

The background is a vibrant green with a pattern of overlapping circles. A large, glowing, multi-colored orb (resembling a sun or star) is positioned in the upper center. The text is centered on a horizontal band across the middle.

Biblical Interpretation & Genesis

The Historical Critical Method

Finding Meaning

- Eisegesis: to read into the text
- Exegesis: to read out of; what it meant to the original audience
- Interpretation: what it means to a particular audience today
- Hermeneutics: reflecting on how we decided what it says to that audience today; evaluation of assumptions and strategies

Listening to the Text

- Who wrote it?
- Where was it written?
- When was it written?
- What was meant?
- Why was it written?

Revelation

- Unveiling / revealed by God
- Transcendent truth
- Divine - infinite

Inspiration

- Human response to revelation
- Human - finite

Word of God

- In the words of humans
- The facts may not be correct but the TRUTH is valid

Complexity of Interpretation

- We are 3rd party interpreters so...
- Language Barrier
 - Translations are interpretations
- Culture gap – communication assumes a shared body of understanding
- Historical gap – separated chronologically from time document was produced

Complexity of Interpretation

- Documents are sometimes products of collective and historical growth (tradition...)
- Oldest MSS are copies; there are multiple and differing versions of same document
- Sacred texts
 - Possess authority
 - Tradition – Official status in life of community
 - Truer understanding of reality
 - Word of God

Meaning of Scripture

■ Text

- Absolute
- Text Only
- Objective
- Static

■ Reader

- Relativist
- Text and...
- Subjective
- Grows

Textual Criticism

- What was the original wording of the text?
 - Determine process by which text was transmitted
 - Establish original wording
 - Determine best form a modern reader should use
- Preferred reading – shorter; more difficult

Historical Criticism

- Setting in time & place
- Geographical
- Cultural
- Authorship

Rhetorical Criticism

- Location of passage within larger literary unit
- Standard topics vs. novelties
- Language & argumentative patterns
- What premises are assumed, suppressed, explicitly stated?
- Who is the intended audience?

Literary Criticism

- Questions of style, figures of speech, *etc.*
- Genre functions as a clue to meaning
- Literary genre hints at what author was trying to achieve with the text
- Individual example can be compared to texts of similar types to see what is unique to this text

Form Criticism

- Oral form is a clue to life setting
- Standard pattern that particular type of “kernel” of tradition
- Individual example of form can be compared to basic structure to see specific changes to or uses of the form

Tradition Criticism

- Earlier stages of development before it became incorporated in biblical text

Redaction Criticism

- Where does the text show evidence of prior editorial activity?
- Does the final form of the passage reflect earlier stages of textual development?

4 Types of Textual Variations

1. Variation among texts in original languages
2. Variations among original translations
3. Variations between original languages of the text and early translations
4. Variant quotations in early Jewish & Xn writings

Factors that show use of Sources

- Change in literary style
- Shift in Vocabulary
- Break in Continuity (thought/presentation)
- Secondary Link Statements
- Change in Theological Viewpoint
- Duplication/Repetition
- Isolatable Subunits
- Inconstancies

God

- Tribal – connected to people
 - God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob
- Sedentary – connected to place
 - God of Israel

Monotheism vs. Henotheism

- Henotheism is “affective monotheism”
 - Don’t worship any other Gods
 - There is only one *true* God
 - Early
 - Does not say, *e.g.*, that the Canaanite deity Baal is not a God; says worship our God, Elohim
- Universal monotheism
 - Ours is the only God
 - There exists only one true God; there is no other
 - Post-exilic

Myth

- Story about God(s); dramatize experienced reality of God (or the Gods)
- Designed to convey a deep *truth* about the nature of reality and the human species
- Not historically factual, but this does not make them false
- “Works” the way theater, poetry, and fiction work: shape the imagination