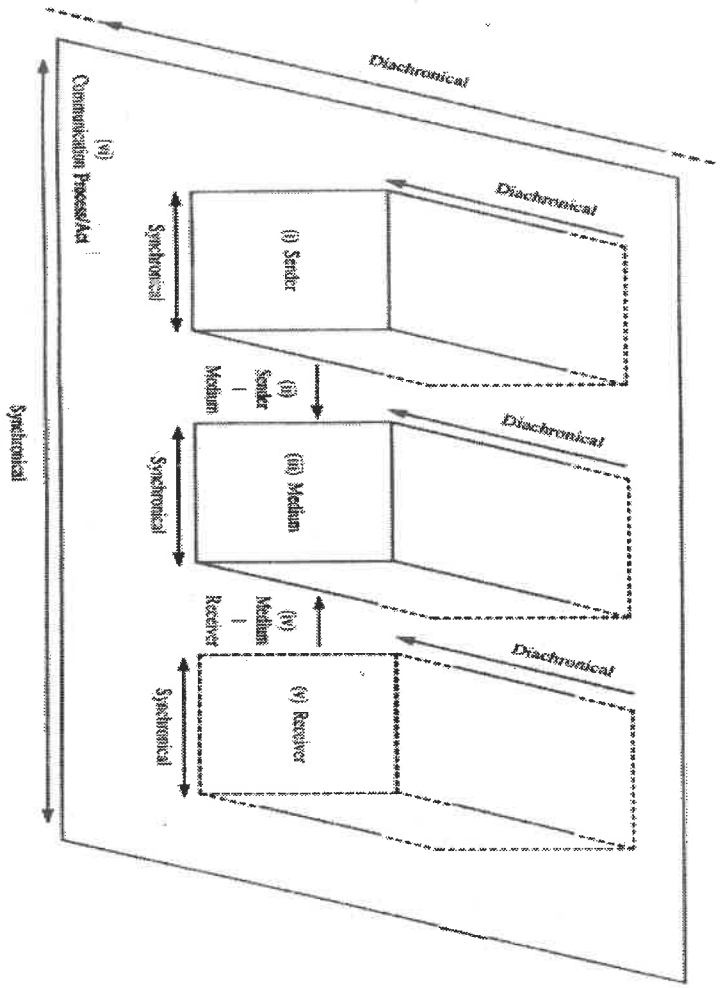
19 Van Huyssteen (1987, 11) emphasizes the religious dimension: 'But at least equally important is the fact that these same literary texts are also *religious texts* responding to explicitly *religious questions*. And this fundamental *religious dimension* of the scriptural texts should not only form an integral part of the systematic theologian's view of the Bible and therefore also of his theory of the text; it can to my mind also never be ignored by literary critics' [his italics - LCJ]. Also Patrick and Scult (1990, 18) in their rhetorical criticism maintain that, 'as difficult as it might be to do so without losing scholarly objectivity, the interpreter must somehow engage the spiritual and theological truth claims of the Biblical text in order to understand it rightly.' Cf. furthermore Tracy (1984, 167).

framework have a historical and a religious dimension, but the interaction between these elements should also be understood in these terms.

(e) Within the hermeneutical framework of a communication model, specialization in a particular exegetical methodology does not become redundant. Rather, this model has an *ecclesia* of exegetical research[20] as a prerequisite.

2.2 Description of the proposed framework

The description will refer to the following diagram:



20 Cf. Ricoeur's terminology (in Léon-Dufour, 1971, 287). Ricoeur asserts that an intersection of exegetical methodologies can only be accomplished on a group basis. The cooperation of scholars should accomplish that which is impossible for the single exegete.

In previous studies[21] the importance of a communication model in the implementation of exegetical methodologies has become evident. However, it has also been emphasized that such a communication model should be developed or adapted to take into account that the object of study in biblical exegesis is an ancient text which came into being, and is still being used, in religious contexts. This fact can only be accounted for adequately if the concepts synchrony and diachrony are applied within the framework of the communication model. Previous studies[22] emphasize the importance of this distinction, and indicate that they are not mutually exclusive procedures[23].

