



# **INTRO TO HERMENEUTICS**

**The philosophy of interpretation**

# HERMENEUTICS



# WHAT IS HERMENEUTICS?

## Ancient Greek word

- *hermeneuein* = to utter, explain, translate
- The Latin equivalent = *interpretari*

## Hermes

- A Greek Olympian god
- The son of Zeus and the Pleiad Maia
- The messenger of the gods



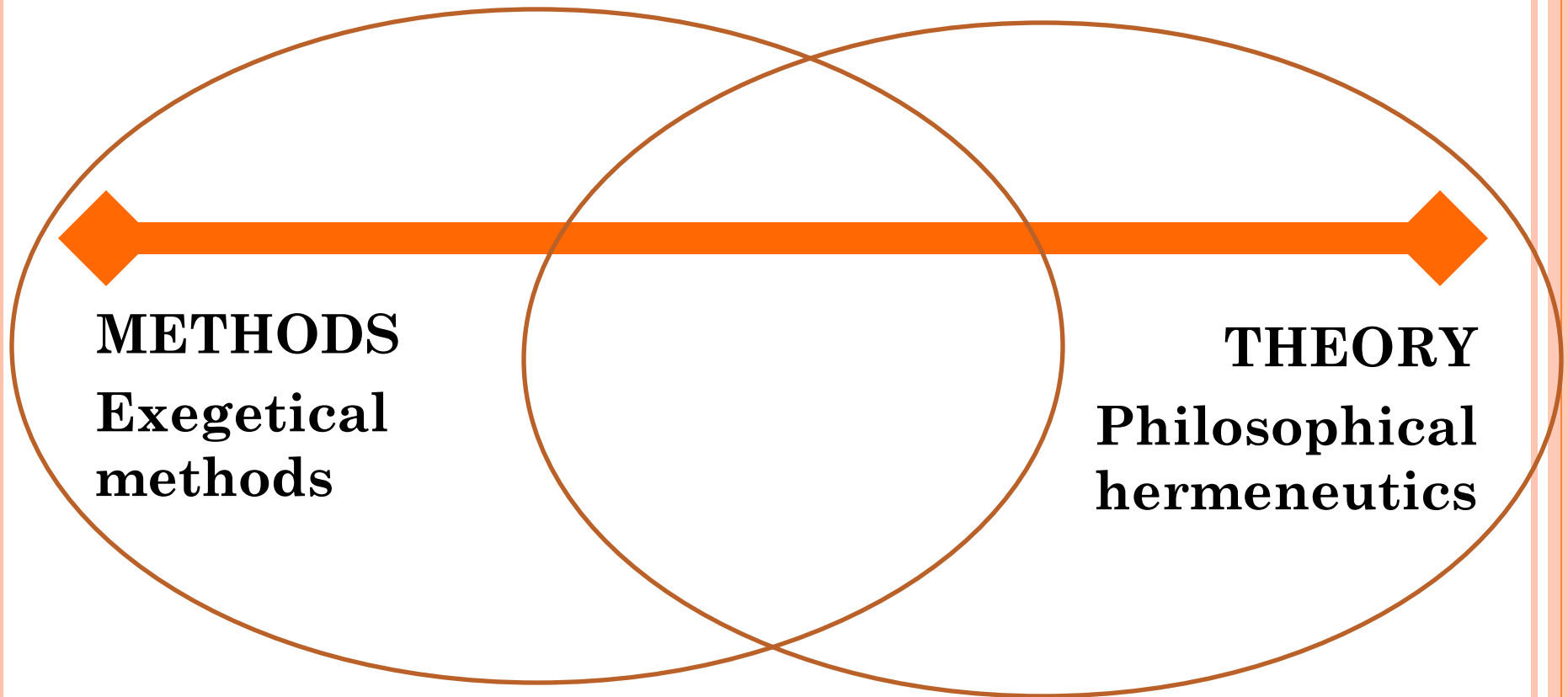
# HERMENEUTICS

## Chrysostomos Mantzavinos

- “Hermeneutics as the **methodology of interpretation** is concerned with problems that arise when dealing with meaningful human actions and the products of such actions, most importantly **texts**.”
- “As a methodological discipline, **it offers a toolbox for efficiently treating problems of the interpretation** of human actions, texts and other meaningful material.”



