



# Dynamic Biblical Interpretation: Contextual Hermeneutics as a Multidimensional Approach

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## **Abstract**

*Accurate and relevant biblical interpretation requires an approach that integrates various dimensions, both historical, theological, and contemporary. This article explores the application of contextual hermeneutics as a holistic method of biblical interpretation by combining four main contexts: faith, history, literature, and contemporary situation. The aim of this research is to demonstrate how contextual hermeneutics can yield a deeper and more applicable understanding that is relevant for contemporary readers. The research method employed is qualitative analysis using a contextual hermeneutic approach, involving literature studies and evaluation of biblical texts in relation to their historical, literary, and social contexts. The findings show that by understanding the contexts of faith, history, literature, and contemporary situations, interpreters can produce more comprehensive and balanced interpretations that bridge denominational differences and offer relevant guidance for modern Christians. The main contribution of this research is emphasizing the importance of a multidimensional approach to biblical interpretation to create more inclusive, adaptive, and applicable interpretations in addressing contemporary challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Contextual hermeneutics; biblical interpretation; faith; history; literature, contemporary context; hermeneutic method.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In theological studies, hermeneutics is one of the most important areas that continues to develop, especially in relation to methods of biblical interpretation. Traditional hermeneutical approaches, such as the historical-grammatical method, are often criticized for being too rigid, while the historical-critical method is considered too

liberal in interpreting the sacred text.<sup>1</sup> Biblical interpretation requires a balance that is able to honor historical context and theological meaning without losing its relevance for contemporary readers.<sup>2</sup> In this context, there is a need for methods that are adaptive, multidimensional, and more responsive to the dynamics of the times.<sup>3</sup> The contextual hermeneutic approach seeks to fill this gap by integrating various methods of interpretation to produce a holistic understanding.

Hermeneutics shows a very rich diversification of methods, ranging from narrative approaches to feminist and postcolonial hermeneutics.<sup>4</sup> For example, the narrative approach emphasizes the story aspect of the text, while the feminist approach focuses on gender issues in the context of theology.<sup>5</sup> Postcolonial hermeneutics, on the other hand, tries to expose colonial domination in traditional interpretations and offer new, more inclusive perspectives.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, historical-grammatical methods continue to maintain their relevance in conservative communities with approaches that remain respectful of the original context of the text.<sup>7</sup> However, most of these methods tend to be fragmented and less able to bridge the need for a more holistic interpretation.

In addition, modern hermeneutical developments include the integration of digital technologies to support the analysis of biblical texts. For example, linguistic analysis software has been used to understand the grammatical and semantic patterns of biblical texts in greater depth.<sup>8</sup> This method provides greater accuracy in understanding the text,

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Conzelmann and A. Lindemann, *Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles & Methods of New Testament Exegesis* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 12; John Muddiman, "Historical Criticism," in *Biblical Interpretation and Method*, ed. Katharine J. Dell and Paul M. Joyce, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 52-62, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199645534.003.0005>.

<sup>2</sup> Joel B. Green, *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 65.

<sup>3</sup> Keith A. Burton, "Contextual Hermeneutics: A Wholistic View of Biblical Interpretation," *Ministry: International Journal For Pastors* 73, no. 3 (2020): 26, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2000/03/contextual-hermeneutics>.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Structuralism, Hermeneutics, and Contextual Meaning," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51, no. 2 (1983): 212, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1463635>.

<sup>5</sup> O.P. Keegan and J. Terence, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 41.

<sup>6</sup> Gerald O. West, "Locating 'Contextual Bible Study' within Biblical Liberation Hermeneutics and Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics," *HTS Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (February 20, 2014): 5, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2641>.

<sup>7</sup> Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 97.

<sup>8</sup> Werner Stenger, *Introduction to New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 120; George T. Montague, *Understanding the Bible: A Basic Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007).

but often neglects its theological and spiritual dimensions.<sup>9</sup> Other approaches, such as cultural hermeneutics, introduce ways to understand the Bible in the context of contemporary culture, but often face criticism for being too focused on social issues and less on core theological meaning.<sup>10</sup> Thus, despite many innovations in hermeneutics, there is still a need for an approach that is able to integrate the various dimensions in a holistic way.

