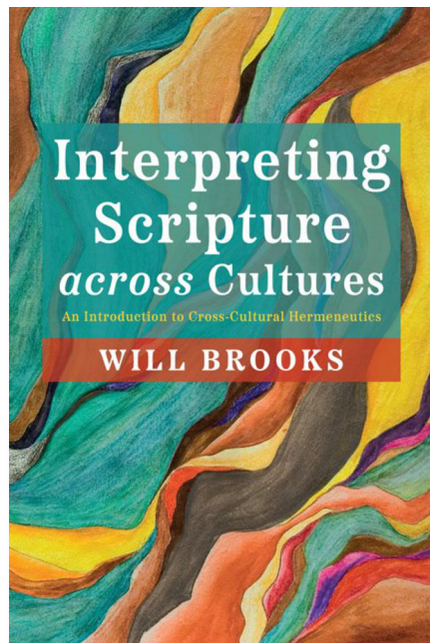


# REVIEW: *Interpreting Scripture Across Cultures: An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics* by Will Brooks

ems

REVIEWED BY  
SOCHANNGAM  
SHIRIK

Brooks, Will. *Interpreting Scripture Across Cultures: An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2022. Pp. 210, ISBN: 978-1-6667-0748-9 \$26.00 paperback.



I have often wondered whether the inspired Bible comes with an embedded hermeneutic, which people from all cultures should adopt. Will Brooks says “Yes.” The biblical hermeneutic he propagates is one in which the interpreter upholds the authorial intent of the meaning. He contends that this method, namely, “the grammatical-historical method” could and should be adopted in different (cross)cultural contexts (5). He does not argue that the grammatical-historical method itself in an inspired method, but he maintains that the inspired Scripture shows that this method is the right method for faithful interpretation. He encourages missionaries to focus not only on the best ways of communicating the gospel but also on the best ways

of training indigenous leaders. One of the ways to accomplish this goal is to help people interpret the Bible correctly, and his book attempts to do just that.

The book is divided into three main parts. In the first part, Brooks raises the contextual challenges of reading the Scriptures together, the necessity of pursuing the authorial intent in biblical interpretation, and the difficulties—and also the possibility—of applying the grammatical-historical method across different cultures. He demonstrates that while we are separated from the context of the biblical writers and from one another, it is still possible to retrieve the author’s intended meaning of the biblical text.

In the second section, Brooks introduces his readers to some alternative ways of interpreting the texts. After briefly discussing Postcolonial hermeneutics, cross-textual

hermeneutics, rhetorical-interactive hermeneutics, and ethnohermeneutics, he finds them falling short of, if not distorting, the hermeneutical models embedded in the Scripture.

In the third section, Brooks comes full circle by providing principles for his proposed hermeneutical model and offering some practical implications of how to apply this model to different contexts including oral learners. He concludes the book by reemphasizing the necessity and urgency of properly equipping Christians with the right method of interpretation.

Brooks has given the global church a helpful tool. Considering that his audience is primarily global conservative evangelicals (as inferred from his bibliographical references), Brooks has formidably argued his thesis by establishing a solid case for the priority of the grammatical-historical method in interpreting Scripture. His argument becomes clearest when reading his discussion of ethnohermeneutics (Ch 8) where he presents his view in contrast to Larry Caldwell's thesis. Caldwell believes that the Scripture itself provides more than one legitimate hermeneutical model, and therefore Christians should adopt indigenous hermeneutical models they are already acquainted with. Hence, according to Caldwell, insisting on one model as Brooks does is unhelpful, if not unbiblical (95–98). I find this chapter to be the most informative in the debate. Ironically, however, I find elements of Caldwell's proposal persuasive.

The ethnohermeneutics that Brooks finds fault with (in one sense, postcolonial hermeneutics, cross-textual hermeneutics, and other indigenous hermeneutics Brooks discusses are forms of ethnohermeneutics) do not need to stand in opposition with the grammatical-historical method. Interpretation, after all, is making sense of the text in a context. Possibly some versions of "ethnohermeneutics" are antithetical to Brook's proposal. But they need not be always. For instance, some forms of postcolonial reading attempt to take into consideration the grammatical-historical context of the biblical text. An example could be a form of Indian Dalit theology. Perhaps a more nuanced discussion of this topic will benefit the reader. Additionally, evangelicals who subscribe to the grammatical-historical method of interpretations do not necessarily agree on the precise hermeneutical approach within this method. Nonetheless, Brooks is correct that our hermeneutical method cannot do away with the author's intended meaning of the text.

---

**Sochanngam Shirik**