

# Early Christian Writings

Text Discovery Tools

# Methods for discovering meaning

- **Dis-cover – uncover, make clear, reveal...**
- Contextually – con (in the, with the) text
- Philologically – attention to the words
- Social-historical – examining the time period and societal customs during which the texts were written
- Cross-textual analysis – drawing meaning from a broad examination of similar sources
- Insight into the text (inspired, attributed, authoritative, etc.)
- Interpretation derived from texts that suggest, foretell, or prophesize...

(Source: – course readings)

# Interpretive Methods We Can Use:

- Some means to explore meaning...
- Exegesis vs. Eisegesis
  - The process by which one reads in order to draw meaning from text is called exegesis.
  - The opposite of exegesis is eisegesis, in which one simply forces pre-existing meanings onto a text, discovering in the text only what one, guided by one's presumptions, expected to find.

(Source: – course readings)

# Critical tools

- Language usage and communication theory
  - Sociology of language, the social transaction involving a sender, a receiver and a message.

Sender:

- God *or* human
- God *and* human

Transmission:

- Message is word of God
- Message is God in Word

(Source: – course readings)

# Critical tools

- Source criticism
  - Concentrates on sources of literary origins of the Hebrew Bible
- Form criticism
  - Focuses on the smaller units that make up the larger texts (social settings, similar vocabulary, language of a court, etc.)

(Source: – course readings)

# Critical tools

- Redaction criticism
  - Carries both Source and Form criticism further – it concerns us with the perspectives and intentions of the redactor, or editor arranged the text or story.
  - How and or why particular texts came to be in the form or assembled in the way they are.

(Source: – course readings)

# Critical tools

- Sociological Criticism
  - Considers the society in which these texts or perspectives came to be.
- Tradition Criticism
  - Studies the entire process of change and adaptation of a tradition from its earliest oral stage, through the compilation of written sources, to the final redaction.

(Source: – course readings)

# Literary / Rhetorical Criticism

- Literary or rhetorical criticism:
  - Focuses on the literary features of the text, literary structures, authors employ of style, suspense, and tension.

(Source: – course readings)



# Literary / Rhetorical Criticism

- Theme – dominating idea in a text (made concrete through plot or narrative or character action)
- Plot – formulation of the relationships between the incidents in the narrative – guiding the reader
- Climax – point of highest interest
- Denouement – unraveling of the plot

(Source: – course readings)

# Literary / Rhetorical Criticism

- Interlude – episodes that interrupt the continuity of the main narrative
- Characterization – how the character is revealed or defined through action and dialogue
- Symbol – something suggestive of universal meaning; an image that goes beyond the reality it images to suggest other levels of meaning.

(Source: – course readings)