The contextual hermeneutic approach stands out as an attempt to address this challenge by integrating various elements of existing methods to produce a balanced analysis.<sup>11</sup> This model not only includes historical and linguistic analysis but also takes into account theological relevance and the needs of contemporary readers.<sup>12</sup> As a multidimensionally oriented approach, contextual hermeneutics is able to provide a broader framework for understanding the Bible in various contexts, making it one of the important innovations in modern theological studies.<sup>13</sup> As such, contextual hermeneutics offers a solution that bridges various perspectives and needs in biblical studies.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a contextual hermeneutic method of analysis. This method involves exploring four main contexts: faith, history, literature, and the contemporary situation. Data was collected through a literature study of the biblical text and secondary references from recent theological works.<sup>14</sup> Analysis is done by systematically assessing each of these contexts to identify patterns, meaning, and

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<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 59.

<sup>10</sup> C. René Padilla, "The Interpreted Word: Reflections on Contextual Hermeneutics," *Themelios: An International Journal for Pastors and Students of Theological and Religious Studies* 7, no. 1 (1981): 19, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/the-interpreted-word-reflections-on-contextual-hermeneutics/>.

<sup>11</sup> Volker Küster, "Models of Contextual Hermeneutics," *Exchange* 23, no. 2 (1994): 150, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254394X00262>.

<sup>12</sup> Ebenhaizer I Nuban Timo and Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, "The Bible in Contextual Theological Work in Indonesia," *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 3, no. 1 (June 10, 2021): 8, <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v3i1.24>.

<sup>13</sup> Ebenhaizer I. Nuban Timo et al., "Protestant Church of Maluku Ecclesiology: From Calvinism to Fuse to Become Pancasilaism," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 37, no. 2 (December 1, 2021): 188–97, <https://doi.org/10.3138/tjt-2020-0158>.

<sup>14</sup> Conzelmann and Lindemann, *Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles & Methods of New Testament Exegesis*, 12; Green, *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 65.

relevance.<sup>15</sup> The results of each context analysis are then integrated to produce a holistic interpretation that is theologically and contextually relevant.<sup>16</sup>

In applying this method, the "results" section presents the findings based on the analysis of each major context, such as the historical context analysis highlights the cultural and social background of the biblical text under study, while the literary context delves into the linguistic structure and genre of the text.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the "discussion" section evaluates these findings by relating them to their theological relevance and application to contemporary situations.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the "discussion" section not only interprets the results but also integrates the four contexts to provide deeper insights. This approach ensures that the interpretation is not only academic but also useful for modern readers.

## **RESULTS**

### **Context of Faith**

Faith context is an important aspect of contextual hermeneutics that examines the influence of personal beliefs on biblical interpretation. An understanding of faith is often the reader's initial foundation in understanding sacred texts, especially in the Christian tradition that regards the Bible as divine revelation.<sup>19</sup> This approach is not free from challenges as faith prejudices can produce biases that obscure the original meaning of the text.<sup>20</sup> Research shows that the integration of faith into contextual hermeneutics enriches spiritual understanding without neglecting academic objectivity.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, faith is not

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<sup>15</sup> Burton, "Contextual Hermeneutics: A Wholistic View of Biblical Interpretation," 26; Malbon, "Structuralism, Hermeneutics, and Contextual Meaning," 212.

<sup>16</sup> Timo and Putrawan, "The Bible in Contextual Theological Work in Indonesia," 8; West, "Locating 'Contextual Bible Study' within Biblical Liberation Hermeneutics and Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics," 5.

<sup>17</sup> Keegan and Terence, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 41.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson and Moore, *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 97; E.M. Cornelius, "Rhetorical Criticism and the Hermeneutics of the New Testament," *In Die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 34, no. 2 (August 15, 2000): a596, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v34i2.596>.

