
*Text, Inter-textual Reading,
Interpretation and Reasoning*

TEXT- the written words in a book,
a sentence or piece of writing from the scripture that
a priest or minister reads aloud and talks about

Hermeneutics- the study of the methodological principles of interpretation- branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation of texts.

the detailed and systematic examination of human understanding that began with the German **philosopher** Hans-Georg Gadamer

hermeneutics is the science and art of interpretation.

The primary need of Hermeneutics is to determine and understand the meaning of text.

The purpose of Hermeneutics is to bridge the gap between our minds and the minds of the writers through a thorough knowledge of the original languages, ancient history and the comparison of Scripture with Scripture.

Who Controls the Meaning a Text?

Who controls the meaning of a text? There are two options:

1. Authorial Intent: Meaning is determined by the intention of the author.
2. Reader Response: Meaning is determined by the reader or by a community of readers.

- **The author of any text is the ultimate authority of its meaning.**
- **We wouldn't believe we could read and interpret it any way we chose.**
- **A text can have multiple meanings if the author intended to communicate those meanings.**
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- **The most dangerous question to ask in a scriptural study is this: “What does this passage mean to you?”**
- **Be careful you don’t “over-spiritualize” a passage and miss the plain meaning of a text.**

Questions to Determine the Meaning of a Text

1. **AUTHOR:** Who wrote the book?
2. **AUDIENCE:** For whom was the book intended?
3. **CONTEXT:** What is the context of the passage?
4. **BEFORE:** What precedes the passage?
5. **AFTER:** What follows the passage?
6. **TOTALITY:** How do other passages interpret this passage?

How is an understanding of this text influenced by what we can learn about its context?

How is an understanding of this text influenced by the community that produced this text?

- What can we learn about the community for whom this text was originally created?
- What is happening at this time in history in the community for which the text was written? Where is it on the timeline of History?
- Who authored, edited and/or translated this text? Is there more than one author?
Is it the work of an individual or a community? Is it possible to establish authorship at all? Does the author draw on other texts in creating this one?
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- Why was the text created?
- Why has the author chosen specific words or phrases?
- What messages might the text have conveyed to its original audience?
- Is there an oral tradition evident? When was the text first put into written form?
- In what language was the text first set down? Do these factors affect the meaning of the text for its original audience?
- Were there any historical or cultural events that caused the text to be edited or translated across time?

How is an understanding of this text influenced by its type and structure?

- Is there a particular structure to this text? Why was it structured in this way?
- How do different parts of the text relate to each other?
- What clues or text features help the reader to identify the type of text?
- Why has the author chosen this style or form of writing to convey the message?

For whom might this text be relevant today?

- What are some messages from or about God that modern believers can take from this text in their time and place?
- Is there anything in this text that might be open to challenge or questioning by a modern reader?
- What factors make it possible for modern readers to bring to this text interpretations not intended by the author?
- How might gender, culture or life experience, including experiences with religion or religious groups, affect the way a modern reader might respond to the text? How can the experience of the reader add to the richness of interpretation?

How might this text be used/applied in contemporary contexts?

- In common worship?
- For personal spiritual reflection?
- To inspire action for justice?
- To reassure?
- To console?
- In prayer?
- To challenge the status quo?
- To invite to belief?
- Rewritten to engage a particular audience?

Intertextuality refers to the interdependence of texts in relation to one another (as well as to the culture at large).

Texts can influence, derive from, parody, reference, quote, contrast with, build on, draw from, or even inspire each other.

Intertextuality produces meaning.

Knowledge does not exist in a vacuum, and neither does literature.

A central idea of contemporary literary and cultural theory, intertextuality has its origins in 20th-century linguistics, particularly in the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913).

The term itself was coined by the Bulgarian-French philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva in the 1960s.

Some say that writers and artists are so deeply influenced by the works they consume that the creation of any completely new work is rendered impossible.

"Intertextuality seems such a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life.

In the Postmodern epoch, theorists often claim, it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or novel, since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art,"

Scriptural Reasoning ("SR") is one type of interdisciplinary, interfaith scriptural reading.

The term "Scriptural Reasoning" was coined by **Peter Ochs** to name a group who now form the Society for Scriptural Reasoning (SSR)

It is an evolving practice in which Christians, Jews, Muslims, and sometimes members of other faiths, meet to study their sacred scriptures together, and to explore the ways in which such study can help them understand and respond to particular contemporary issues.

Originally developed by theologians and religious philosophers as a means of fostering post-critical and post-liberal corrections to patterns of modern reasoning, it has now spread beyond academic circles.

Scriptural Reasoning involves participants from multiple religious traditions

meeting, very often in small groups, to read and discuss passages from their sacred texts

The texts will often relate to a common topic - say, the figure of Abraham, or consideration of legal and moral issues of property-holding.

Participants discuss the content of the texts, and will often explore the variety of ways in which their religious communities have worked with them and continue to work with them, and the ways in which those texts might shape their understanding of and engagement with a range of contemporary issues.

A participant from any one religious tradition might therefore:

Discuss with the other participants his or her own readings of the texts from his or her own tradition

Discuss with them their attempts to make sense of the texts from his or her own tradition, and

In turn discuss with them the texts from their own traditions.