



Indonesian Evangelical Hermeneutics Meets Derrida's "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte"

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the intersection between Jacques Derrida's deconstructive axiom, "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte" (often translated as "nothing is outside the text"), and the well-established principles of Indonesian Evangelical hermeneutics. Derrida's statement challenges the notion of fixed meaning, stable reference, and authorial intent outside of the textual marking game, emphasizing contextuality and the impermanence of meaning. In contrast, Indonesian Evangelical hermeneutics, which is rooted in the Protestant theological tradition and often emphasizes the authority, clarity, and divine inspiration of Scripture (*Sola Scriptura*), seeking objective truths and stable meanings for faith and practice, also emphasizes the author's contextual understanding when writing the text. Using the literature analysis research method, this study explores the underlying tensions and potential points of dialogue between these frameworks. This paper argues that this encounter highlights fundamental questions about the authority of the text, the nature of interpretation, the possibility of stable meaning, and the influence of cultural location in the unique Indonesian Evangelical context, revealing both significant challenges and unexpected hermeneutical complexities. This study concludes that although Indonesian evangelical hermeneutics and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction experience a fundamental epistemological conflict. Indonesian evangelicals adhere to the final authority of the Bible as the coherent and meaningful word of God. In contrast, Derrida's deconstruction radically rejects the existence of a stable meaning in any text and emphasizes the text's irreducibility to external contexts such as history, authors' intentions, or transcendent references. Deconstruction was seen as threatening the foundations of biblical authority and the stability of the doctrine it held so firmly. A common point emerges in the emphasis on the role of the interpretative community.

Keywords: *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*; Deconstruction; Derrida; Evangelical; Indonesian; Hermeneutic

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INTRODUCTION

Jacques Derrida's statement "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte" ("There is nothing outside the text") is one of the most radical concepts in deconstruction. This is not just a claim that "everything is a written text," but rather a critique of the way we understand reality, meaning, and reference. According to Derrida, text is a network of markers and not a written page. Derrida uses the word "text" metaphorically. For him, all experiences, languages, and even the world itself operate like text, that is, as a network of signifiers that refer to each other endlessly (Derrida, 1998). Example: The word "tree" refers to the concept of a tree, but the concept itself is formed from other markers ("root", "leaf", "nature"), without any *stable signified* (absolute meaning).

Derrida also states that there are no pure references. What he means is that the traditional claim that language "represents reality outside of itself" (just as the word "God" refers to God as a real entity) is questionable. For Derrida, what we understand as "reality" has always been constructed by language/text (Derrida, 1998).

Derrida criticized the "Metaphysics of Presence." The metaphysics of presence is a view in Western philosophy that, according to philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida, prioritizes concepts such as presence, essence, identity, and origin, while ignoring the important role of absence, difference, and change (Izzah, 2013). The term is often associated with logocentrism, which is the tendency to prioritize rational thought and spoken language (which is considered more "present") over writing (Hendricks, 2014).

Logocentrism, which is Western philosophy from Plato to Saussure, Derrida believed that meaning exists "outside" language as a transcendent truth (God, Idea, Subject). Derrida rejects this. Example: When we read the Bible, we think it "represents" God's present will. According to Derrida, all we have access to is a trace of meaning that continues to shift (Tamawiwiy, 2023).

Derrida also states that there is a *Difference*, which is the meaning of always deferred and differed because the marker never reaches the endpoint. Example: The word "faith" in Romans 10:17 ("Faith arises from hearing...") depends on the context of Greco-Roman culture, church interpretation, and modern readership without a fixed original meaning (Tamawiwiy, 2023).

Derrida's statement "Nothing is beyond the text" has significant implications for biblical interpretation and textual analysis. This concept challenges traditional epistemological structures and reveals the nature of truth and constructed reality (Salehi, 2025). In biblical studies, Derrida's deconstruction of the Tower of Babel narrative highlights the importance of language in interpretation, although his approach is considered problematic for biblical interpretation (Bartholomew, 1998). Derrida's critique of 'signs' and the peculiarities of speech rather than writing in Western discourse has had an impact on a wide range of disciplines, including biblical studies, by emphasizing the inherent instability and ambiguity of language (Hendricks, 2016).

Derrida does not deny the existence of material realities (such as suffering or God), but emphasizes that we can only access them through unstable language/text. He gave an analogy such that a map is not a region itself, but we cannot understand a region without a map. He also rejected his views as relativist. According to him, this is not a claim that "all interpretations are equally valid", but that every interpretation contains internal contradictions that need to be dismantled.