<sup>19</sup> Jens Zimmermann, "Biblical Hermeneutics," in *A Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Niall Keane and Chris Lawn (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 212-225; Thomas M. Seebohm, "The Problem of Hermeneutics in Recent Anglo-American Literature: Part I," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 10, no. 3 (1977): 180-198, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237030>.

<sup>20</sup> James A. Loader, "The Canon as Text for a Biblical Theology," *HTS Theological Studies / Theological Studies* 61, no. 4 (October 13, 2005): 1027-48, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v61i4.494>; D.R. Dungan and Bradley Cobb, *Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation* (South Fulton, GA: Cobb Publishing, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021).

only the basis of belief, but also a tool of theological exploration to explore the relevance of the text for modern life.<sup>22</sup>

Other studies reveal that faith can be a bridge between the reader and the text that brings theological values into a contemporary context. In this approach, faith becomes an interpretive lens that serves to align the meaning of the text with the spiritual experience of the reader.<sup>23</sup> For example, the doctrine of love in John's Gospel is often used to inspire relationships between individuals in modern faith communities. However, it is important to balance faith-based interpretation with critical analysis so as not to reduce the message of the text to a mere reflection of the reader's beliefs.<sup>24</sup> As such, faith-based approaches still require critical management to maintain theological relevance without losing academic integrity.

The integration of faith in hermeneutics also helps readers understand the spiritual dynamics in complex biblical texts. For example, the book of Job offers insights into the tension between faith and human suffering that are relevant for modern theological reflection. In this analysis, faith is understood as the reader's response to the narrative challenges of the text, which creates space for deeper theological dialog. With this approach, faith not only acts as a subjective belief but also becomes a tool to uncover theological meanings relevant to the modern context.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, faith in contextual hermeneutics becomes an integral part of the interpretive process.

The context of faith also opens up opportunities to bridge differences in interpretation between different denominations. This approach allows recognition of theological diversity while creating space for constructive ecumenical dialogue.<sup>26</sup> For

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<sup>22</sup> Green, *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*.

<sup>23</sup> West, "Locating 'Contextual Bible Study' within Biblical Liberation Hermeneutics and Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics"; Frank S. Ravitch, "Struggling With Text and Context: A Hermeneutic Approach to Interpreting and Realizing Law School Missions," *St. John's Law Review* 74, no. 2 (2000): 731-52, <https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1446&context=lawreview>.

<sup>24</sup> Milton Terry and Edward Andrews, *BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, Ohio: Christian Publishing House, 2021); Gregory Goswell, *Text and Paratext: Book Order, Title, and Division as Keys to Biblical Interpretation*, 1st ed. (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Academic, 2022); Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2018); Timo Eskola, *A Narrative Theology of the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1628/978-3-16-154037-0>.

<sup>25</sup> Michael V. Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 1 (2018): 7, <https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1371.2018.1372>; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament)* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> Tyron Inbody, *The Faith of the Christian Church: An Introduction to Theology*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, n.d.); Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics Interpretation Theory in*

example, theological interpretations of the concept of salvation can enrich the understanding of faith through different denominational perspectives. Thus, faith in contextual hermeneutics not only strengthens individual beliefs but also encourages cross-denominational understanding.<sup>27</sup> This shows that the context of faith can make a significant contribution to collective understanding in the Christian tradition.

Finally, faith enables readers to assess the relevance of the biblical text in everyday life. Principles of faith, such as love, forgiveness, and justice, are often used to evaluate how the biblical text can provide moral and spiritual guidance.<sup>28</sup> Thus, faith helps readers integrate the message of the text into their contemporary reality, making the Bible a source of inspiration and a guide to life.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, an analysis of the faith context shows that the reader's faith plays an important role in establishing a deep connection with the biblical text and relates it to the challenges of modern life.

## **Historical Context**

Understanding the historical context is essential in interpreting biblical texts deeply and accurately. The cultural and social background at the time of the writing of the text helps explain the laws written, such as the law of Moses which reflects the patriarchal structure of society in the ancient Near East. In this case, understanding the social norms of the time can help modern readers avoid anachronistic judgments of the text.<sup>30</sup> For example, the system of slavery in the Old Testament can be better interpreted when understood in the context of the ancient economy.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the historical context

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*Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969); Dungan and Cobb, *Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation*.

