

PRAXIS HANDBOOK

NUMBER 3

Applied Hermeneutics: Interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures for pastoral care

Date last revised: 14 November 2004

Acknowledgement

This Handbook is a short version of a paper written in 2004 by Ross Pitt, Director of the Academy for Chaplaincy and Community Ministries as part of the requirements for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma of Arts (Languages East & West) by the University of Queensland's School of History, Philosophy, Religion, and Classics. The encouragement, suggestions, and critical commentary provided by Associate Professor Ed Conrad, Rev. Dr. Neville Kirkwood², and Rev. Dr. John Chalmers³ are gratefully acknowledged.

¹ The Academy was formed in 1993 by chaplains to train pastoral care workers and is a genuinely ecumenical body, not answerable to any particular Church. Its governing Board has members from all the major Christian traditions. Its Certificate and Diploma level courses are shortly to be offered by the University of Southern Queensland as a minor/major in the new Human Services program of the Arts Faculty.

² Author of the standard textbook used in Australia for the training pastoral carers: *Pastoral Care in Hospitals*, Sydney: Dwyer 1995

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Disclaimer

This Handbook does not have the imprimatur of any Christian church, nor has it been endorsed by the University of Queensland nor any of its individual academic staff. The views expressed are the sole responsibility of the author, who is a Roman Catholic **lay** pastoral care worker with a very strong commitment to recruiting and training **lay** people to undertake pastoral care in ecumenical teams.

It is not the intention of the author to provoke or aggravate points of disputation on doctrinal matters. Every effort has been made to avoid raking over the theological disputes that may still remain between some Christian churches regarding the status of the Scriptures as a resource for spiritual formation. The author apologises in advance if any offence is caused in this regard.

Critical comments are encouraged

This Handbook is but one person's reflection on the place of the Hebrew Scriptures in pastoral care praxis. Therefore, constructive comments on the Handbook are welcome and may be posted to :

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All constructive comments will be acknowledged and, where practicable, will be incorporated into future editions of the Handbook. The Handbook is seen as an evolving document.

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Attachment A: What interpretative principles (hermeneutics) should be applied to the Christian scriptures?

This Attachment contains :

1. A précis of the interpretative principles (hermeneutics) issued by the Roman Catholic Pontifical Biblical Commission.
2. A list of interpretative principles (hermeneutics) from Ford D., *Theology: a very short introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (1999) pp137-139.

Why this Handbook?

This Handbook has been written for lay Christians undergoing preparation by the Academy for Chaplaincy and Community Ministries to provide pastoral care in ecumenical teams in institutions such as hospitals, hostels, nursing homes, mental health units, prisons, schools, colleges, universities, refugee communities, the armed forces, work places, parishes, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

The Handbook is premised upon Christ's caution in John 15:5 -

"I am the vine; you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him will bear much fruit. Because, separated from me you can't achieve anything."

This familiar passage is normally interpreted as laying down the prerequisite for effective ministry. Not only do pastoral carers have to be **grafted** into Christ, they also have to function in a **mutually** effective way with Christ. In other words, for this ministry to be effective, Christ needs to work **through** the pastoral carer.

Through Baptism the pastoral carer is **grafted** into Christ and so gains the potential (via "Grace"⁴) to have a **fruitful** relationship with Christ. But the pastoral carer has to work very hard at having a **fruitful** relationship with Christ if s/he is going to provide **authentic** pastoral care to others. Good intentions are not enough.

The process of developing this mutually *close relationship with Christ* is called **spiritual formation**. Experience has shown us that if pastoral carers don't invest in their *own* spiritual formation they will not be able to sustain themselves through the challenges and difficulties of providing pastoral care to *others*.

A major part of the pastoral carers interaction with others is as a **catalyst**⁵ so that through them others may be brought closer to Christ. This means that they must be able to intuit the **spiritual significance** of what patients, residents, pupils, prisoners, etc are communicating to them and be able to respond accordingly. If they can't do this then they are merely a visitor, not a pastoral carer.

This Handbook was designed to help pastoral carers to use the Hebrew Scriptures in their spiritual formation so that they can minister to others. Another Handbook does the same for the **Good News** about Jesus (the) Christ.

⁴ The January 2003 issue (Volume 57 Number1) of *Interpretation – A Journal of Bible & Theology* is devoted to the subject of "Grace" and explores questions such as: What is "Grace"? What is the extent of God's "Grace"? How does "Grace" relate to human conduct and accountability? The contributions are from leading educationalists in the Protestant tradition. The relevant sections of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on Grace are 1810-1811, 1987-2011, & 2021-2029.

⁵ Pastoral carers are not there administering the sacraments, nor are they there in the role of a clinician, therapist, counsellor, mentor, or friend. The **catalytic** dimension of pastoral care is explained in Handbook No.1 – Pastoral Care in Institutional Settings

What is spiritual formation?

Put in its simplest terms, spiritual formation is a *process* whereby pastoral carers learn to:

- open their ears to the Word of God
- form their soul (i.e., become particularly sensitised) to its meaning
- respond with courage to what they sense is God's particular call to them
- seek to serve God in everything they do; and
- seek to serve God in everyone who touches their life.

Thus the task of learning how to listen to the Scriptures in order to find meaning in them and in order to respond to them, is fundamental to the spiritual formation needed to undertake pastoral care.

What do pastoral carers do?

Pastoral carers work in institutional settings (such as hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, mental health facilities, educational establishments, parishes, migrant hostels, defence forces, work places, and NGOs) and they constitute a recognisable community that shares the following characteristics:

- they are baptised Christians.
- they are practising members of a Church (Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Uniting, etc) or Christian Fellowship.
- they have been commissioned by their Church or Fellowship to provide pastoral care in the name of their Church or Fellowship.
- increasingly they are laity (i.e., have not been ordained as sacramental ministers nor taken religious vows).
- they work in ecumenical teams and elect the leader (or coordinator) of their ecumenical teams.
- they don't provide pastoral care just to those who are practising members of their own Church or Fellowship; they are available to all they encounter (including staff and relatives).
- their first encounter with someone is most likely to be "cold call" (i.e., they are rarely invited to make contact first).
- most of the people they encounter are not church goers but the pastoral carers recognise them as inherently spiritual people; in fact pastoral carers don't define being "spiritual" as necessarily belonging to a Church.
- they are not *visitors* because they relate to people on a *spiritual* level.
- they don't offer to help fix "problems" (i.e., they are not mentors or counsellors; nor do they offer clinical interventions or therapy; nor are they Social Workers).
- they are not ethicists; nor are they preachers; nor is their primary role to administer the sacraments.
- rather, they function in a *catalytic role* helping people to make sense of what is happening to them and helping them to use their own spiritual resources to cope with what is confronting them.