Thus, its practical application is that reading the Bible deconstructively means: Rejecting a single interpretation (e.g., patriarchal, literalist) and paying attention to gaps (aporias) in the text such as violence in the name of God. If there is no absolute meaning "beyond the text", then our responsibility is to constantly criticize the claims of authority in the name of absolute truth." *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte* " tends to invite us to realize our dependence on language in understanding reality/spirituality and to be critical of claims of truth that ignore context and differentiation of meaning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses a qualitative approach to explore the main points of Derrida's thoughts in *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte* and the hermeneutic principles of evangelicals, especially in Indonesia. The methodology used is a literature study. The research began by collecting and analyzing relevant literature, including books, journal articles, and research reports that discussed *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte* in the context of Derrida's deconstruction and the

hermeneutic dynamics of evangelicals in Indonesia. It aims to understand and compare and see the advantages and disadvantages of the two views. The results of the analysis will be presented in the form of a narrative, as well as the challenges and opportunities for possible similarities in the existing analysis and synthesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, carried by Jacques Derrida, is the main pillar in his philosophy of deconstruction. Derrida rejected the idea that meaning could be found outside of language or signs. Derrida expanded the definition of "text" to include all cultural phenomena language, social institutions, art, even identity. Text is not just writing, but a network of signs that refer to each other without an absolute external reference point. This concept states that our access to reality (including the transcendent) is always mediated by language and interpretation. It further affirms that the claim about the "original meaning" of sacred texts is an illusion, since texts can only be understood through a network of other signs (intertextuality) (Souza, 2023). This statement, which appeared in *Of Grammatology* (1967), is often misunderstood as a rejection of extratextual reality. In fact, Derrida challenges the traditional hierarchy between language and reality, and rejects the notion that meaning is transparent and stable. Through this concept, Derrida dismantled the myth of the "metaphysics of presence" that dominates Western philosophy, namely the belief that meaning can be fully and independently present outside the field of interconnected signifiers (Royle, 2003).

Key Points of Derrida's Thought

The Instability of Meaning: Language as a Field of Difference in Derrida's Deconstruction

The concept of the instability of meaning is a central pillar in Jacques Derrida's thought, especially through his theory of deconstruction. He radically rejected the traditional notion of meaning as a single, fixed, and transparent entity that could be fully captured. In contrast, Derrida describes language as an inherently unstable field, and the key mechanism that drives this instability is *the différance* (Culler, 1985; Derrida, 1998).

Traditional View (Logocentrism): Western philosophy, according to Derrida, is dominated by "logocentrism". This view presupposes the existence of a stable center of meaning (logos), such as the full presence of the speaker, objective truth, or God, which is the sure foundation for language and meaning. Meaning is considered intrinsically inherent to a word or concept and can be accessed directly (Derrida, 1998; Derrida & Bass, 2001).

Derrida's Critique: Derrida dismantles this assumption. He argues that there is no absolute "full presence" or point of origin in language. Meaning is never truly present in its entirety and independently at a single point. The idea of a fixed and singular meaning is an illusion produced by the structure of language itself that is actually moving and fluid (Derrida, 1998).

Différance is a term coined by Derrida (in French, it sounds the same as "différence" but is spelled differently). The term cleverly blends the two meanings of the French verb "différer" (Derrida & Bass, 1982). The two words are: (1) *To Differ*: Every sign (especially a signifier or marker, i.e., a form of sound or writing) derives its identity not from its essential self, but from its difference (differentiation) from other markers in the language system. For example, "bat" is not "paint", not "rat", not "mat". Meaning emerges from this network of differences (De Saussure, 1959; Derrida, 1998). (2) *To Defer*: More radically, Derrida argues that the meaning of a marker is never fully present at the time it is spoken or written. Markers simply refer to other markers in an endless chain of

markers. Meaning is deferred continuously to other markers, whose meaning is also deferred to other markers again, and so on. There is no endpoint where the meaning of "pure" and "full" is truly achieved (Derrida & Bass, 1982; Royle, 2003).

As a result, language is a network or game (play) of markers that refer to each other and delay each other. No marker becomes the absolute center or the final marker that stops the shift in meaning. Each marker carries a "trace" of another marker that distinguishes and precedes it, while opening up the possibility for other markers to come (Derrida, 1998; Derrida & Bass, 1982).