<sup>27</sup> Inbody, *The Faith of the Christian Church: An Introduction to Theology*; Palmer, *Hermeneutics Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*; Dungan and Cobb, *Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation*.

<sup>28</sup> Amy Anderson and Wendy Widder, *Textual Criticism of the Bible: Revised Edition (Lexham Methods Series)*, ed. Douglas Mangum (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2018); Darren Sarisky, "Biblical Interpretation and Analytic Reflection," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 6 (July 19, 2018): 162–82, <https://doi.org/10.12978/jat.2018-6.030013180024a>.

<sup>29</sup> Sarisky, "Biblical Interpretation and Analytic Reflection"; Dungan and Cobb, *Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation*.

<sup>30</sup> Darren M. Slade, "What Is the Socio-Historical Method in the Study of Religion?" *Socio-Historical Examination of Religion and Ministry* 2, no. 1 (April 1, 2020): 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.33929/sherm.2020.vol2.no1.01>; Emmanuel Forster Asamoah, "Interpretation Approaches for Biblical Apocalyptic Literature: An Evaluation," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 6, no. 4 (July 27, 2020): 236-42, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2020073>; Muddiman, "Historical Criticism."

<sup>31</sup> Robby Waddell, "Spirit Hermeneutics or Biblical Interpretation by Any Other Name," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 27, no. 2 (September 14, 2018): 196-212, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251->

provides an important framework for assessing the text without neglecting its theological value.

Examples from the context of the Roman empire are key elements in understanding the gospel narratives and Paul's letters. Roman political, legal and religious systems provide insights into the challenges faced by early Christian communities. For example, the conflicts between Jews and non-Jews in Paul's letters reflect the social tensions of the time. The influence of Hellenism cannot be ignored either, especially in the way Greek was used to convey theological messages to diverse audiences.<sup>32</sup> By understanding these dynamics of power and culture, interpretation of the text becomes more contextualized and meaningful for contemporary readers.

In addition, the historical context helps explain the different theological outlooks between the Old and New Testament books. For example, the idea of the Messiah in Isaiah is often understood in the context of the Babylonian exile that shaped messianic expectations. Historical changes, such as the Babylonian and later Roman conquests, influenced the development of theological thought reflected in the New Testament. Therefore, historical context plays an important role in bridging the epochal differences between the biblical text and today's readers.<sup>33</sup> This allows for a deeper exploration of meaning while maintaining the integrity of the biblical narrative.

The historical background also provides insight into the oral tradition and the process of writing the texts. Before the biblical texts were written down, many traditions were passed on orally, reflecting the dynamics of a community living in a collective culture.<sup>34</sup> For example, the Psalms and the sagas in Genesis show the long-lasting influence of oral traditions before they were transformed into writing. This analysis shows that the biblical text is not only a historical document but also a reflection of the

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02702002; Henry A. Vikler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Slade, "What Is the Socio-Historical Method in the Study of Religion?"; "Historical-Cultural Background," *Lives Transforming*, 2018, <https://www.livestransforming.com/historical-cultural-background/>; J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1993); Donald Arthur Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> Paul R. House and Eric Mitchell, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007); Marc Zvi Brettler, Peter Enns, and Daniel J. Harrington, "The Historical-Critical Reading of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," in *The Bible and the Believer*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-20, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199863006.003.0000>; Loader, "The Canon as Text for a Biblical Theology."

<sup>34</sup> Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021); Muddiman, "Historical Criticism."

collective experiences of a diverse community.<sup>35</sup> As such, an understanding of this process helps readers understand how the divine message was preserved and passed on through the ages.

Finally, the contextual approach to history emphasizes the importance of keeping the text relevant for modern readers. Although the historical setting of the text may be very different from the present-day context, the principles contained therein, such as justice and love, remain relevant. By relating the historical narrative to contemporary challenges, readers can discover theological values that have a direct impact on everyday life. Therefore, historical analysis not only brings the past back to life but also makes the Bible a lasting source of inspiration for today's generation.