- they are trained in how to listen attentively to others, to appreciate the spiritual significance of what they are being told, and to respond empathically so as to help others constructively with their own efforts at “meaning making”⁶.
- they don’t see God as “up there” but as existing in the world and using people of all faiths (or even of no faith) to further His purposes.
- they value other faith traditions (such as Islam or Buddhism).
- they recognise that socio-economic factors are major determinants of poor health (mental & physical) and of dysfunctional and self-harming behaviour.
- they *publicly challenge* reductionist views of humanity such as euthanasia, punitive penal systems, consumerism, economic determinism, the medicalisation of social problems, and genetic interventions to slow the natural ageing process.
- they recognise that they cannot function effectively as pastoral carers without a sound and sustained spiritual formation that is relevant to their calling.

Pastoral carers are thus members of an ecumenical “community” of empathic listeners who operate in a wide variety of institutional settings offering constructive support to others in “meaning-making”.

What is meant by “meaning making”⁷?

Across both the literary arts and the sciences of the mind you will find thinkers advocating the following propositions about how human beings make sense of their life experiences:

- human life is developmental as well as biological (nurture as well as nature)
- most human beings typically experience their lives as an autobiographical narrative (or story) or at least a collection of autobiographical stories;
- autobiographical memory is essentially a constructive and reconstructive phenomenon rather than a reproductive one
- a narrative outlook on one’s life (a construct) is essential to a sense of personhood and well-being
- a person’s autobiographical memory (self-narrative) is not necessarily reliable because they can engage *unconsciously* in invention, falsification, confabulation, revisionism, and fiction
- the autobiographical memory or narrative is somehow related to the group of powerful emotions we associate with personal morality: pride (self-love), conceit, shame, guilt, regret, and remorse
- the autobiographical memory or narrative has a special relevance in the present time *both emotionally and morally* because it is the *present-shaping* consequences of the past that matter when we are under pressure by others, by poverty, by ill-health, by disability, by being imprisoned, etc.

These propositions might seem trite to mature adults but their efficacy is important for those whose job is to *intervene* to help us change⁸ e.g., spiritual directors, medical

⁶ This term is explained in detail on p.6

⁷ This section was inspired by Strawson G.’s Commentary in the October 15 issue of the Times Literary Supplement. However it does not include his arguments in support of the existence of a non-narrative (or what he calls “Episodic”) form of meaning making for a very small group of people.

⁸ It must be stressed that it is ***not*** the role of a pastoral carer to intervene to change someone.

practitioners (especially those working in the mental health field), therapists, those working in prisoner rehabilitation programs, etc.

Pastoral carers become quite familiar with the urge for story telling that patients, residents, inmates, etc engage in. So, the propositions listed above about the nature of autobiographical narrative all make sense. But pastoral carers need to understand *how* this narrative process works so that their *listening* can be more empathic and they can become better at intuiting the *spiritual significance* of what they are hearing.

The story telling that pastoral carers hear from patients, residents, inmates, etc. involves a process of construction or shaping of life events. At play in their heads seems to be some sort of relatively large scale coherence-, unity-, or pattern-seeking or form-finding process. But they are not just producing a connected account of their life as in a family history. Whatever is going on in their heads obviously entails the ability to detect the developmental (nurture) coherences of their life (or to put it in less technical language: to apprehend the deep personal constancies that manifest themselves in their life).

The story telling that pastoral carers hear seems to be a response to the need of patients, residents, inmates etc. to explain *to themselves* their current predicament in terms of the bad things that have happened to them before and how they coped on those occasions. It is the role of the pastoral carer to provide the **catalyst** for this story telling to happen. People don't seem to be able to story-tell like this *to themselves*; they seem to need someone else to be present, even though the listener may contribute very little to the narrative process.

While the patient, resident, inmate, etc. is engaging in this process of “meaning making” by story-telling, the pastoral carer is engaging in a ***parallel*** “meaning making” process of his or her own that simultaneously seeks answers to the following questions:

- have I really understood what this person is telling me? (accurate empathic listening)
- what is the major theme of this story?
- what issues (interpersonal etc.) does this person have?
- what emotions (fear, anger, disappointment, etc.) am I detecting?
- does what I am hearing make sense in terms of the theory I was taught about personal development and reactions to loss and grief?
- what is the *spiritual significance* in what this person is telling me? (relationship with God etc.)
- what passages of Scripture come readily to my mind as I listen to this person?
- how do I engage with this person at a *spiritual* level?

The following sections of this Handbook address the question: how can the Hebrew Scriptures help me in my work as a pastoral carer?

How do pastoral carers approach the Scriptures?

The shared characteristics of pastoral carers that are listed above on pages 5 & 6 do **not** transcend their individual allegiances to their Churches but they do affect the way they view the Scriptures:

- they *hear* Scripture calling them to the apostolic dimension of their work
- they *listen* to the Scriptures in order to nourish and sustain them in their apostolate
- they *search* Scripture for parallels that will resonate with them when they hear people “meaning making” about their experiences
- they *read* Scripture with people in times of distress to help them plumb their own spiritual resources
- they *share* the reading and hearing of Scripture and the singing of hymns⁹ as symbolic of all that they have in common as pastoral carers.
- they *use* the Scriptures when reflecting¹⁰ upon the theological implications of their ministry encounters with individual patients, residents, inmates etc.

In what way does this approach to the Scriptures differ from other approaches to Scripture?

Use of Scripture is termed “exegesis”. This is a strange term. “In Roman times the exegetes were professional and official interpreters of charms, omens, dreams, sacred law and oracular pronouncements. Thus the term has come to mean an explanation or interpretation and is often applied to biblical studies.”¹¹

Much of the documented history of the Christian Churches¹² right up to the modern era has been about a particular use of Scripture, viz., searching the Scriptures (and tradition) in order to meet various needs: doctrine, organisation, discipline, and worship. This approach commonly uses “proof-texting” to find authoritative support for (or arguments against) positions on “issues”. Even today, differences over “issues” can still be bitter and divisive, e.g., the acrimonious division within some Christian Churches on issues such as the ordination of women, the admission of gays to “full communion”, and the limits that should be placed on fertility control and on the biotechnological manipulation of the human genome.

