

Exegesis & Hermeneutics

Don't be afraid of these two

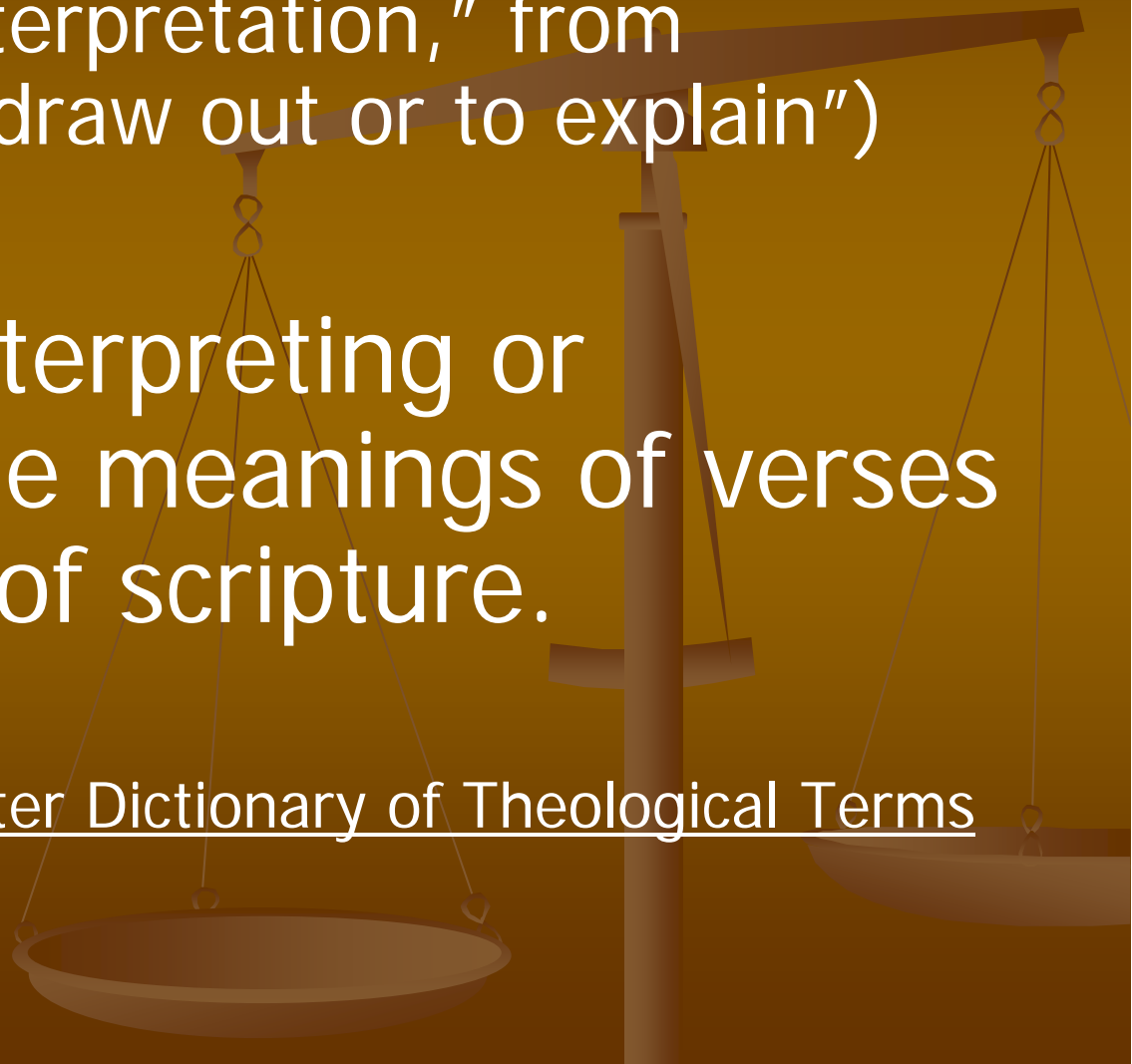
BIG
words.

Exegesis

(Gr. Exegesis, "interpretation," from exigeisthai, "to draw out or to explain")

The act of interpreting or explaining the meanings of verses or passages of scripture.

[Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms](#)

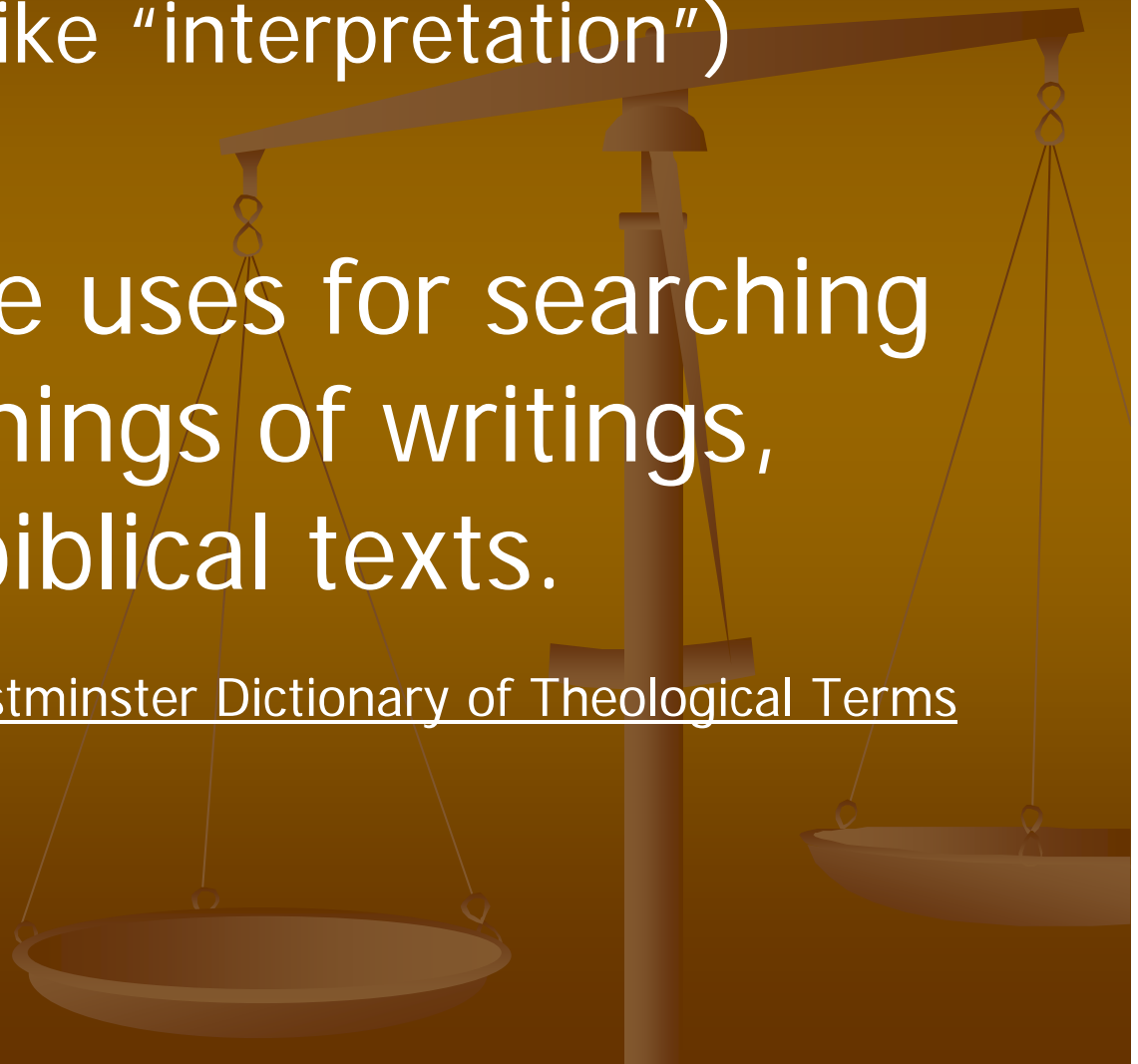


Hermeneutics

(Gr. Hermeneutike “interpretation”)

The rules one uses for searching out the meanings of writings, particularly biblical texts.

Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms



The terms contrasted:

"It (hermeneutics) stands in the same relationship to exegesis that a rule-book stands to a game. The rule-book is written in terms of reflection, analysis and experience. The game is played by concrete actualization of the rules. Hermeneutics proper is not exegesis, but exegesis is applied Hermeneutics."

(Bernard Ramm Protestant Bible Interpretation)

The terms contrasted:

"Usage has restricted the meaning of hermeneutics* to the science of Biblical exegesis, that is, to the collection of rules which govern the right interpretation of Sacred Scripture. Exegesis is therefore related to hermeneutics, as language is to grammar, or as reasoning is to logic."

[The Catholic Encyclopedia](#)

* That used to be the case. These days other disciplines use the term.