### **Literary Context**

Literary context is one of the important aspects in the process of interpreting biblical texts. In analyzing a biblical text, we need to consider the literary culture in which it was written. The languages used in the Bible, such as Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, are expressions of a particular literary culture that must be understood to produce a deep and accurate interpretation. Without a good understanding of these languages, the interpretation of the biblical text will be limited and will not reach the true depth of meaning. Therefore, it is important for biblical interpreters to have adequate linguistic knowledge, as well as the readiness to evaluate the text within the framework of a valid linguistic methodology.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, the literary genre of the document being analyzed also plays an important role in biblical interpretation. Each literary genre has certain rules and structures that affect the way we understand the text. For example, in Biblical literature, there are various categories such as history, prophecy, poetry, apocalyptic, rhetoric, and epistolary. Paul's letters, which belong to the epistolary genre, are best analyzed through the lens of classical rhetoric, because in those days, rhetoric was the primary means of interpersonal communication. Likewise, books like the Gospels, Acts, and Exodus are

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<sup>35</sup> Brettler, Enns, and Harrington, "The Historical-Critical Reading of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament"; R. W. L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology (Invitation to Theological Studies)*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021), 67; Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2007), 85.

better understood as historical works that convey important events in the lives of God's people.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to macro literary genres, text interpretation also involves analyzing the micro-units in the text. These micro-units include maxims, analogies, parallelisms, and various other literary categories. Understanding how these micro-units work is crucial to gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of the text. For example, parallelism in Hebrew poetry is often used to emphasize a certain idea or to introduce a contrast between two concepts. By understanding these micro-structures, we can be more precise in drawing meaning from the text and avoid superficial or erroneous interpretations.<sup>38</sup>

At a more fundamental level, semantic, grammatical and syntactical aspects must also be carefully analyzed in the interpretation of biblical texts. Each word, phrase, or sentence in the text has a specific function that can reveal a deeper meaning if analyzed carefully. For example, in Ephesians 2:8, Paul uses the perfect passive verb to show that salvation is a gift from God that has already happened and cannot be earned by human effort. Paying attention to the rules of grammar and the way words are arranged in sentences is crucial in extracting the exact meaning of the text. In this context, syntactical and semantic analysis is key to achieving an accurate and thorough understanding of the text.<sup>39</sup>

Overall, understanding the literary context in biblical interpretation not only involves understanding the original language and literary genre, but also demands attention to micro-units and in-depth grammatical aspects. All these elements work together to form a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning contained in the biblical text. Therefore, biblical exegetes must engage a variety of methods and in-depth

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph D. Fantin, *Interpreting the New Testament Text: An Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 132; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 214.

<sup>38</sup> Conzelmann and Lindemann, *Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles & Methods of New Testament Exegesis*; Jonathan Roberge, "What Is Critical Hermeneutics?" *Thesis Eleven* 106, no. 1 (August 4, 2011): 5-22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513611411682>; Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory*, 13th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, 1st ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 118; Kaiser Jr. and Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*; William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004).

approaches in order to interpret the text in a way that is correct and in accordance with the original intent of the author. This requires not only knowledge of linguistics and literary methodology, but also the skill to analyze the text thoroughly and meticulously.<sup>40</sup>

### **DISCUSSION: Dynamic Biblical Interpretation in Multidimensional Approach**

A good hermeneutical method should always be updated and informed by the current context. The Bible, as the living Word of God, has infinite relevance and is able to speak to every generation. However, to apply biblical principles to contemporary life, we must first clearly understand the textual context, whether and how the principles can be analogized to the multidimensional situation. This requires a deeper attention to the original context of the text rather than simply accepting pre-existing interpretations. With this approach, we ensure that the application of biblical teachings remains faithful to its original message, while also being relevant to today's conditions and challenges.<sup>41</sup>

Finding the contemporary meaning of a biblical text requires a deep understanding of the historical and literary context behind it. Without this knowledge, we will find it difficult to draw valid conclusions about how the text can be applied to our lives. Therefore, we cannot just take the surface of the text or accept a hasty interpretation. This process requires time and diligence in studying the text thoroughly. As such, only after we have done our careful interpretive homework can we confidently express God's will in accordance with multidimensional's context.<sup>42</sup>