Interestingly, the areas of Christian praxis (such as parenting, spiritual formation, evangelisation, good works, ethics and pastoral care) have largely been free of this “proof-texting” type of exegesis. This is in stark contrast to Judaism and Islam where much of such praxis is closely “regulated” (or guided) by exegesis. This Handbook is not the place to explore this particular phenomenon; it is explained in another Handbook: “*Understanding Other Faith Traditions*”.

However, the most common form of exegesis is the homily. Here, the focus is generally upon explicating the relevance of a particular text in Scripture to the circumstances of the congregation’s daily living.

⁹ most hymns are passages (or messages) of Scripture put to music

¹⁰ all training courses for pastoral carers use the Verbatim method of reflective praxis and this includes selecting and reflecting upon a text of Scripture that they feel is relevant to the particular encounter.

¹¹ The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory (4th Ed.) p.294

¹² and also Judaism and Islam

Pastoral carers are neither theologians nor homilists.

So, *what* are Christian pastoral carers doing with Scripture if they are not using it for “proof-texting” or homilies?

The answer can be expressed in these terms :

*They see themselves as a particular community where there is agreement among the members that one of their roles is interpreting the Scriptures **meaningfully** for themselves and for others.*

*They are recognising and giving primacy to the key role of **hearers** and **readers** in the finding of meaning in the Scriptures.*

*They are particularly interested in the resonance between what they **read** in Scripture and what they **hear** when the patient, resident, prisoner etc is attempting to find meaning in the realities of their own situation.*

*They accept that the Scriptures are much like any other literary product that needs to be **encountered somehow in the present tense** and made to speak meaningfully to them about their needs as pastoral carers when engaging in their apostolate of genuine and empathic listening to others.*

*They know that the Scriptures were meant to be **proclaimed** as the word of God but they also understand that they need to be interpreted in the situation in which they are **heard**.*

Interestingly, in the literature that is normally circulated among pastoral carers, there is no discussion about how they use Scripture. Perhaps it has only recently become an issue because **lay** people do not usually undergo the same intensive study of Scripture that ordained ministers and religious are required to undergo. On the other hand it may just be another case of a “community” that projects its own way of looking at things but doesn’t reflect upon how or why it does so. This **living** Handbook will redress any such shortcomings for the benefit of **lay** trainee pastoral carers.

What can pastoral carers learn from the way other “communities of interpreters” have approached (or now approach) the Hebrew Scriptures?

Before identifying various “**communities of interpretation**” that have (or have had) an interest in interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures, it is necessary first to answer three questions:

- what is meant by the term a “community”?

- what is meant by the term “interpret”?
- why bother with the Hebrew Scriptures?

Throughout this Handbook the term “***community***” is used in a broad sense¹³:

a body of people with a sense of common identity, having a religion or profession in common, and characterised by identifiable agreement on ideas, identity, communion, and /or other bases of fellowship.

The term “***interpret***” is used in order to convey the point that the Hebrew Scriptures can’t be understood without considerable help:

- Those who study Classical Hebrew texts often have difficulty in progressing confidently from a strict literal word-by-word rendition of the Hebrew to a meaningful English translation.
- As a collection of texts, they are far from being an “entertaining read” for a modern reader and it is very rare to meet anyone who has in fact read them from cover to cover.
- They are not a “Book” in the sense that a modern reader (or even an ancient one) would understand the term. They are more like an anthology of texts of different genres.
- Without access to explanatory notes, large parts of the collection would make little or no sense to a modern reader.
- Even in the parts that are readily understandable the modern reader will find peculiarities in the narrative, e.g., apparently irrelevant disjunctions, repetitions, and even contradictions.

Therefore, the task of making sense of the Hebrew Scriptures (in whole or part) is firstly one of translation and then one of “interpretation”.

Attachment A to this Handbook provides a précis of the 20 principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) endorsed by the Biblical Pontifical Commission for exegetical purposes together with a list of 10 principles supplied by David Ford¹⁴ for the purposes of theological hermeneutics. Both lists are supplied in this Handbook simply to demonstrate that the Christian Churches recognise and legitimise a very wide variety of approaches developed by various *communities of interpretation* interested in using the Hebrew Scriptures ***for their particular purposes***. However, as shall be seen below, there is considerable disputation among ***biblical scholars*** themselves as to what principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) have legitimacy and/or which should take priority when seeking to find the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures. Students need to be alert to this highly contentious area when reading academic commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures.

One thing that will become abundantly clear to trainees as they progress through this Handbook is that the various *communities of interpretation* focus on different things in the Hebrew Scriptures because they are coming from different mind sets (paradigms) about how communities and individuals *find* deep meaning in what they experience and how they choose to *express* it. This variety in outlook is reflected in

¹³ Compiled from the entry in the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary

¹⁴ Ford D., *Theology: a very short introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (1999) pp137-139.

the form of the Hebrew Scriptures themselves where the collection comprises different genres, different modes of expression, different voices, reinterpretations of earlier materials, redactions, etc.

Why bother with the *Hebrew Scriptures*?

There are many good books in the market that explain why the Hebrew Scriptures are incorporated into the Christian Scriptures, and why they appear in the form they do, and how these particular texts came to be regarded as a canon, and why some texts are not recognised by some Churches. For the purposes of this Handbook it is assumed that the **lay** trainee pastoral carer is familiar with this part of Church history¹⁵.

Learning to translate and write commentaries on Classical Hebrew texts has always been regarded as an esoteric accomplishment. Except for a few biblical scholars, like Jerome¹⁶, the Christian Churches have preferred to use the *Septuagint*¹⁷ as the principle source document for accessing their Hebrew Scripture canon. In other words they have been working off a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into demotic Greek that was then translated into demotic Latin and then translated into the vernacular from the Reformation onwards¹⁸. So what we read today as “the Old Testament” (in at least 300 versions) is three steps in translation from the original Classical Hebrew: Hebrew > Greek > Latin > vernacular. In addition we have three centuries of cultural (paradigm) change to come to grips with if we are to seek to understand the Classical Hebrew text in context. Thus, it should be of little wonder that there is so much contention among biblical scholars about the stability of the texts, their provenance, and how someone in ancient Israel would have interpreted them.