For Derrida, the meaning is as a process, and not a product. Because of the differential mechanism, meaning is not something static and ready, but a process that is constantly moving and suspended. Derrida states that meaning is not an endpoint, but rather a movement itself, more so, according to him, meaning is the effect of differences and delays that continue to occur in the network of signifiers (Royle, 2003; Watkin, 2017).

This instability also means that meaning is always contextual or context-dependent. The meaning of a sign depends on the context in which it appears, namely the linguistic context (the words around it), the cultural context, the historical context, the reading context, and even the context that is absent (subtext). These contexts themselves are never absolutely closed or complete; they are also open to reinterpretation and shifting (Derrida & MacLachlan, 2004).

The meaning of the word "ghost" in Shakespeare's play Hamlet does not refer to a fixed and obvious metaphysical entity. Its meaning is formed through its difference with other concepts in the text (life vs. death, truth vs. illusion, action vs. paralysis) and the delay of our full understanding of it. Is it Hamlet's father's spirit that really begs for revenge? Is it a hoax or a psychological projection of Hamlet? Is it a symbol of trauma, disturbing memories, moral uncertainty, or political tension? The meaning of "ghost" is constantly pending and changing depending on which part of the text is read, the interpretation of the reader or viewer, the cultural context of the reception of the play, and the critical discussion that surrounds it. Its network includes death, memory, betrayal, madness, justice, and inability to act, all of which are unstable and interconnected (Culler, 1985).

The instability of meaning through *différance* has broad implications, namely: (1) invalidating the Authority of Single Interpretation. There is no single definitive reading of a text (literature, law, philosophy, etc.). Each interpretation is an intervention in the game of *différance* and contains the possibility of being deconstructed to show its dependence on suppressed assumptions or exceptions (Culler, 1985). (2) Emphasizing the Responsibility of Interpretation: If the meaning is not fixed, then the responsibility to interpret and decide the meaning (even if temporary and uncertain) becomes greater (Derrida et al., 1992, 2014). Derrida's deconstruction uses this instability to dismantle the binary oppositions that are often hierarchical in discourse (e.g.: male/female, intellect/emotion, center/periphery) by showing how privileged terms actually depend on oppressed terms (Derrida, 1998). Language is seen not as a neutral tool for conveying a finished meaning, but as a dynamic marker playing field that never reaches an absolute conclusion (Derrida & Bass, 2001).

Derrida's concept of *différance* provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the instability of language meaning. By showing that meaning always arises from an endless process of difference and delay in a network of interdependent and contextual markers, Derrida replaces the idea of singular and fixed meaning with an understanding of meaning as something fluid, always in motion, and inherently unstable. Like the illustration of the "ghost" in Hamlet, meaning is not a ghost that can be nailed to a single definition, but rather a shadow that constantly moves in a play of light and dark in a vast network of texts and contexts (Derrida & Bass, 1982).

A Radical Expansion of the Meaning of "Text" in Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction

In the Western philosophical tradition, "text" is narrowly understood as literary writing, such as a book, document, or literary work that has a stable meaning and is objectively accessible. This understanding is rooted in logocentrism, which presupposes the presence of meaning through written or spoken language.

Derrida rejects this reduction by pointing out that language itself is unstable due to the mechanism of *différance* (difference and delay of meaning). The concept of text must go beyond written material because all human realities are constituted through a network of markers.

For Derrida, "text" encompasses the entire field of production of meaning in human life. Social practices such as traditional ceremonies, religious rituals, or the education system are not just actions, but "texts" that must be read through historical codes, power relations, and colonial contexts. For example, traditional Javanese ceremonies are not just rituals, but texts that articulate resistance to modernization or state hegemony (Derrida, 1998).

Public policy, legal structures, or political campaigns are "texts" that contain hidden hierarchies. Example: The Citizenship Act can be read as a text that marginalizes ethnic minority groups through the definition of "indigenous". The human body, such as skin color, nose shape, or posture, becomes a "text" that is interpreted by cultural standards. The concept of beauty that glorifies white skin and slim bodies is a text that perpetuates racism and patriarchy (Derrida, 1998).

Derrida's radical statement "il n'y a pas de hors-texte" is often misunderstood as a denial of material reality. In fact, the meaning is: (1) Every human experience has always been mediated by a system of markers (language, symbols, cultural codes). For example, a "forest" is not just a collection of trees, but a text that is read through conservation narratives, local myths, or capitalist exploitation. (2) Text is not a closed structure, but rather "a network of markers that refer to other markers... without a center or final boundary". Example: the scriptures refer not only to the written text, but also to the oral traditions, conflicts of interpretation, and the political forces that shaped them (Royle, 2003).