In the proposed hermeneutical framework the basis is thus formed by an adapted communication model. Intricate communication models can, for the purpose of biblical exegesis, be reduced to three basic elements, namely sender (author(s)[24]), medium (text) and receiver (exegete/reader). Each of these communication elements has a diachronical and synchronical component (which will be described later). The interaction between sender-medium, and medium-receiver can also be described in synchronical terms. However, the whole communication situation (which functions synchronically) changes over time, and should also be described on a diachronical level. Each of the aspects of the proposed communication model will now be dealt with separately:

(i) *Sender [(Author(s)]*: Each text in the Old Testament originates from somewhere/someone. No text simply appears without origin. In the proposed communication model this origin is referred to as the sender. Normally, with regard to Old Testament texts, different levels of senders can be distinguished. These levels of senders can be described *diachronically*. Originally, a text (or parts thereof) may have existed as orally transmitted traditions. Those who transmitted these traditions (insofar as it can be established who they were) form a first sender level. Various subsequent levels can be distinguished, for example the level of the initial written form of the text, compositional levels and redactional levels. Each of these levels originated from (a) specific sender(s), be they authors, compositors or redactors. Not only can various levels of senders be established (the diachronical aspect[25]), but each level can also be described *synchronically*[26].

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21 Cf. Buss *et al* (1979), Rousseau (1986), Patte (1990a) and Jonker (1993a). Each one of these studies foresees some sort of communication model as hermeneutical framework for the integration of exegetical methodologies.

22 Cf. e.g. Crossan (1982).

23 Boorer's investigation has shown that 'different diachronic readings will result in different final readings of the same text; and the interpretation of the present text that results from a diachronic reading is likely to be different from a synchronic reading of that text' (1989, 204-205). It follows that neither a synchronical reading nor a diachronical reading should be neglected in the interpretation of texts. Cf. also Rendtorff (1992, 19-20) and Noble (1993).

24 'Author(s)' is used here in a neutral sense. This term may designate author, compositor or redactor.

25 Cf. the different levels of senders disclosed in the following historical-critical methods: *Motiven- und Traditionskritik*, *Überlieferungskritik* and *Redaktionskritik*.

26 Cf. the *Sitz im Leben* question which is asked in terms of the historical-critical method *Formen- und Gattungskritik*.

(ii) *Interaction between sender-medium*: The *synchronical* aspect of the sender (or various levels of senders) provides the basis for the description of the interaction which takes place between sender (author) and medium (text). On each level of interaction between sender and medium (or, each level on which an author creates a text) this interaction takes place in a specific context[27]. This context, which has a historical component (sociological, economical, cultural, political) and a religious component (secular[28], religious-cultic), constitutes a specific world view. It should, however, be borne in mind that, with reference to an ancient written text, the context of interaction can only become known to the exegete through and by means of the text (the medium).

(iii) *Medium (Text)*: The biblical text (and more specifically the Old Testament) has undergone a long process of tradition and development. The *diachronical* aspect of this element in the communication process can be described in terms of the textual growth and modification from the earliest possible stages (insofar as these stages can be determined) to the Masoretic activities and canonization processes. The *synchronical* aspect lies in the fact that the medium in the communication process is a written text which consists of language, and which can therefore be described in terms of its structure (grammatical, rhetorical, literary, or otherwise). In addition, the *synchronical* aspect of the medium provides for the possibility of other texts forming an intertextual structure of which the medium is a part.

(iv) *Interaction between medium-receiver*: The interaction between medium (text) and receiver (exegete/reader) is analogous to the interaction between sender and medium. Whereas the *synchronical* aspect of the sender provides the basis for the last-mentioned interaction, the *synchronical* aspect of the receiver now provides the basis for the interaction between text and exegete/reader. On each level of reception the interaction with the text takes place in a specific context which constitutes a specific world view. The same components can be distinguished in the contexts in which reception takes place, namely a historical (sociological, economical, cultural, political) and a religious component (secular[29], religious-cultic).

(v) *Receiver (Exegete/Reader)*: During a study of the history of reception of the biblical text, various levels of exegetes/readers can be determined. This *diachronical* aspect can be described from the first (original) hearers/readers

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27 Cf. the sensitivity of the historical-critical exegesis to the *original* context in which every textual level came into being.

28 On certain levels of interaction between sender and medium (or levels on which authors created texts) it is possible that no religious factor played any role. For example, it is possible that the story in Judges 14-15 originated in a secular context without any religious interest. However, the lack of a religious context should also be accounted for under the religious component of the interaction between sender and medium. Cf. Patte (1990b, 106-107): 'All human beings, whether they are religious (in the common contemporary sense of the term), agnostic, or atheist, have an 'ultimate concern' (the definition of faith proposed by Paul Tillich). In contemporary Western culture this ultimate concern is often secular and finds expression in non-religious behavior, but it remains a faith.'