Moreover, the Christian Churches have continued the hermeneutic practice, adopted by the early Christian Churches, of viewing the Hebrew Scriptures as actually or allegorically prefiguring Jesus (the) Christ.

With all this complexity and uncertainty about how one should approach the Hebrew Scriptures it is little wonder that most of us quickly come to the conclusion that delving into the Hebrew Scriptures is “not a space you want to play in”.

However, it is precisely all this confusion and uncertainty that makes the Hebrew Scriptures a gold mine for pastoral carers in the task of helping others to make sense of what is happening for them and helping them to tap into their spiritual resources to cope with the realities confronting them.

Modern biblical scholarship seems to be converging on the proposition that much of the Hebrew Scripture **canon** comprises carefully worked-over texts in a **collection** that assembles texts by **genre** (narrative, prophetic, wisdom, hymn, etc) and that the collection as a whole has some *organizing themes* such as right relationship with

¹⁵ This subject is covered in the unit: Early Christianity.

¹⁶ Biblical scholars have demonstrated that Jerome, in his translations, also had recourse to the *Septuagint* as well as extant Hebrew texts.

¹⁷ A translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into demotic Greek.

¹⁸ Even though the producers of the Holy Bible in the vernacular regarded the *Septuagint* as their source document, they saw themselves as “correcting” the infelicities of the Latin translation.

God, sin, and the place of suffering and hope for individuals and communities in God's "economy". This way of viewing the canon makes the Hebrew Scriptures directly relevant for pastoral carers because they too encounter issues of relationship failure, sin, suffering and hope in their work with others.

Once they become familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, trainee pastoral carers will find:

- a treasure trove of stories about the nature of the relationship (good, bad, and indifferent) that individual men and women *and their communities* have had with God;
- some thought-provoking commentary on the real preconditions for the well-being of individuals *and communities* (that challenge our prevailing "materialist" and egocentric mind-sets or paradigms);
- a consistent theme of God's plan for mankind and His intervention in the world of men for *His* purposes (and the problem for men in trying to discern *His* purposes)
- hundreds of prayers;
- the background for sayings, figures of speech, etc in the Good News of Jesus (the) Christ;
- the important place of suffering and hope in God's "economy".

However, when we start delving into academic commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures we find an astounding level of disputation about all manner of quite fundamental questions:

- how did the Hebrew Scriptures (in their canonical form) come down to us?
- who wrote them?
- when were they written?
- where were they written?
- how do you deal with the oddities in [and between] texts (e.g., parallel versions of the same event, gaps, apparent mistakes, apparent misordering, discontinuities, contradictions, redactions, reworkings, words of unknown provenance, etc)?
- what is the logic behind the way the Hebrew Scriptures are grouped?
- what did they mean to hearers/readers at the time?
- how should we interpret them now?
- what do we do about the attitudes and behaviour described in the Hebrew Scriptures that society would not countenance today?

Not only is there widespread disputation among individual academics on fundamental issues of translation and interpretation, but the individual academics tend to be identified with well-established schools of thought ("communities of interpretation") that vie with each other for the legitimacy of their particular interpretative paradigms. This phenomenon is quite common across academia in general but it is more than a little bewildering for the trainee pastoral care worker to find that there is little of certainty about the texts that they hold sacred.

Yet there are some useful insights for pastoral care praxis to be gleaned from these schools of thought ("communities of interpretation") regarding the Hebrew Scriptures.

Who are these “communities of interpretation”?

Within biblical scholarship there are fourteen¹⁹ “communities of interpretation” and they are characterised by what is termed their “critical methodologies”:

- Historiographical Criticism
- Source Criticism
- Form Criticism
- Tradition-Historical Criticism
- Redaction Criticism
- * Social-Scientific Criticism
- * Canonical Criticism
- * Rhetorical Criticism & Intertextuality
- * Structural Criticism
- * Narrative Criticism
- * Reader-Response Criticism
- * Poststructuralism
- * Ideological Criticism (Feminist perspectives)
- * Ideological Criticism (Socioeconomic perspectives)

Put in the simplest terms these critical methodologies are:

1. **historiographical** analysis: reconstructing a more accurate picture of the ancient biblical world (using epigraphical & archaeological evidence and sociological models) in order to clarify the message of the texts as intended by the authors
2. **source** criticism: discovering the layered sources behind the text by examining its literary features
3. **form** criticism: explicating the genres and social/literary settings (patterns of language that appear within the overall linguistic configuration or forms of a text and the role that these patterns play in giving shape and expression to the text)
4. **tradition-historical** criticism: reconstruction of the **transmission processes** (oral and written) behind texts
5. **redaction** criticism: analysis of the ways and means by which traditional sources, pericopes, and texts were compiled into the present Books
6. **sociocultural** criticism: applying sociology and anthropology to elicit the dynamics of the world behind a text and encoded in it.
7. **canonical** criticism: explicating the theological imperative behind the overall shape of the corpus of Books that have been accepted as canonical

¹⁹ The source for this list is McKenzie S.L. & Haynes S.R., *To Each His Own Meaning: an introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their application*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press (1999) but in many cases the description of the various critical methodologies in this Handbook varies substantially from that presented in this text book.

8. **rhetorical** criticism and **intertextual** comparisons: applying the theories of discourse and epistemology particularly to the hortatory sections of scripture to elucidate the accepted "rules" of communication adopted by authors
9. **structural** criticism: applying semiotic theory to elucidate the system of convictions in the text (i.e., the characteristics of its "religion")
10. **narrative** criticism: understanding the text as an interpretable entity by focussing on characterisation & who is doing what (plot) & in whose interests
11. **reader response**-criticism: acknowledging biases the reader brings to the task
12. **poststructuralist** criticism: deconstructionist reading strategies
13. ideological criticism (**feminist** perspectives)
14. ideological criticism (**socio-economic** perspectives)

These critical methodologies are not absolutely discrete²⁰ and over the last three decades there has been a tendency for some of the critical methodologies to overlap and also for some scholars to adopt several of the critical methodologies in their commentaries²¹. At one point scholars of the "historical" group of methodologies drew a sharp line between themselves and those who questioned the validity of seeing the Hebrew Scriptures as capable of providing data to build an authentic history of Israel. This latter group used only the analytical techniques borrowed²² from secular "literary" criticism. In more recent times both these groups have joined forces to combat the relativism of the postmodernists.