Deconstruction is not a standard method, but rather an "event of reading" that dismantles binary oppositions in social texts. For example, reading the concept of "modern vs traditional" by exposing its paradoxes: modernity claims to be rational but gave birth to the Holocaust; Traditional is considered ancient but retains ecological wisdom. Deconstruction reveals the repressed voices in the dominant text. In the legal text of "heterosexual marriage", deconstruction features marginalized LGBTQ+ narratives (Hardiman, 2015).

In his essay *Of Grammatology*, Derrida shows how the term "native" is deconstructed. Binary Opposition: "Indigenous vs Immigrant" creates a hierarchy that legitimizes dominance. Internal Paradox: "Indigenous" is claimed to be "indigenous," but its own definition is the result of colonial legal constructions. Deconstruction reveals that "authenticity" is a political myth (Derrida, 1998; Derrida & Bass, 2001).

Contextuality and Unbreakability in Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction

Derrida radically rejected the idea that meaning can stand alone or be isolated from its relational network. Every sign, whether linguistic, visual, or institutional, acquires its meaning through interaction with other marker systems. This concept is rooted in the mechanism of *différance*, where meaning is always deferred and differentiated in an endless chain of markers. For example, the meaning of "freedom" in the Declaration of Independence is only meaningful through its relationship to the concepts of colonialism, natural rights, and opposition to tyranny. Without

this context, the word loses its historical-political power. Derrida's critique of the isolation of meaning is at the core of a deconstruction that defies the Western logocentric tradition. Logocentrism assumes that meaning is fully present in the object, while Derrida proves that meaning is always relational and context-dependent (Derrida & MacLachlan, 2004; LePort, 2010).

Although context is essential to meaning, Derrida asserts that context itself is never final. Any new context such as a change in social norms, historical findings, or political upheaval can shift the meaning of the text. The statement *il n'y a pas de hors-texte* affirms that reality is always articulated through a system of marking, but this system itself is fluid and infinite. Example: the reading of the Declaration of Independence in the 18th century (as a document of liberation) versus its reading now in the anti-racism movement, highlighting the contradictions of slavery by the signatories. The concept of "nothing outside the text" is often mistaken for a rejection of material reality. In fact, he emphasizes that our access to reality is always mediated by a network of markers. Context is not a static container, but an ever-evolving field of exchange of meaning (Aziz, 2025; Derrida, 1998; Royle, 2003).

Non-closure is made possible by the concepts of "trace" and "play". Each text carries the imprint of another text that preceded it, while also opening itself up to future reading. For example, the Declaration of Independence contains traces of John Locke's thought (natural rights), the British colonial context, and even ancient Greek philosophy. However, it also continued to "play" in new contexts, such as when civil rights activists in the 1960s quoted it to demand racial equality. This process illustrates the quote of Royle (2003): "Meaning is the effect of the game of difference in an infinite network of texts". Trace and play are instruments of deconstruction that show the instability of meaning. The trail reveals the dependency on the absent, while the "game" rejects interpretative closure (Derrida, 1998).

Deconstruction carries significant epistemological and ethical implications. Epistemologically, it triggers a crisis of interpretive authority: the disappearance of meaning still undermines claims of single truth (such as the literal reading of the constitution), because each interpretation is understood as an active intervention in a wider network of texts. The ethical implications then emerge: the unbreakability of the context demands that the reader be critically aware of his position in producing meaning and assume ethical responsibility for it. For example, reading the Declaration of Independence today must involve the perspective of the victims of colonialism. As a result, space has opened up for the democratization of meaning, where marginalized voices (such as indigenous peoples or minorities) have the opportunity to participate in shaping interpretations of dominant texts (Cornell et al., 1992; Derrida et al., 2014).

Derrida is confronted with two main criticisms: (1) Radical Relativism: If all contexts are legitimate, can meanings be stabilized for political action? Derrida replied that ethical decisions are still possible, even if they are temporary and contextual. (2) Legal Practicality: The legal system requires stability of meaning. However, Derrida points out that "legal certainty" itself is a deconstructed construction of the text (e.g., the reinterpretation of the Constitution by the U.S. Supreme Court). Derrida distinguishes between certainty and decidability: despite the unstable meaning, ethical decisions must be made in uncertainty (Cornell et al., 1992).