29 Cf. in this regard Wcela (1991). Reception may also take place in a secular context where religious factors play no role. The lack of a religious context in the reception process should thus be taken into account when dealing with the religious component of the interaction between medium and receiver.

of the text (insofar as they can be established) through the New Testament writers and Christian communities, church fathers, rabbis and reformers up to modern exegetes and readers. Whereas the *diachronical* description of the sender and medium can be concluded at a specific point in time, this cannot be done with regard to the receiver (exegete/reader). Reception is an ongoing process which constitutes a continuation of the *diachronical* aspect. The *synchronical* aspect of the receiver (which is described above) is constituted by the context in which and from which exegetes and/or readers operate.

(vi) *The communication process/act*: Although the three elements of the communication process, as well as the interaction between them, are dealt with separately above, these elements do not operate independently. Instead, they form a dynamic system. Each unique communication process/act has a specific structure or compositeness which can be referred to as its *synchronical* aspect. However, each communication process/act differs from other communication processes/acts, because their structures or compositeness varies from time to time. This variation can be described as the *diachronical* aspect of the communication process/act.

2.3 Discussion of the proposed framework

From the above-mentioned description it should already be clear that the principles of a plurality of exegetical methodologies and an *ecclesia* of exegetical research are presuppositions to this model. These principles provide the basis for a discussion of how exegetical methodologies can operate within the proposed hermeneutical framework.

The point of departure of this discussion is that each exegetical methodology is allowed to operate according to its own presuppositions and method(s). However, the plurality of approaches and methods are not regarded as a menace that compels the exegete to make exclusivistic claims. The plurality becomes manageable when it is borne in mind that each of these methodologies deals with one or more aspects of the communication situation. One methodology may concentrate on the synchronical (structural or intertextual) aspect of the medium[30]. Another methodology may be interested in the diachronical aspect of the medium[31], or the interaction between receiver and medium[32]. The communication model thus forms the framework within which exegetical methodologies can operate multidimensionally, and not exclusively. At the same time this model provides a heuristic tool to 'map' different exegetical methodologies. The communication situation constitutes the possibility of an *ecclesia* of exegetical research consisting of a variety of methodologies.

The communication model should not only provide an explanation of how exegetical methodologies can exist side by side, but should also explain how this system becomes operative, that is, how methodologies interact. The view held here is that a *reading strategy* provides such an operative factor. Reading, as an act of

30 Such a methodology may be literary, structural or semiotic.

31 This interest is one of the primary focuses of a historical-critical methodology.

32 Various reader-response methodologies focus on this aspect.

communication[33], can be done on two levels: (i) *Specialized (methodological) reading* takes place when an exegete, specializing in a specific exegetical methodology, analyses a biblical text and the communication situation in which it functions (or parts thereof) according to his/her own approach and method(s). Each specialized reading broadens the *diachronical* basis of the communication situation in the sense that another aspect(s) of the communication elements or the interaction between them is being described. It follows that specialized reading is an indispensable part of the reading strategy, because it increasingly unfolds the multidimensionality of the communication situation. (ii) *Competent reading*, on the other hand, does not aim at specializing in the description of certain aspects of the communication situation, but rather at knowing the rules according to which communication through biblical texts takes place[34]. A competent reader grasps the structure (that is the *synchronical* dimension) of a specific communication situation. An exegete thus has to have a knowledge of every aspect of the communication situation. This does not mean that every exegete has to specialize in each and every exegetical methodology. It rather means that he/she should be aware of the strategies followed in various exegetical methodologies and of how these strategies contribute to the description of aspects of the communication situation. It follows that the more knowledge an exegete has of different aspects of the communication situation, the more competent a reader he/she becomes.