# TWO OVERLAPPING MEANINGS



**METHODS**

**Exegetical  
methods**

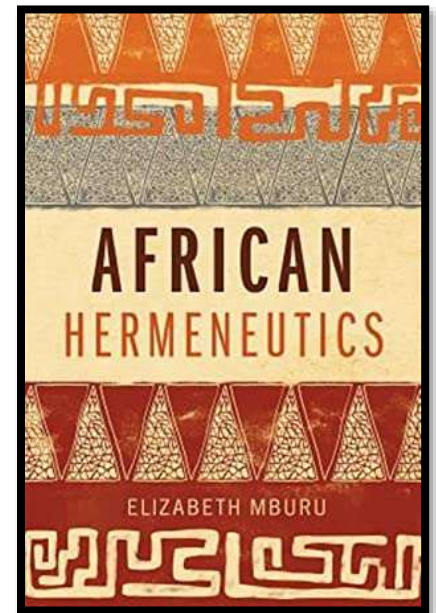
**THEORY**

**Philosophical  
hermeneutics**

# AFRICAN HERMENEUTICS

- An African intercultural hermeneutic that embraces contextualization throughout the process.
- “All conclusions regarding the text must be rooted in an understanding of the culture and worldview of the Bible.”

■ Elizabeth Mburu. *African Hermeneutics*. (Langham Global Library, 2019) 7-8.



# HERMENEUTICS

## Beth's definition

Hermeneutics is:

### **The philosophy of interpretation**

- Including discussion of the meanings created by the author, texts, and readers within their the historic-situatedness/contexts (including interpreters' agendas).
- Including a meta-critique of interpretive methods



# HERMENEUTICAL QUESTIONS?

1. **What's the difference between exegesis and hermeneutics?**
2. **Where is the source of meaning?  
(author, text, reader)**
3. **How is Scripture authoritative?**
4. **How do the Lutheran Confessions influence our interpretations?**
5. **Is there one right way to interpret the Bible?**
6. **If there are many interpretations:**
  - **How do we evaluate their faithfulness to the text?**
  - **What do we do with competing interpretations?**
7. **Is biblical interpretation only good/trustworthy when done by those who know the biblical languages and have advanced degrees?**