Interestingly, nobody seems to have tried to apply all fourteen critical methodologies of biblical scholarship to a particular text and then tried to produce an eclectic synthesis of the result. A search of the academic literature will not find any attempt at such an ambitious task²³. In any event, an eclectic synthesis of this kind would only be possible if it were accepted that the meaning of Scripture is a complex phenomenon to be found:

- "behind" the text (i.e., in the historical events/sources/transmission history that underlie it); and
- "in" the text (i.e., in the interaction of elements and structures that emerge in a close reading of the text in its final form); and
- "in front of" the text (i.e., in the construction of meaning that takes place in the interaction between the text and a modern **sympathetic** reader.

None of these three constitutive elements²⁴ of meaning (and certainly no single critical methodology) should have a monopoly²⁵ on "meaning making" in biblical

²⁰ Readers will encounter considerable difficulty in ascertaining the precise applied analytical technique(s) said to characterise each particular critical methodology.

²¹ Trainee pastoral carers need to be aware that biblical scholars tend to develop their position on critical methodologies over time. Their early commentaries can at times bear little relation to their later views.

²² Secular scholars have also borrowed techniques from biblical scholars.

²³ "The modern academic mind lives by analysis, is suspicious of synthesis if ever it pauses to notice it" (p.14) *Smith W.C., What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach*: Minneapolis (1993)

²⁴ These terms are borrowed from McKenzie S.L. & Haynes S.R. (1999) where they are grouped into competing (as opposed to complementary) perspectives.

²⁵ This view is affirmed in the 1993 Pontifical Biblical Commission's document: *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* but "primacy" is given to the historical-critical method as applied to the

scholarship. All provide a useful perspective; and we shall now have a closer look at how eight²⁶ of these critical methodologies might be relevant to the needs of a trainee pastoral carer.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CRITICISM

This Handbook uses the term “**Historiographical**” rather than the more commonly used term “Historical” for four reasons:

- the latter term has become a shorthand tag for describing the left hand side of the abovementioned *historical/literary* binary where the term “historical” was used to embrace those critical methodologies that are ***not*** derived from literary or cultural theory;
- the tendency for modern biblical commentary to elide over the question as to whether scriptural narrative is or is not reliable history;
- there has been considerable debate in recent times about the efficacy of critical methodologies employed by professional historians; and
- there are a range of definitions of “history” in the literature and these shape the critical method:
 - a continuous methodical record of important events (genealogies, king lists, annals etc)
 - a narration of incidents, a story (e.g., the Joseph narrative)
 - the tide of public events and circumstances that shape a given epoch or test the character, wisdom, and foresight of a given person or community
 - whole turn of events connected with a nation
 - the aggregate of past events, the course of human affairs
 - God’s history of intervention in human affairs

Historiographical Criticism as a critical method starts with three propositions:

- that scripture is founded upon authentic historical memory
- that scripture cannot be read intelligently without a good feel for :
 - the chronology of the events included in the narrative
 - the geography, ecology, etc of the regions mentioned
 - the geo-political forces at work in the background
- that, while complete objectivity is an unattainable goal, the attempt to access the historical context (both the authentic historical memory and that contrived for polemic purposes) is essential to the task of reading/hearing of scripture faithfully²⁷

It is the goal of **Historiographical Criticism** to ascertain the historical context from which the texts of scripture emerged. An important part of this task is to separate the authentic historical memory from the theological and legendary aspects of the text because the latter should ***not*** be read as historical.

canonical version of the text and read diachronically. This methodology is seen as an “indispensable tool” for ascertaining the literal sense (not necessarily the same as the spiritual sense) of the text.

²⁶ Only those methodologies that are of direct or tangential relevance to the work of pastoral carers are covered here. The rest are methodologies for close analysis of texts within Scripture and are not relevant to the type of interaction that pastoral carers have with patients, residents, inmates, etc.

²⁷ Using “faithfully” in every sense of that word: accurately, with the right disposition, loyally, etc

At one level, historians work by finding evidence (sources) to test whether claims that **what** happened **when** and **why**, actually (or probably or possibly) did happen at that time for the reasons cited. Among the practitioners of **Historiographical Criticism** there are those who conclude that the Books of Genesis, Exodus, et seq. should be treated as pre-history²⁸ because none of the characters or events in scripture (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph²⁹, Moses, the exodus from Egypt, Joshua, the conquest of Canaan, Saul, David, Solomon, etc) prior to Omri and Ahab are mentioned in any ancient epigraphical sources outside of scripture nor can they be verified by artefactual evidence from archaeological surveys. On the other hand there are those practitioners³⁰ who concede the paucity of confirmatory evidence outside of scripture but who invite us to see the people, events, geography, geo-political forces, etc mentioned in scripture as **factual** but submerged under layers of liturgical explanation and retelling for later audiences.

At another level, historians when faced with no evidence (sources) or poor evidence, work via conceptual models or hypotheses about how society functions and what meta-patterns of change tend to occur and under what circumstances. They apply what is called the principle of analogy (viz., one human society is analogous to another). Early theorists adopted the sociological theories of Max Weber. Later theorists have tended to look for insights from a broader range of disciplines such as anthropology and environmental studies.

From the work of the **Historiographical** “community of interpretation” pastoral carers can learn that not much in the Hebrew Scriptures is provably historical. The Scriptures appear not to have been written for that purpose; they appear instead to have a theological purpose viz., “meaning making” for the people of Israel about their special relationship with God and the implications of failure by individuals and by the community to maintain a right relationship with God.

Applying Historiographical Criticism to pastoral care:

Trainee pastoral carers will frequently hear the patient, resident, inmate etc. relating what seems to be their life story. With experience the pastoral carer comes to appreciate that these stories are not personal histories in the sense of compiling a family history. Rather, they are an attempt at “meaning making” by the narrators as they try to make sense of their current predicament in the context of other bad things that have happened to them during their life and how they coped on those occasions. Frequently these stories are peppered with references to God and changes in the narrator’s relationship with God.