Although a distinction is made between specialized reading and competent reading[35], it should be evident that these readings cannot, and should not, take place independently from one another. *A competent reading of biblical texts is only possible if a variety of exegetical methodologies highlights the multidimensionality of the communication process/act*[36]. *A specialized reading only finds its own identity when it is integrated into a communication process/act by a competent reading.* The

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33 Cf. Rossouw (1980:,9): *'Die situasie waarin so iets soos 'n hermeneutiese probleem ontstaan, is 'n leessituasie. Om 'n geskrewe teks te lees, beteken meer as om slegs die woorde van die teks te registreer, ter herhaal of te siteer. Lees is primêr 'n hermeneutiese gebeure, 'n gebeure van interpretasie. Wie 'n teks lees, is daarop uit om dit wat die teks te sê het, te verstaan of vir homself verstaanbaar te maak. Hy wil met ander woorde sin maak van en sin vind in die teks. As hermeneutiese gebeure het die lesing van 'n teks die karakter van 'n kommunikasieproses. Wanneer iemand 'n teks begin lees, begin die teks spreek. Die teks kom aan die woord, dit word mededeling.'*

34 Cf. in this regard Barton's (1984:,8ff.) description of 'competence'' He illustrates his view by referring to the game of chess: 'A *good* chess player is one who plays well, has a good grasp of chess strategy, and so on, but a *competent* chess player, in this technical sense of the term, would be one who (irrespective of how well or badly he plays) knows what sorts of moves are permitted by the rules of the game, who does not try, for example, to move pawns backwards or to castle with the bishop' [his italics - LCJ] (1984, 12). Deist (1989b, 61) complements this view in his discussion of the teaching of exegesis: '*Die kompetensie waarvan hier ter sprake is, behels 'n behoorlik geïntegreerde kennis van die historiese én filologiese fasette van Bybelse tekste.*'

35 West (1991, chapters 7 and 8 in particular) makes a similar distinction, although in another context (namely that of liberation hermeneutics), between trained readers and ordinary readers of the biblical text. The main difference between his distinction and the distinction made in the proposed model is that *competent* reading does not refer to a pre-critical reading as is the case in West's *ordinary* reading.

36 Rousseau (1986) illustrates the multidimensionality of the communication process by referring to Rubic's cube. Each turn of a cube level results in another (synchronical) pattern. This newly formed pattern can only be explained and understood in terms of the preceding turns of the cube levels.

plurality of exegetical methodologies then functions as an *ecclesia* of research without anyone claiming exclusivity.

Before the discussion of this model can be concluded, reference should be made to certain questions which can lead to criticism when left unclarified. The first of these issues is the view held on the concepts *text* and *meaning* in this model. The principle of pluralism applies as a presupposition to this model. This principle not only has implications for the variety of exegetical methodologies, but also for the definitions which are ascribed to 'text' and 'meaning'. To be true to the principle of pluralism which is presupposed, one should also accept the possibility of a plurality of views on these concepts. It should, for example, be possible to accommodate within the hermeneutical framework definitions of 'text' according to which the biblical text is a product of history which reflects the intention of an author[37], or that the 'real' text is constituted when it is read[38] or even that the real text is an intertextual reality[39]. The same applies to different definitions of 'meaning', whether it be that of author intention[40], structural meaning[41] or reader construction[42]. To explain how these different definitions of 'text' and 'meaning' can be accommodated within one hermeneutical framework, the diachronical and synchronical aspects of the communication situation should be reconsidered. Each exegetical activity (or reading) which proceeds according to a specific view on 'text' and 'meaning' constitutes a new communication situation. This progression in the communication situation has been described as the diachronical aspect. It should, however, be noted that this progression does not follow a linear pattern. Rather, it develops multidimensionally, that is, a new communication situation does not replace a previous one. They co-exist, but they do so interactively[43]. Each new communication situation has a bearing on previous readings[44]. The synchronical aspect of each new communication situation reflects the views held by the exegete/reader on the concepts 'text' and 'meaning'. It follows that these views can only be evaluated or understood within the unique synchronical structure of the particular reading.

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37 This definition refers to the diachronical aspect of the medium. The historical-critical exegesis defines *text* according to this aspect.

38 This definition refers to the interaction between medium and receiver. Cf. Patrick and Scult (1990, 21): 'The rhetorical perspective bids us to locate the normative text somehow in the exchange between it and the exegete.'

39 This definition refers to the synchronical (intertextual) structure of the medium. Various structural (e.g. semiotic) methodologies define *text* according to this aspect.

40 This definition refers to the synchronical and diachronical aspects of the sender.

41 This definition refers to the synchronical aspect of the medium.

42 This definition refers to the interaction between receiver and medium which is determined by the synchronical aspect of the receiver.

43 Cf. Patte (1990b, 29): 'When one acknowledges that meaning is multi-dimensional and relational, one cannot but acknowledge that one's exegesis deals with merely a few of the meaning-dimensions of a text. Consequently, one recognizes the need for other types of exegesis that complement one's own exegesis by dealing with other meaning-dimensions of the text.'