# THE HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE / SPIRAL

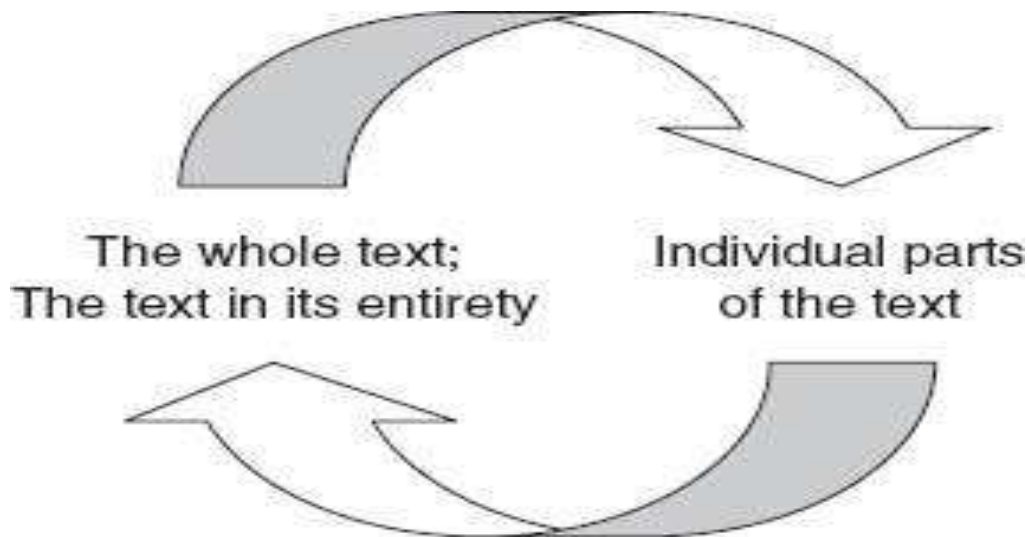


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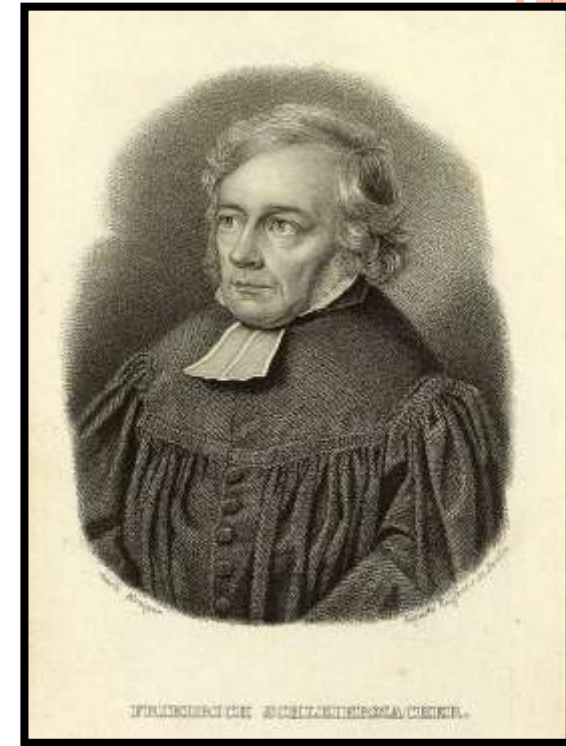
# THE HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE

Friedrich Schleiermacher



Focus here on **objective** aspect:  
The *authorial intent* **behind** the text.

(Schleiermacher also had **subjective** aspect.)



1768 – 1834

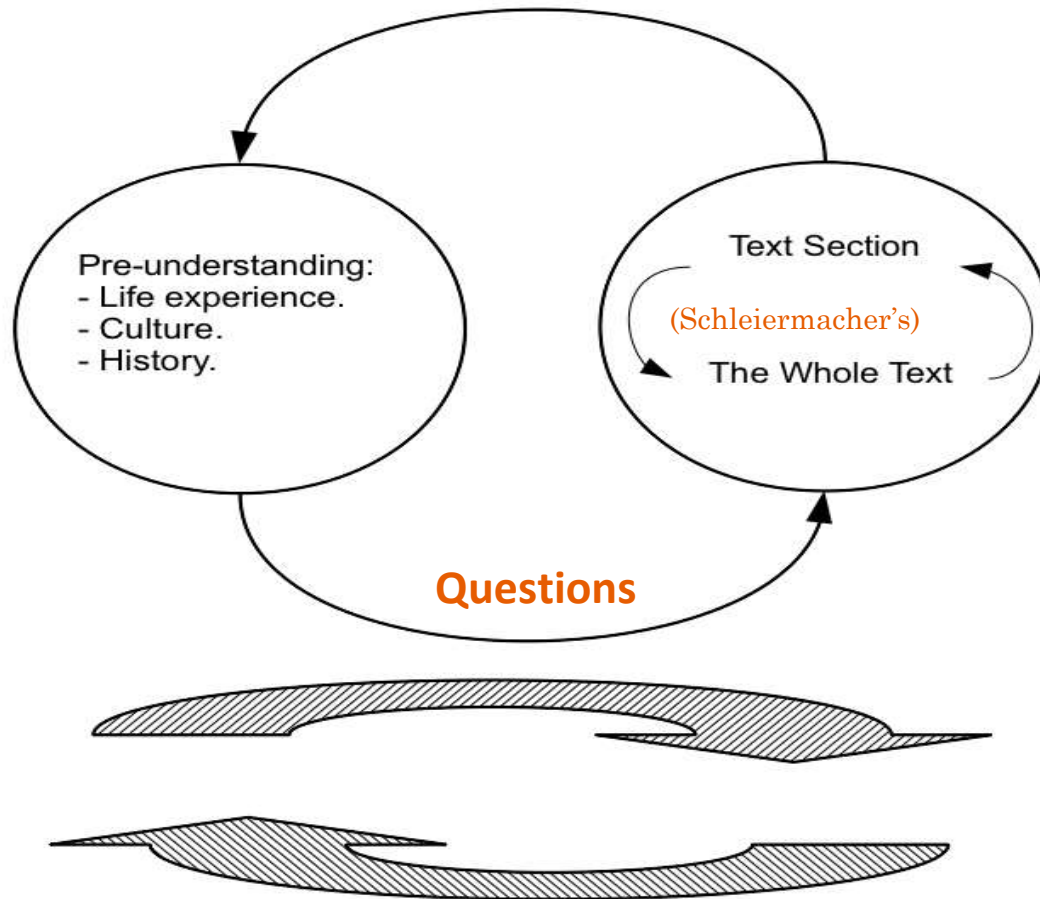
“Part of the task of hermeneutics is to fully understand these thoughts through the author’s discourse, **even better than the author himself.**”