The terms contrasted:

" Hermeneutics, as opposed to exegesis, is the theory, rather than the practice, of interpretation. Initially concerned with how we interpret texts, hermeneutics in the nineteenth century becomes the theory of understanding itself, dealing with texts only as one example of the event of understanding between persons"

John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism

The terms contrasted:

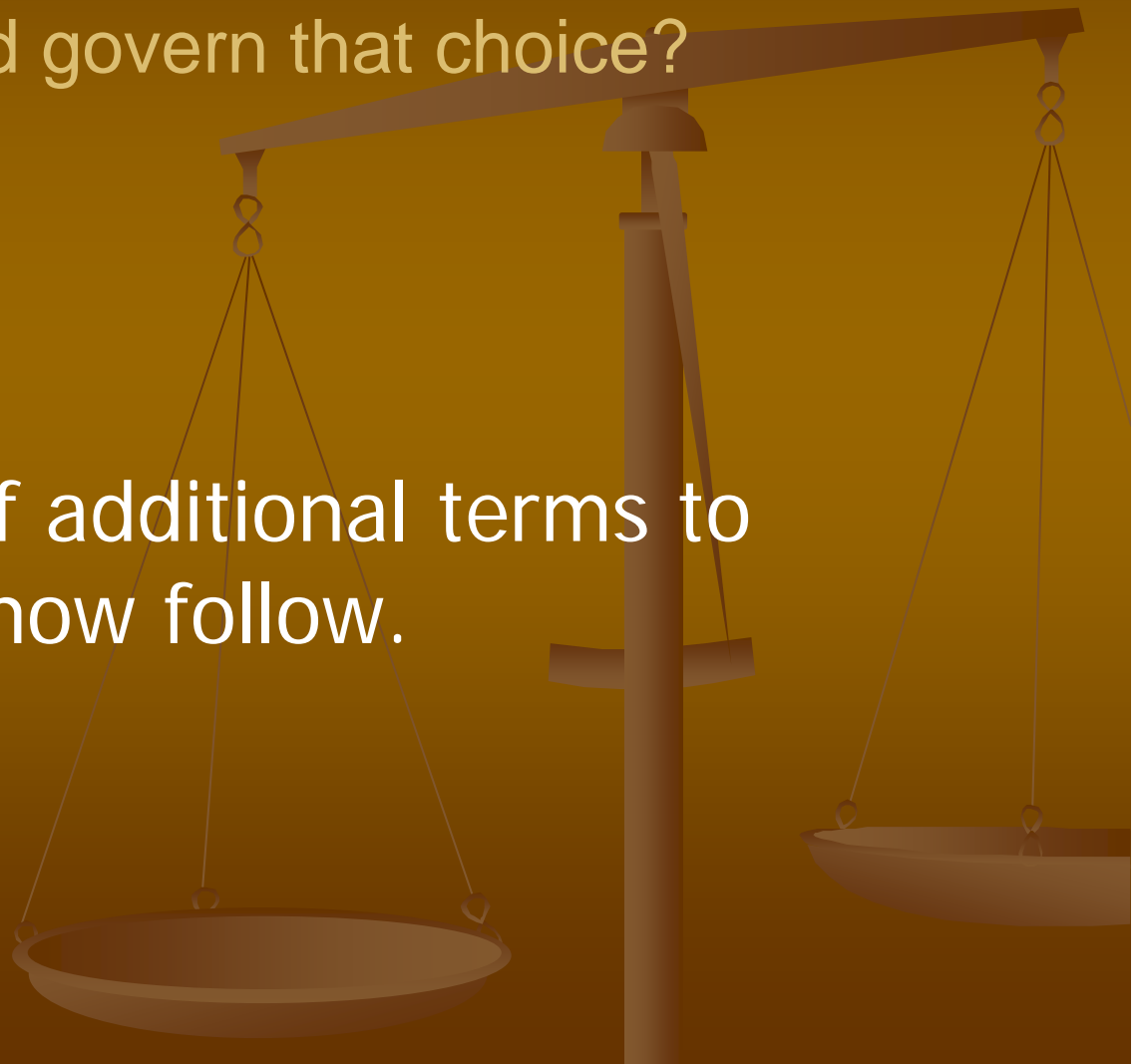
What is the relationship of exegesis, as the concrete process of interpretation, to hermeneutics, as the explicit or implicit grasping of the ultimate conditions for understanding?

When it comes to fundamental problems of interpretation, is exegesis dependent upon prior hermeneutical decisions, to such a degree that a clarification does not lie at all in the sphere of exegetical understanding? What then is the nature of such hermeneutical decisions? Are they arrived at apart from relations with the intellectual tradition, and hence independent of textual interpretation? Or must the so-called hermeneutical circle bring about a relationship between hermeneutics and exegesis?

Gerhard Ebeling

That last slide shows you that this issue is complex—how do you decide what your hermeneutics will be? Are there in turn “rules” that should govern that choice?

A couple of additional terms to know follow.



The Hermeneutical Circle:

A contemporary recognition in biblical interpretation that the person of the interpreter inevitably becomes part of the interpretive process. If so, then the one who interprets will find that any interpretation of the biblical texts and contexts will be affected by one's own context.

WDTT



The New Hermeneutic:

A term associated with the interpretive approach of Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) and his followers who adapted the work of the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and argued for the demythologization of the New Testament

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Houston, we have a problem. For those of us believe that there are no myths to remove from the scriptures, the New Hermeneutic poses a challenge for our apologetics. (Your instructor.)