

The Relationship Between Hermeneutics and Exegesis by Dan Fabricatore

The relationship between these two disciplines has in effect already been discussed in their respective treatment in the previous two pages.

There is a wide range of opinion regarding the relationship between hermeneutics and exegesis, with some seeing exegesis as a subcategory of hermeneutics (Osborne, *The Hermeneutic Spiral*, p. 5) while others see the two as practically synonymous with exegesis taking into account relevancy, application, and contemporary significance. Furnish for instance notes that exegesis “designates the task of *interpretation*” (*Perkins Journal*, Spring, 1973, p. 1). Silva and Kaiser seems to imply the same thing (p. 10). Osborne argues quite convincingly in his book that the relationship is a “single task” (hermeneutical theory) with “two aspects” (meaning and significance) (p. 41).

Personally, I have always seen a distinction in the two disciplines, with exegesis being the process of determining the meaning of a given text that the author intended to communicate to his readers. In other words, the meaning of a text isn't something that the author did not intend to communicate. Exegesis is part of the process of hermeneutics. It seeks to lead out the meaning of the text as intended by the author, and it incorporates many disciplines to accomplish its task (see page 1).

Hermeneutics on the other hand is broader than exegesis. While it includes the purpose of leading out the meaning of the text, it also seeks to communicate the divine message to the church at large. It seeks to be relevant to God's people in any age. Therefore, it includes exegesis, but also involves the incorporating of that original message into biblical and systematic theology before proclaiming that message to a contemporary audience via teaching/sermons. Furnish for instance does a good job discussing the need for theological analysis in the task of hermeneutics (p. 9).

At times, the crisis in hermeneutics today is, interesting enough, a semantic one. Terminology is changing at an alarming rate. Thomas' suggestion to exegetical practitioners is well taken: “Please get together with one another and agree upon some definitions for key hermeneutical words, or else return to what has been the traditional connotation of those words and create a new vocabulary to cover the subjects you must treat. Until you do, you have left us practitioners in utter darkness” (*JETS* 39/2; p. 255).