# HANS GEORG GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE

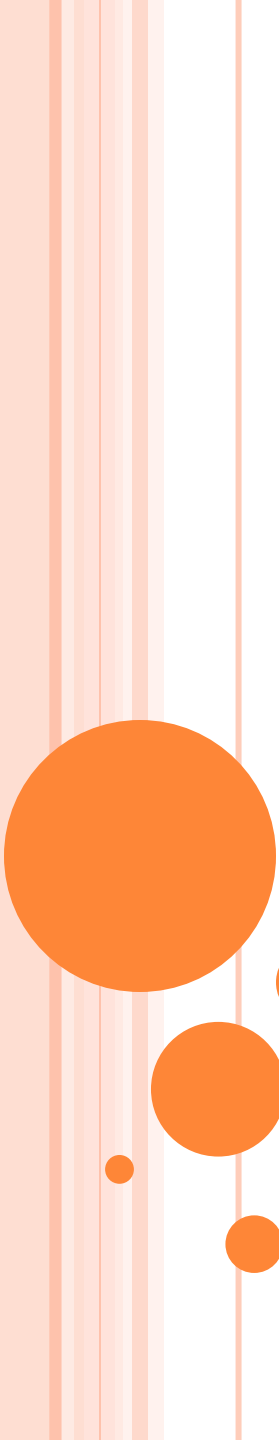


1900 – 2002

## Fusion [Fusing] of Horizons







# WHERE IS THE SOURCE OF MEANING?

Hermeneutical Pluralism

# HUMPTY DUMPTY

**Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.**

**Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.**

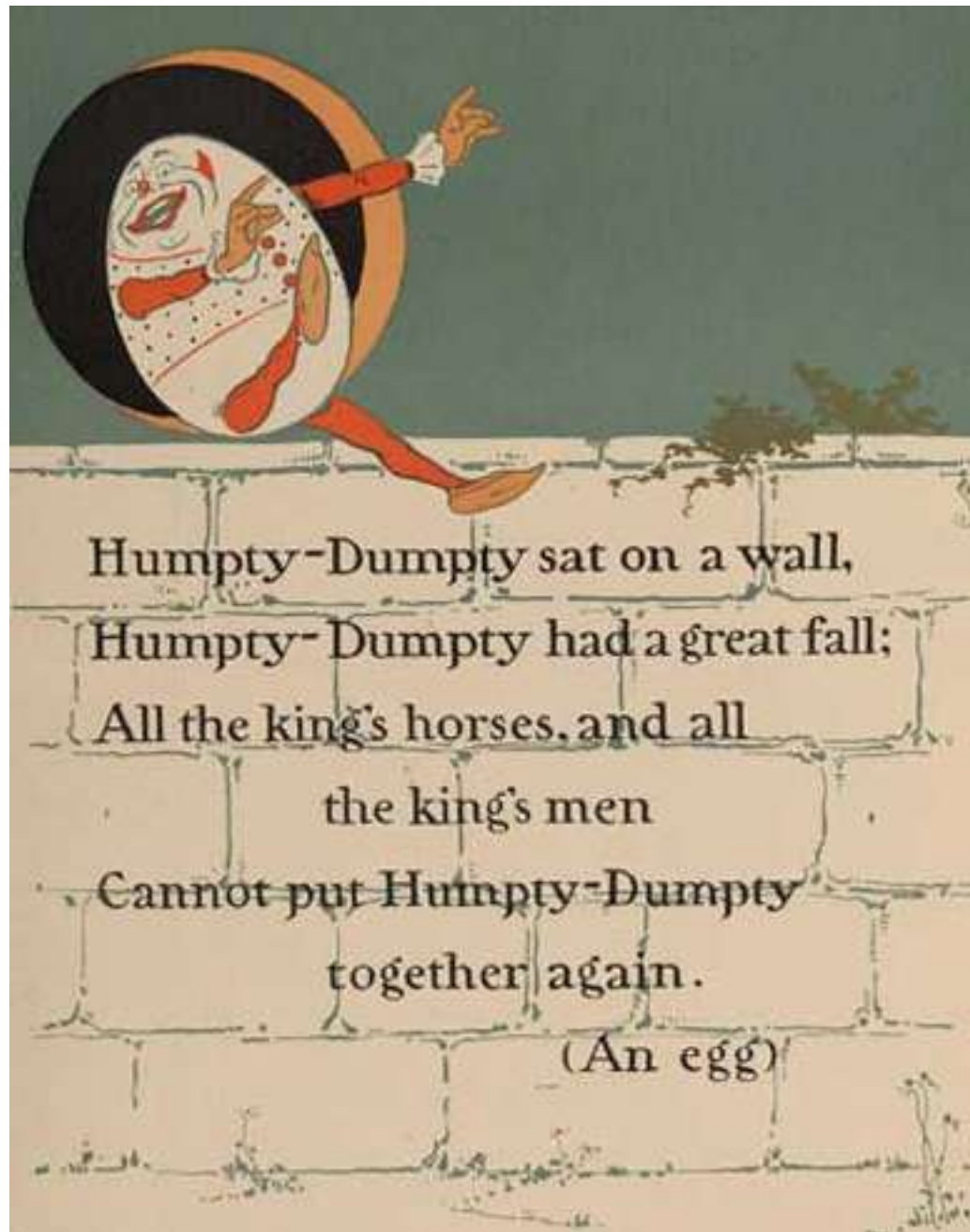
**All the king's horses and all the king's men**