Biblical scholarship seems to be converging upon the proposition that the Hebrew Scriptures are doing something similar and that this may in fact have been their ultimate purpose. Trainee pastoral carers would do well to reflect upon this insight

²⁸ This term, in essence, denies the possibility of personalities or events being historically “discoverable” using the tools normally employed by professional historians. In other words they should be treated as “legendary”.

²⁹ However, a plausible case has been made for identifying the patriarch Joseph in Genesis 37-50 as Yuya, the vizier (or deputy) appointed by the 18th Dynasty King Tuthmosis IV. See Osman A., *The Hebrew Pharaohs of Egypt*, Vermont: Bear Press (1987, PB 2003)

³⁰ Example: Stuhlmüller C., *New Paths through the Old Testament*, New York: Paulist Press (1989)

because the major role of a pastoral carer is to be a *catalyst* in helping the patient, resident, inmate etc. to distil the *spiritual learnings* from the meta-narrative of their life.

Seen from this perspective, even the narrative parts of the Biblical Scriptures have value for the pastoral carer.

Assignment: The next time you encounter a patient, resident, inmate etc. who is bargaining with God, read to them Genesis 18: 16-32 about Abraham's bargaining with God. You will find that "bargainers" respond well to this *affirming* type of approach (as opposed to being told that they shouldn't or can't bargain with God) and you will usually find that "bargainers", when asked how they pray, will explain that they pray in a fairly conversational way with God (as opposed to reciting formal prayers). Thus, by using Genesis in your pastoral interaction with "bargainers" you can usually have a deep spiritual discussion with them. Moreover, it becomes a very useful text for the *Theological Reflection* section of your Verbatim.

SOURCE CRITICISM

This critical methodology starts with seven propositions:

- that a literary work carries the imprint of the historical age in which it was produced;
- that the interpretation of a literary work is best served by situating it within its historical context and determining the intent of its author;
- that scripture is not fiction but based upon stories (oral & written) already in circulation in their communities;
- that this traditional material (oral & written) was incorporated, rewritten, and reinterpreted to produce version(s) of ancient Israel's history;
- that this interpretative process continued through several iterations until the texts attained their present form;
- that it is possible to retrace this process by isolating each redactional layer to reveal the sources that were used; and
- that the references³¹ in scripture to source materials should be taken at face value.

For these reasons it is the goal of **Source Criticism** to discover the sources behind a text by closely examining its compositional features for:

- anachronisms
- variations in style, vocabulary, and perspective
- contradictions & inconsistencies
- abrupt interruptions to continuity
- duplications & repetitions

The assumption is that single authors do not include contradictory or inconsistent material, interruptions, or multiple versions, and that single author's style, vocabulary and perspective tends to be consistent.

³¹ For example the references to lost Books.

Applying Source Criticism to pastoral care: Pastoral carers would probably not accept the assumptions behind this particular methodology in so far as **oral** narratives are concerned. The stories of patients, residents, inmates etc. are often presented in a jumbled form that exhibits many of the compositional shortcomings listed above. In fact pastoral carers would probably regard such compositional characteristics as confirming the authenticity of the narrator's narrative.

Assignment: The next time you encounter a patient who narrates their life story, pay particular attention to the compositional character of the narrative, noting how many of the abovementioned features are present.

TRADITION-HISTORICAL CRITICISM

This critical method starts with four propositions:

- that much of scripture is presented as historical in both format and content;
- the theological message of scripture is thoroughly intermeshed with this historical perspective;
- the authors of the texts³² obviously intended the reader/hearer to be conscious of **their** understanding of the meaning of the history of ancient Israel: and
- the true meaning of scripture cannot be accessed by the modern reader without knowledge of this authorial historical perspective

Applying Tradition-Historical Criticism to pastoral care: This particular methodology would resonate with pastoral carers as consistent with what they hear when patients, residents, inmates, etc narrate their life story and the place of God in it.

NARRATIVE CRITICISM

This critical method starts with five propositions:

- Stories are the main way we make sense of things, whether in thinking of our lives as a progression leading somewhere or in telling ourselves what is happening in the world
- To tell a story is to claim a certain authority which listeners grant
- There is no correct interpretation of a story. Meaning is to be found by close reading that:
 - Identifies the formal and conventional structures of the narrative
 - Establishes the plot
 - Develops characterisation
 - Distinguishes point(s) of view
 - Exposes language play
 - Relates all these elements to some overarching encapsulating theme
- viewing scripture as narrative means to see the various texts synchronically rather than diachronically, i.e., as a meaningful **whole** containing the essential elements of its own understanding rather than as understandable only as a product of a historically determined process of composition.
- Seen from a narrology perspective there is one obvious major feature of scripture: narrative frameworks featuring engaging characterisation in stories

³² Not just the final form but also the versions in its transmission history.

about “delivery” where there is a deep engagement with questions of self and the other (i.e., issues of identity) in a variety of what are called “construals”:

- gender, ethnicity, nationality (highlighting the need to expel and distance oneself from foreigners);
- and religion (highlighting the need to maintain YHWH’s cult and covenant)

Applying Narrative Criticism to pastoral care: The techniques of **Narrative Criticism** are:

- to ask questions about plot
- to analyse the way the narrator names, describes, and evaluates a character
- to note what characters say and how they say it
- to pay close attention to the context of a character’s speech and the circumstances in which it takes place
- to compare and contrast characters taking note of how they speak to and about each other
- to identify whose view is being presented
- to point to parallel plots, key ideas, modes of expression in other texts

These techniques are akin to the attentive listening techniques that pastoral carers are trained in.

Assignment:

In one of your Verbatims, carefully analyse the narrative for the techniques listed above.

READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM

This critical method starts with four propositions:

- when they write, authors they have in mind naratees³³ to whom their text is addressed. (The naratee is not an actual reader but an **ideal** reader or a **class** of readers with particular predispositions, understandings, and competencies.)
- authors deliberately determine (? predetermine) the extent to which a reader needs (? is allowed) to actively collaborate with the text in the creation of its meaning. (At the extreme ends of the continuum are the parable and the witness statement.)
- the meaning of the text is not objective³⁴, rather it is a derivative created from the reader’s encounter with the text
- because readers approach a text with varying expectations and competencies and reading strategies, they can have different reactions and interpret the text differently

For these reasons the goal of **Reader-Response Criticism** is fourfold:

- to identify what naratee group the author is addressing the text
- to ascertain the extent to which the author requires collaboration by readers in establishing the meaning of the text

³³ A term coined by Gerald Prince

³⁴ viz., not contained IN the text or EXTRACTABLE from the text

- to tease out those implicit knowledge and assumptions that readers are bringing to their encounter with text that account for their reactions and interpretation
- to describe what sorts of procedures and strategies readers follow in responding to the text as they do

Applying Reader-Response Criticism to pastoral care: On the surface this methodology is not relevant to pastoral carers because they are dealing with oral narratives. But, if the method were to be recast as *Hearer*-Response then it would be of immediate relevance because pastoral carers are trained to constantly assess the nature of their interaction with patients, residents, inmates, etc., whether they are being invited into a collaboration with the patient etc., and what knowledge and assumptions they themselves are bringing to the encounter.

Assignment: In one of your Verbatims, carefully analyse your role in the interaction and the assumptions and knowledge that you brought to the encounter.

POSTSTRUCTURALISM

This critical method starts with four propositions:

- it is questionable to ground discourse³⁵ on a text in any theory of metaphysical origins³⁶ about its source. Texts are human constructions whatever inspires their author(s).
- the meaning of any text is, of its nature, unstable because it can be read to say something quite different from which it appears to be saying and maybe even contradictory to and subversive of what might have been its “received” meaning.
- a text must be read as including:
 - firstly, what is not in it (i.e., what is outside the text, what is not said);
 - and secondly, any implicit or explicit assumptions underlying it
- in order to fully understand a text it thus needs to be rigorously probed and analysed by a process of dismantling it or taking it apart (deconstruction)

For these reasons the goal of **Poststructuralism** is to critique the notion of objective knowledge and the notion of a subject able to know him/herself. This is because the structures of the system of signification within texts do not exist independently of the subject, as objects of knowledge, but are structures for subjects who are entangled with the forces that produce them. In biblical studies it is important not to transpose onto authors the thinking-in-terms-of-binaries that characterise Western thought processes. Nor is it acceptable to assume that the authors of biblical texts share the thought processes of their contemporaries in other cultures.

Applying Poststructuralism to pastoral care: Poststructuralism appears³⁷ to propose two injunctions: one negative, one positive:

³⁵ Exposition of a thesis with a pedagogical or methodological purpose.

³⁶ Questions concerning the nature of existence, the existence of God, or the immortality of the human soul

³⁷ Readers will encounter considerable difficulty in finding specific examples of Poststructuralism techniques being applied rigorously to a particular Biblical Hebrew text.

- (the negative injunction) ***don't*** set about attempting to make any particular text intelligible in any ***objective*** sense e.g.,
 - by identifying it as characteristic of particular literary convention (***genre***) and thus easily accessible. This is important because texts ***can*** create meaning by violating any such literary conventions that Structuralist Criticism locates; or
 - by sourcing a text's meaning elsewhere than in the interplay between author and the particular text at hand
- (the positive injunction) closely analyse the text with reference to the hierarchical oppositions³⁸ that have structured Western thought so as to demonstrate that:
 - they are not employed as binaries in this particular text; and
 - other (***different***) thought processes are at play.

The real value of this methodology for pastoral carers lies in its challenging of our mind-sets (paradigms) especially the hierarchical oppositions that characterise Western thought processes. Pastoral carers are always stunned when a patient decides to die and quickly does so, or when a patient, near death, talks about dead relatives being with them. Eastern religions accept that life might in fact be a different sort of "reality" than the one we construe in our heads. Pastoral carers in particular need to be sensitive to possibilities other than the mind/body binary within the spiritual dimension.

Assignment: In what way have your encounters with patients, residents, inmates, etc. challenged the hierarchical oppositions that characterise Western thought processes?

IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM (SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES)

This critical method starts with five propositions:

- the reader of Scripture is searching for its spiritual truth

³⁸ Examples:

- inside/outside
- mind/body
- literal/metaphorical
- speech/writing
- presence/absence
- nature/nurture
- form/meaning
- self/others

- this spiritual truth may be interpreted and reinterpreted from generation unto generation and made relevant in different eras. In other words Scripture may have different meanings for different readers at different times.
- what a reader brings to the text (knowledge, assumptions, cultural background, experience, insight, etc) affects their interpretation. A reader thus creates the meaning of a text.
- the reader's socio-economic class has a direct and decisive impact upon such interpretation
- the salvific events in Scripture are political in character and Scripture is subversive in nature. It is thus important to recognise this ideological character of Scripture and read the texts as pro-liberation and anti-oppression (both political & economic).

Applying Ideological Criticism (Sociological Perspectives) to pastoral care: This methodology is particularly useful for pastoral carers. When narrating their life stories, patients, residents, inmates, etc will inevitably position themselves by social class, life chances, the impact of major socio-economic events such as the Depression and the War, and the implications of major health problems. Pastoral carers are taught to see that socio-economic factors are major determinants of poor health and dysfunctional and self-harming behaviour.

Assignment: Review your Verbatims and find examples of when patients, residents, inmates, etc. have “positioned” themselves by social class, life chances, and the impact of major socio-economic events.

IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM (FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES)

This critical method starts with three propositions:

- there is a fundamental distinction³⁹ between the way women and men think and express themselves
- the language of scripture is male-dominated⁴⁰ and male engendered⁴¹ and as discourse is predominantly “phallogocentric”⁴² (i.e., focussed upon male values and ideologies)
- readers of scripture should question numerous prejudices and assumptions about women made by male authors of texts, not least their misogynist tendency to cast women in stock character roles and their unquestioning assumption that men have power over women socially, politically, and economically.

Applying Ideological Criticism (Feminist Perspectives) to pastoral care: This particular methodology is useful for pastoral carers because:

- the topic comes up frequently with females usually as asides about how compliant they were/are with such attitudes;
- males and females handle poor health differently;

³⁹ based not on biological determinism so much as social and economic factors and their psychological consequences.

⁴⁰ This male way of thinking is termed “patriarchal”

⁴¹ This means interpreted from a male perspective

⁴² This term was coined by Jacques Derrida

- males unlike females are quite reluctant to express their feelings; and
- reading certain Scripture passages with female patients, residents, inmates, etc. can be counter productive.