44 Rubic's cube can serve as illustration again. When one level of the cube is moved, the other levels are also affected. Similarly, every new reading of a biblical text does not replace, or even alter, previous readings. They are, however, given a new perspective by the new reading.

However, because each reading is part of the diachronical progression of the communication situation, these views are not regarded as exclusive entities. Claims towards exclusivity are thus surmounted within the hermeneutical framework of the communication model.

The above discussion leads to the question of *relativism*. In the literal sense of the word, it should be admitted that each new reading in the diachronical progression of the communication situation is relativized against the background of already existing readings[45]. This process of relativization also proceeds in the opposite direction. Because the diachronical progression is regarded as a multidimensional process, previous readings are also relativized against the background of each new reading. However, this relativization does not mean that the legitimacy[46] of readings cannot be determined. Relativism, in the sense of 'anything goes', is undermined by the fact that each new methodology has to be defined within the hermeneutical framework of the communication model. An illegitimate reading of the biblical text would be one that does not describe one or more aspects of the communication situation. The diachronical interaction of existing exegetical methodologies, which already operate within the hermeneutical framework of the communication model, assists in determining the legitimacy of new methodologies[47].

The formulated model also addresses the problem of the *validity*[48] of readings. Validity can only be discussed in terms of a specific receiver, that is the synchronical aspect of the exegete/reader. The two synchronical components of the receiver which have been discussed in the above description, determine the context in which the exegete/reader is formed and from which he/she operates. The historic component provides insight into the sociological, economical, cultural and political structures which determine his/her world view and presuppositions. The religious component reveals the secular, theological or ecclesiastical presuppositions that an exegete or a reader may have. It thus follows that the synchronical aspect of the receiver determines the interaction which takes place between medium and receiver. The validity of a reading can thus be determined by referring to the success[49] of this last-

45 Cf. Patrick and Scult (1990, 20): 'Since the text has lived a succession of significant interpretative moments, each must be seen as contributing to the full meaning of the text, which is contained in its entire history of interpretation. The interpreter, therefore, must synthesize the meanings a text has had into the meaning it has in order to understand it fully.'

46 Patte, who also uses this term, defines a legitimate reading as one which is based upon a selection of true dimensions of the biblical text.

47 Feyerabend's proliferation principle, which is also latent in Popper's principle of falsification, applies. Testability of theories is only possible in relation to other theories.

48 Patte, who also uses this term, states that the validity of a reading depends on its appropriateness for the specific cultural, religious and social circumstances in which the reading takes place.

49 *Success* is a subjective term which cannot be measured in a predefined unit. However, with reference to the different components of the formulated model, the success of the interaction between medium and receiver can be determined according to the compatibility of the synchronical aspect of the receiver (exegete/reader) with the synchronical aspect of the whole communication situation (that is, the unique structure of the particular hermeneutical framework in which the reading takes place).

mentioned interaction[50]. The implication is that no reading can claim absolute validity. Similarly, no reading can be accused of absolute invalidity.

3. Guidelines for Future Discussions

From the above discussion it should be clear that this study does not profess to have the final answers to the dilemma of exegetical methodology. The framework provided in the previous section indicates in which direction the discussion should develop. It is evident that various aspects in this discussion demand further clarification. Only four of these aspects, which are regarded as the most important, are mentioned in this section.

(i) The practitioners of exegetical methodologies should amend their respective methodologies to include an explanation of how their approaches and methods are relativized within the hermeneutical framework proposed in this model. They should make clear which aspects of the communication situation are described and highlighted by their methodologies.

(ii) The challenge of post-structuralist and post-modern methodologies should be taken seriously. The proposed framework serves as one possible basis on which a discussion concerning these methodologies can be conducted.

(iii) New methodologies should be developed, or existing methodologies should be broadened, to include every possible aspect of the communication situation described in the proposed framework.

(iv) Renewed attention should be devoted to a more adequate formulation of a reading strategy as operative factor in the communication situation. Competent reading, in particular, should be described more accurately.

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50 Cf. the principle of 'cogency' proposed by Patrick and Scult (1990, 86): 'To understand the history of interpretation, one must be able to enter into the perspectives of the interpreters; in particular, to recreate the questions they were asking the text. Then one must judge whether a given question was a germane and productive one, and assess whether the means by which the interpreter found an answer allowed the text to teach them anything.'

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