**COM 701-1**

**[90-day assignment] –**

**COM 701-3**

**Essay on Essential Elements of Hermeneutics**

**Question –**

Write an essay on the essential elements of hermeneutics. The essay should be 5-7 pages in length and double-spaced and should express your understanding of the essential elements of the curse.

Some may question, the need to interpret the Bible. Their reasoning might be, that if people have God inside of them then; He will guide them. Further, they may conclude, that Human minds should not try to put meaning or another meaning to God’s Word other than what they may read on the pages of the Bible. This might be so but *proper interpretation can be achieved through the accurate methodology; and a better understanding of the original meanings* of what the Word of God says. Thus, allowing for stronger belief by individuals, in the church, and even in the wider society.

Hermeneutics (Green 2005) is defined as the theory of interpretation in the simplest form. The art of interpretation is not simply the literal reading of what we see written on pages or texts in black and white. It is not even a mental or educational explanation of a text. Hermeneutics is a science and an art, as it tells how to interpret writings, such as rhetoric, philosophy, poetry, legal documents, and particular Holy writings such as the Bible. It can go as far as translation from another language. It involves exploration, investigation, exegetic or, unmasking literary criticism. Thus, it derives a meaning of, “to bring understanding” or comprehension. I recall, that in the early times as a younger believer in Christ, my spiritual leader, when he taught in the Bible Study always said, “Context is king,” he indicated that whenever considering a biblical passage, one should always read two to three verses before and after to arrive at the meaning of a context. Do not take one Scripture verse in isolation.

. The word hermeneutics came from the Greek word “hermeneuein” which means to interpret. In the early stages of the hermeneutics development, it is said that the theology of the Christian culture and hermeneutics was a vital part of the education system as a disciplinary practice at the school of Alexandria (Figueiredo 2025), which can be traced back to Greece in the Middle Ages. The various types of hermeneutics have moved from the classical, religious, philosophical, and literary, to the empirical. For example, the -

* 1. C**lassical** - Greeks and Jewish Rabbis developed tools of codes and rules, namely Kora, and Homer for the allegorical meanings, to understand the literal, moral, and allegorical text, especially for the Holy Bible.
1. **Religious** – this shows how to interpret the biblical, theological, historical philosophical, and cultural settings. For instance,
2. **Grammatically** - In grammar attention is paid to language symbols, types of expression, and figures of speech;
	* 1. Historical - In history, they look at the background, and culture, including the grammatical construct to understand the language of a text.
		2. critical interpretation - language context, progressive revelation, and harmony.
3. **Philosophical** – It is a mixture of classical (grammar) and religious(themes)

this focus is on the nature of understanding and interpretation. In other words, how it relates to human existence and how it will fit into philosophical questions.

Hermeneutics as a science was developed by different philosophers such as Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer including Schleiermacher with his projections of introspections, and intuitive linguistic analysis. His psychological thrust looks at the dialog between the speaker and listener. In this case, the listener understands and shares the same language and, recognizes intentions.

Further, Jews and Christians alike have embraced not only one but four (4) major types of hermeneutics (George 2025), for the interpretation of the Bible; and the general study of principles of biblical interpretation.

* **literal** – plain meaning based on the construct of the grammatical and historical context. This means, that a particular word is understood without any extra meaning.
* **moral** – establish exegetical principles for extracting ethical lessons and principles from a text to determine how it can guide moral behavior even now. For example, the story of the Good Samaritan can be used as a means to encourage helping others.
* **allegorical** – this refers to a method used to interpret a story in terms of symbolic or a deeper or spiritual meaning. They are - typological including the key figures, main events; types or foreshadowing persons, events, and objects. For example, Jonah was swallowed by a whale; Noah’s ark was intended to be a type of the church; and the woman at the well.
* the **anagogical** – to deal with the mystical. This focuses on the life that is to come. Example biblical events, such as messianic prophecies

These different methods and types of hermeneutics are useful for interpreting written text.

The fact is hermeneutics in itself is both a science and an art, such essential elements must be applied to written text, in particular religious writing. Careful attention should be on the way or even how, the various parts are to be understood in the context of the whole. In this case the historical, and the cultural, along with the predetermined biases of the interpreter. For each reader comes to a text, with a mindset. This would allow for a proper interpretation to be achieved. For example, in the Gospels, the bible refers to the words, “a certain man.” One teacher said this meant a particular male person, while the other said the man was certain. To avoid misinterpretation of this, one can get the exact meaning of the text, one can consider, the use of a Greek dictionary and look up the meaning of the word “certain” in its context. This in itself is the process of interpretation.

For a proper interpretation of a text one must ask, what is the original meaning of a word, how can it be paraphrased, and are there more supporting pieces of evidence available? This analysis would mean taking a deeper look into the text to understand the original meaning and what the author intended to say, instead of simply taking it at face value. Instead of drawing directly from the face of the text or approaching it with one own preconceived ideas the historical background, grammatical structure, and the overall contextual message of the text should also be investigated. Therefore, including the above suggestions would allow for proper interpretation and enable the true meaning and application of written material.

Further to this, other facts should be included. For example, one should bridge the gap between the mind of the reader and that of the writer. The method would be to acquaint yourself with further text (for example a Greek or Hebrew Lexicon) that explains the original language of its text. This will help students discover the truth and values as stated, even without the bias influencing their perspective; to determine if they are right or wrong.

More interestingly, particular texts can come with striking unique character distinctions. Such texts may require critically examining one’s own biases. Further enlightenment can be derived from a topic under review. Understanding always allows for an accurate interpretation of the author's intention, prevents misinterpretations, and gives a deeper comprehension of the text beyond surface-level meanings.

The assumption in hermeneutics is to attempt interpretation inaccurately, in the cases of dealing with specific or difficult text e.g. Prophecy, or controversial matters such as divorce and remarriage. These can present unique difficulties when determining an author’s intention, the situation, and the text's origin. In dealing with these difficulties one can address them through oral discourses, or carry out in-depth scrutiny. There might even be instances where the text may appear in opposition to the explanation, in other words, they may present a contrast. These unique texts can create many disputes, resulting in an opposition between interpretation and explanation of the central problem of hermeneutics. In such cases, the customs, traditions, era, time of writing, and the original authors are to be considered. would impact attempts to unravel its meaning. Other issues can be the written text versus spoken language and the interpretation versus explanation.

Nevertheless, the interpretation of written information should use sound hermeneutical methods. This will prevent misinterpretation, poor exegetes, and conflicts of the original meanings. Careful systematic hermeneutics will give the meaning the writer’s mind intended especially in the Holy text of the Bible and other written materials.