**Couldn't put Humpty together again.**

**What is Humpty Dumpty?**



**HUMPTY DUMPTY,  
SHOWN AS A RIDDLE  
WITH ANSWER,  
IN A 1902 MOTHER  
GOOSE STORY BOOK  
BY WILLIAM  
WALLACE  
DENSLOW.**



# HISTORY AND ORIGIN

- **Humpty Dumpty is... believed to be a large cannon used during the English Civil War (1642 - 1649).**
- **A huge cannon, nicknamed Humpty Dumpty, was strategically placed on the wall next to St. Mary's Church, in Colchester.**






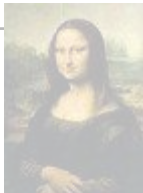

# HISTORY CONTINUED

- **A shot from a Parliamentary cannon succeeded in damaging the wall beneath Humpty Dumpty which caused the cannon to tumble to the ground.**
- **The Royalists, “the King’s men” attempted to raise Humpty Dumpty on to another part of the wall.**
- **Because the cannon, or Humpty Dumpty, was so heavy “All the King's horses and all the King’s men couldn't put Humpty together again!”**
- **Thus, Colchester fell to the Parliamentarians after a siege lasting eleven weeks.**



# WHERE IS THE SOURCE OF MEANING?


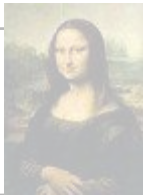

Christopher J. H. Wright, "Christ and the Mosaic of Pluralisms," in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century*, ed. William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2001), 75–83.

	<b>Historical-critical</b>	<b>Narrative</b>	<b>Reader-response</b>
<b>Location of meaning</b>	<b>Behind</b> the text (author[s])	<b>In</b> the text	<b>In front of</b> the text (reader)
<b>Worldview influence</b>	Modern	Post-modern	Strong post-modern
<b>Metaphor</b>	Window 	Painting 	Mirror 
<b>As applied to Humpty</b>	A canon from 1642 - 1649	The story of something broken & unfixable	How Humpty's brokenness makes you feel
<b>Wright article</b>	p. 76	p. 78	p. 81




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# JOSHUA 1:1-9

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, <sup>2</sup> "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. <sup>3</sup> Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. <sup>4</sup> From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. <sup>5</sup> No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. <sup>6</sup> Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. <sup>7</sup> Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. <sup>8</sup> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."



# Which questions would you ask from your group's "hermeneutic"?




## GOD'S COMMISSION TO JOSHUA, JOSH 1:1-9

	<b>1) Historical-critical</b>	<b>2) Narrative</b>	<b>3) Reader-response</b>
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<b>Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a (what is the) greater historical, geo-political context?</li> <li>• What are the grammatical, linguistic (dating?) issues in the Hebrew text?</li> <li>• How/Why is Joshua cast as the new Moses?</li> <li>• How do we understand the Deuteronomist's theological agenda?</li> </ul>		





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# HERMENEUTICAL PLURALISM

- **Where is the source of meaning?**
  - **author,**
  - **text,**
  - **reader**
- **Which is the best approach?**
- **There are strengths and weaknesses with each of the different approaches.**



# HERMENEUTICAL QUESTIONS?

- **Is there one right way to interpret the Bible?**
- **If there are many interpretations:**
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# CHRISTOPHER J.H. WRIGHT, “HERMENEUTICAL PLURALISM”

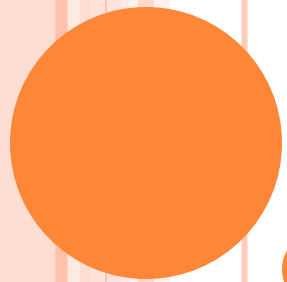
- “There is a value in recognizing the *relativity* of all hermeneutics.
- A positive benefit of the post-modern shift in biblical studies is that **you don’t have to submit your interpretation of Scripture to a single accrediting agency**—the Western critical guild of scholarship.
- On the other hand, the post-modern rejection of any foundation or grounds on which we might affirm a reading of the biblical text to be *right* or *wrong* **opens up an uncontrolled *relativism*”** (75).