However, honest interpreters must recognize that there is not always a clear answer for every contemporary situation. At some point, our interpretation may face the fact that no biblical statement can be easily translated into a very specific situation. This is a challenge that everyone who seeks to understand God's Word in a contemporary context must face. Sometimes, even though multidimensional situations seem similar to those in the text, we may not be able to find a directly relevant statement. In such cases,

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<sup>40</sup> Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology (Invitation to Theological Studies)*, 67; Kaiser Jr. and Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, 85.

<sup>41</sup> Tibor Fabiny, "The Hermeneutical Context," in *The Lion and the Lamb*, 1st ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1992), 13-44, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-22113-4\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-22113-4_2); Küster, "Models of Contextual Hermeneutics"; Malbon, "Structuralism, Hermeneutics, and Contextual Meaning."

<sup>42</sup> D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, *God And Culture*, ed. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Surabaya: Momentum Christian Literature, 2012), 85; Fantin, *Interpreting the New Testament Text: An Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, 132; Burton, "Contextual Hermeneutics: A Wholistic View of Biblical Interpretation."

we must be cautious of concluding that "thus saith the Lord" without careful consideration of the wider context and dynamics of the present age.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, we need to accept the fact that even if a particular historical context provides a clear teaching, the contemporary and multidimensional context may demand a different response. This is important to remember in the interpretive process as it implies that divine communication in one situation cannot always be simply transferred into another seemingly similar situation. Therefore, it is important to approach the text with humility, recognizing that not all applications of biblical teachings are easy to find or obvious under present conditions. In our quest to understand God's will, we must also be prepared to let go of our prejudices and political agendas, so that God's voice can be heard more clearly.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, while the application of biblical principles in contemporary life can be complex, that does not mean that God's Word cannot speak with profound relevance. If we approach the text with an open heart, seriousness in research, and a strong hermeneutical discipline, we will find ways to apply the teachings wisely and according to the demands of the times. Therefore, a good hermeneutical method must constantly update itself with the current context without losing its faithfulness to the original message of the Bible.<sup>45</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The contextual hermeneutic approach offers a more dynamic and adaptive way of interpreting the Bible, integrating four main contexts: faith, history, literature and the contemporary. This hermeneutic recognizes that the interpretation of the text does not only depend on the literal or historical meaning, but also needs to consider how the text

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<sup>43</sup> Vikler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*; Keegan and Terence, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*.

<sup>44</sup> James D. Hester and J. David Hester, eds., *Rhetorics and Hermeneutics: Wilhelm Wuellner and His Influence (Emory Studies in Early Christianity)* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002); Timo and Putrawan, "The Bible in Contextual Theological Work in Indonesia"; Waddell, "Spirit Hermeneutics or Biblical Interpretation by Any Other Name."

<sup>45</sup> N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019); Wayne Grudem, C. John Collins, and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible's Origin, Reliability, and Meaning*, 1st ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Grant R. Osborne, *Spiral Hermeneutics A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2012); West, "Locating 'Contextual Bible Study' within Biblical Liberation Hermeneutics and Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics."

can be applied in the context of modern life. Thus, biblical interpretation does not only focus on theological or linguistic aspects, but also seeks to unearth the spiritual and moral relevance that can be drawn upon by contemporary readers. Through this approach, readers are invited to consider the meaning of the text in relation to their personal, social and cultural experiences.

On the other hand, contextual hermeneutics also emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical and cultural background of the time the text was written to avoid anachronistic interpretations. By utilizing historical, literary, and social contexts, this approach enables readers to gain a deeper understanding of the biblical text, as well as apply its principles to everyday life. This approach not only enriches theological understanding, but also encourages inter-denominational dialog and provides life guidance relevant to the challenges of today. Overall, contextual hermeneutics is an effective tool to bridge the biblical text with contemporary reality, making it a living and relevant source of inspiration.

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