For Derrida, contextuality and unbreakability are not the weaknesses of language, but rather its fundamental nature. Meaning is not a static entity, but a historical process that is constantly being reshaped through the intervention of new contexts. The deconstruction of the Declaration of Independence proves that the text is not a dead monument, but a battlefield of meaning in which the past, present, and future dialogue. As Royle (2003) concludes, meaning is the effect of the game of differentiation in an infinite network a network that contains not

only written text, but also cultural practices, collective memory, and a politicized body. This historical process of interpretation demands an awareness that each new context is a "promise" for a fairer reading (Royle, 2003).

Deconstruction as a Strategy for Dismantling Binary Oppositions in Jacques Derrida's Thought

Deconstruction in Jacques Derrida's thought is not an act of destruction, but rather a critical reading strategy that dismantles the binary opposition hierarchical pairs such as essence/accident, center/margin, speech/writing that dominate Western logic. Derrida emphasizes that deconstruction is twofold: both unravelling and affirming, focusing on the "fault lines" in the text that give rise to internal contradictions. This strategy does not aim to create a new system, but to uncover the instability of meaning in a seemingly solid structure. As affirmed in the analysis of the Declaration of Independence, deconstruction shows how the text invalidates its own claims of authority through internal inconsistencies. Deconstruction is an intervention against opposition structures that are considered "natural" (Watkin, 2017).

At the heart of Derrida's criticism is logocentrism, the Western metaphysical belief that meaning is fully present in the consciousness of the speaker or text. Logocentrism gives birth to a hidden hierarchy in binary opposition, in which one term (such as "speech", "essence", "center") is considered superior, while its counterpart ("writing", "accident", "margin") is demeaning. Derrida proves that this superiority is a linguistic illusion, since meaning is always generated through *différance* a network of markers that refer to each other and delay full presence. For example, in Plato's philosophy, "truth" is considered to be present in direct speech, but the claim itself can only be known through the writings he criticizes. Logocentrism presupposes the presence of a stable transcendental meaning. Derrida's critique of this is at the heart of the deconstruction project (Derrida, 1998).

The Mechanism of Dismantling: Hierarchy Reversal and the Introduction of "Undecidable"

Derrida's strategy of deconstruction generally involves two related stages. *First*, the reversal of the hierarchy in traditional binary opposition. This stage aims to expose the dependence of terms that are considered superior to inferior terms that are often overlooked. A classic example is the opposition of speech and writing in Western philosophy, where speech is revered as an expression of the soul that is authentic and "present," while writing is considered secondary and corrupt. Derrida reverses this hierarchy by showing that speech also contains a "structure of writing" it relies on markers that can be separated from the native speaker and iterated outside of the original context. Thus, speech is no more "present" or authentic than writing. *Second*, the introduction of the concept of "undecidable". New terms such as *différance*, *trace*, or *pharmakon* were deliberately introduced to break down binary oppositions from within. These terms are ambivalent and cannot be confined to binary logic. For example, *pharmakon* in Derrida's essay on Plato means both "medicine" and "poison", thus effectively dismantling the binary opposition that tries to govern it (Derrida & Bass, 1982).

Derrida's deconstruction is not just a sterile theoretical game, but has profound ethical and political implications by dismantling the power relations hidden in discourse. By dismantling binary oppositions (such as male/female, Western/Eastern, rational/irrational), deconstruction reveals how this linguistic hierarchy is not neutral, but rather perpetuates power structures and mechanisms of marginalization in society. This strategy ethically opens up space for the voices of the "other" that have been suppressed by dominant discourse. For example, in the analysis of colonial law, the term "indigenous," which is claimed to represent authenticity, is actually revealed as a political construct that legitimizes dominance (Derrida, 1998). Therefore, as James K.A. Smith points out,

deconstruction serves as a "mode of affirmative criticism" that aims not only to criticize but also to reconstruct social practices to be more equitable by integrating marginalized perspectives (A. Smith, 2006).

Deconstruction is often criticized as a parasitic strategy, which is accused of only undermining established texts without offering alternative systems or new foundations. However, Derrida refutes this accusation with two key arguments. *First*, he asserts that deconstruction is precisely productive: by dismantling the hierarchy of meaning in the text, he liberates the possibility of new interpretations that were previously suppressed or marginalized by dominant structures. *Second*, Derrida emphasizes that deconstruction is not a standard, mechanically applicable method; it is an "event" that arises from the dynamic interaction between the text and the reader. Thus, the claim of "parasitism" fails to understand the transformative and responsive nature of deconstruction to the complexity of the text itself. (Derrida, 1988).