Assignment: The next time you encounter a widow offer to read to them from the Book of Ruth, and, if they agree, read them Chapter 1: 3-13. Invite them to respond by asking, “What did you hear?”

7. What is distinctive about what pastoral carers do when interpreting the Scriptures?

Pastoral carers use the Scriptures in a manner quite different to theologians and homilists. The former are using Scripture for proof-texting and the latter are explaining Scripture’s current day relevance.

Pastoral carers are using Scripture to find **resonance** between what they intuit as the *spiritual significance* of what they hear patients, residents, inmates, etc. telling them and what they themselves recall from their reading/hearing of Scripture. This is why being familiar with the Scriptures is an important part of their spiritual formation.

Having experienced this **resonance**, pastoral carers use that knowledge and understanding to engage with the patient, resident, inmate, etc. at a *spiritual* level (this may be conversation and/or prayer).

Once they become familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, trainee pastoral carers will find the Hebrew Scriptures:

- a treasure trove of stories about the nature of the relationship (good, bad, and indifferent) that individual men and women *and their communities* have had with God;
- some thought-provoking commentary on the real preconditions for the well-being of individuals *and communities* (that challenge our prevailing “materialist” and egocentric mind-sets or paradigms);
- a consistent theme of God’s plan for mankind and His intervention in the world of men for *His* purposes (and the problem for men in trying to discern *His* purposes)
- hundreds of prayers;
- the background for sayings, figures of speech, etc in the Good News of Jesus (the) Christ;
- the important place of suffering and hope in God’s “economy”.

ATTACHMENT A

What interpretative principles (hermeneutics) should be applied to the Christian scriptures?

This is a particularly contentious area because of the differences of view among the Christians traditions as to how to approach the Christian scriptures. Instead of papering over these differences they have to be acknowledged.

As a starting point I took the “principles” extracted by Dr. Peter Williamson⁴³ from the most comprehensive official church statement on the subject (viz., the 1993 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*) and then recast them into a very specific “do and don’t” list for reading individual texts within the Christian scriptures.

Any disagreement that a particular Christian tradition is known to have with an item on the “do or don’t” list is footnoted accordingly. You will probably be surprised at how few differences there are but not surprised at where they are.

However, I need to stress the point that not all biblical scholarship is undertaken for **exegetical**⁴⁴ purposes and that my “do and don’t” list is not applicable for **academic** biblical scholarship. In academic circles my “do and don’t” list would be fiercely debated on several grounds:

- There would be outright opposition to the epistemological proposition that the texts have a discernable “spiritual sense”
- the list would be seen as too rigid given the level of disputation among academics as to the respective merits of the various critical methodologies or even what they are in practice
- the list would be seen as too favourably disposed towards the “historical” critical methodology

In order to better represent the protestant tradition’s approach to reading the Christian scriptures I have reproduced the appendix to David Ford’s *Theology: a very short introduction, Oxford, Oxford University Press (1999) pp137-139*.

A LIST OF TWENTY “DO & DON’Ts” (derived from the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s document)

1. Do not read the text as a direct stenographic transcription⁴⁵ of the Word of God.
2. Treat the text as inspired by God but communicated through human agency.

⁴³ Williamson P.S., *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Biblical Commission’s The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Subsidia biblica 22), Rome. Pontifical Biblical Institute (2001)

⁴⁴ See page 8 of this Handbook for the definition of this term.

⁴⁵ While some fundamentalists claim that the Christian scriptures should be read as a direct transcription of the Word of God their official church organs do not endorse this claim.

3. Treat only the version as it appears in the canon as the inspired expression of the Word of God.
4. Treat the results of applying the Source Criticism methodology as merely shedding light on the meaning of the inspired form of the text in the canon.
5. Because the text is the work of human author(s), read it as you would any other ancient text i.e., set out first to understand its literary, socio-cultural, religious, and historical contexts.
6. Apply the same critical methods as you would to any other ancient texts (provided the methods are not atheistic or ideologically incompatible with the Christian faith).
7. Do not read the Christian scriptures as history but read them as bearing witness to a historical reality viz., the saving actions of God in the past.
8. Use historical-critical method to supply the context that makes the text intelligible. Give the historical-critical method **primacy** but do not give this critical method a monopoly.
9. Make sure your interpretation remains faithful to (i.e., consistent with) the message the human author(s) expressed in writing.
10. Do not confine the meaning of Christian scripture to their original historical circumstance. You must accept possibilities of meaning beyond the text's historical setting and you must accept plurality of meaning.
11. Do not deem the verifiable historical information about the events recounted in the Christian scriptures as the only information worthy of credence.
12. Treat as subjective all accounts and interpretation of historical events.
13. To help make clear what the human author(s) intended, you must value the synchronic study of texts as well as the diachronic perspective of historical study. This means that you must use philological, semiotic, and literary analyses (viz., analysing vocabulary and syntax, distinguishing textual units, identifying genres, analysing sources, recognising internal coherence in texts, analysing narrative and rhetorical devices, etc).
14. Keep an open mind about the plurality of methods and approaches for aiding interpreting the Christian scriptures, especially those based upon tradition⁴⁶.
15. You must accept that your interpretation is subjective.
16. Proceed on the basis that the text must be approached in the light of faith in order to be properly understood and that real understanding of the text is possible only if there is a fundamental affinity (sympathy not necessarily correspondence) between your paradigms and that of the author's.
17. Seek the meaning of the text **for the present** and overcome the distance in time between the origin of the text and today.
18. Interpret individual texts in the light of the whole canon. Observe throughout the canon the pattern of re-reading (interpretation) of original texts in the light of new circumstances. (Later writings often depend upon earlier texts when their authors re-read what had been written before in the light of new questions and circumstances.)
19. Read the Judaic scriptures both as a stage in the history of salvation and as presaging Christ.
20. Proceed on the basis that the spiritual sense of the Christian scriptures is always founded on the literal sense. The spiritual sense is the one intended by

⁴⁶ This claim for the authority of tradition is contested by protestant churches.

God but not clearly expressed or even fully understood or perceived at the time by the human author.

The list of 10 principles supplied by David Ford⁴⁷ for the purposes of theological hermeneutics:

(inclusion of this document has not yet been approved by the publisher)

⁴⁷ Ford D., *Theology: a very short introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (1999) pp137-139.