**the Western  
critical guild of  
scholarship**



**uncontrolled  
*relativism***





**QUESTIONS?**



**ANY CRITERIA  
FOR EVALUATION?  
PART 1**

# WHO NEEDS THEOLOGY?

BY STANLEY GRENZ AND ROGER OLSON

Dogma	Doctrine	Opinion
<b>Essential beliefs</b>	<b>Important without being essential</b>	<b>Interesting but relatively unimportant</b>
<b>Separates Christians from other religions</b>	<b>Beliefs important for a particular tradition or denomination</b>	<b>Simply a difference of interpretation; <i>adiaphora</i></b>
<b>Take 5 minutes to make a list of what is in the categories. Your group will focus on one category.</b>		



# WHO NEEDS THEOLOGY?

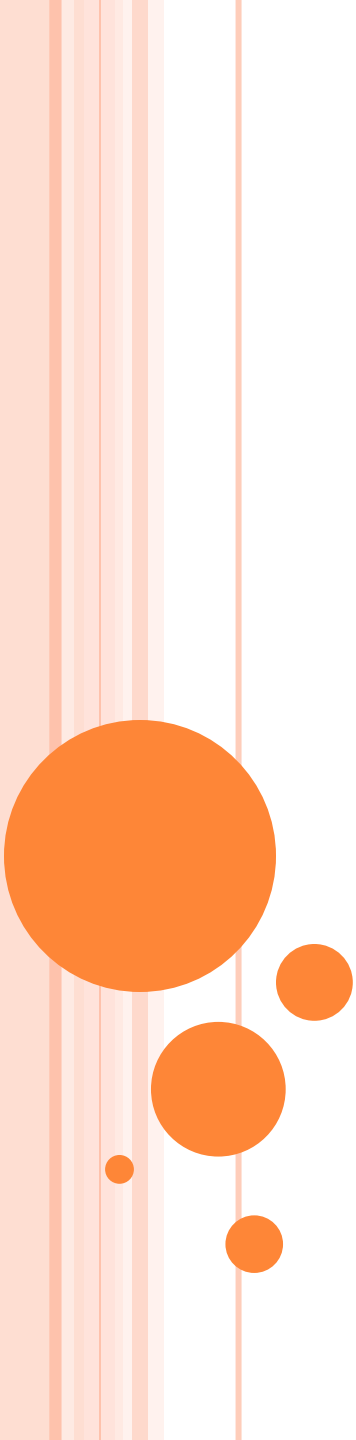
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Separates Christians from other religions	Beliefs important for a particular tradition or denomination	Simply a difference of interpretation; <i>adiaphora</i>
The Triune nature of God and the means of salvation (saved by grace through faith); creedal content	Sacraments, free-will, predestination, Scriptural authority, ecclesiology, eschatology, (Holy Spirit)	Angels and demons, charismatic gifts (except some Pentecostals)



**DON'T SWEAT THE  
SMALL STUFF (OPINIONS).**





**ANY CRITERIA  
FOR EVALUATION?  
PART 2**

# INTERCULTURAL HERMENEUTICS

Henricus Procee developed two “(meta) standards for transcultural morality” utilized by Hans de Wit:

1. **Non-exclusion**, which grows out of the idea of “human dignity”.
2. The **willingness to stimulate interactions**.



**Henricus Procee  
(1947-2014)**



**Hans de Wit,  
Emeritus Professor  
VU University  
Amsterdam**



**Breaking down walls**



**Building bridges**



# THE WE OF INTERPRETATION

...WE discovered that we needed to recognized that ALL interpretations of Scripture necessarily involve (whether consciously or not) THREE types of interpretive choices that establish:

- the **LEGITIMACY** (textual/analytical choices of what is most significant in the **text**) and
- the **VALIDITY** (contextual choices--**reader**),
- **PLAUSIBILITY** (hermeneutical and theological choices).



**Daniel Patte**  
**Vanderbilt**  
**University**

# THE WE OF INTERPRETATION

In dialogue with:

- The church historical (time)
- The church catholic (space)