Derrida's deconstruction is an ethical-political strategy of deconstruction. By reversing the hierarchy of binary opposition and introducing "undecidable", he rejects claims of metaphysical certainty and opens up space for diversity of interpretation. As summarized in the essay *Specters of Marx*, deconstruction is a "promise" for justice that is always postponed but must continue to be fought for (Derrida, 2006). In this context, the statement "Deconstruction is an intervention in the structure of the opposition that seems natural" (LePort, 2010; Watkin, 2017) is not just a theoretical description, but a call for critical intervention in social discourse and practice (LePort, 2010; Watkin, 2017)

Criticism of Naïve Referentiality

Derrida does not deny material reality, but rejects the notion that language is only a "mirror" of reality. Meaning does not come from external referents (objects, transcendent ideas), but from the internal network of language itself. In the analysis of Sappho's poetry, the missing fragment is not just a "flaw", but a space in which the reader constructs meaning through relationships with other texts (Royle, 2003; Watkin, 2017).

The evangelical view of the hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) of biblical texts is rooted in distinctive theological beliefs. Evangelical hermeneutics systematically rejects allegorization and subjectivity through methodological triangulation: (1) rigorous linguistic-historical analysis, (2) intra-biblical interpretation, and (3) the distinction between illumination and inspiration. This approach aims to protect the authority of the text from arbitrary interpreter intervention (Frame, 2013).

Key principles of Evangelical Hermeneutics:

Biblical Authority and Inerrant:

Basis: The Bible is believed to be the Word of God, revealed and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the implication in Hermeneutics, because it comes from the true God, the Bible is considered inerrant in its original text, meaning that it is free from error in all that it teaches, including history and doctrine. This encourages serious and literal interpretation (as per the author's intent) because the text is considered absolutely trustworthy (Grudem, 1994a; Helm, 2022).

Grammatical-Historical Interpretation:

The main focus is to find the original meaning that the human writer intended for his original audience by using the method: *Grammar*: Analyzing the grammar, syntax, and meaning of words in the original language

(Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). *Historical*: Understand the historical, cultural, social, political, and geographical context in which the text was written. *Literature*: Pay attention to literary genres (narrative, poetry, prophecy, letters, apocalyptic, etc.), as genre determines the rules of interpretation. *Objective*: Avoid allegorical or subjective interpretations that impose external meaning into the text (Kaiser & Silva, 2009).

This method forms the backbone of evangelical hermeneutics: *Linguistic Analysis*: Examining the grammar, syntax, semantics, and literary structure of texts in the original language (Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek). Example: The Greek word *logos* (John 1:1) is studied in the context of Judeo-Hellenistic philosophy, not speculatively interpreted (Carson, 1984).

Historical Context Reconstruction: Understand the cultural, political, social, and religious background of the original audience. Example: The command to "kiss the Son" (Psalm 2:12) is interpreted as an ancient Near Eastern political loyalty call, not an allegory about "receiving God's love" (VanGemeren, 2017).

Scripture Interprets Scripture:

Because the unity of the Bible is a coherent revelation of God. The implication, then, in Practice is that the clearer portions of the Bible are used to interpret the less obvious portions. This principle is used to establish a consistent doctrine and resolve the difficulties of interpretation. The Analogy of Faith – the belief that the Bible does not contradict itself – is part of this principle (Grudem, 1994b; Kaiser & Silva, 2009). *Analogia Fidei* (Analogy of Faith) means that the meaning of the text must be in harmony with the teaching of the Bible as a whole. Example: Ezekiel's vision of the shin bones (Ezekiel 37) is interpreted as a prophecy of Israel's restoration, not an allegory of the resurrection of the 21st-century church, because it is consistent with the theme of Israel's restoration in other prophets (House, 1998).

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Illumination:

The Holy Spirit, who inspires the Bible, is also needed to enlighten the reader's mind to understand its spiritual meaning. The implication is that evangelical hermeneutics is not just a mere intellectual endeavour, but it also involves humility, prayer, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Illumination does not add new revelation, but opens up an understanding of the revelation that has already been written. So there is a balance in the interpretation of the biblical text. The illumination of the Holy Spirit does not replace rigorous grammatical-historical research, but works with it (Manaroinsong et al., 2022; Setiadi et al., 2024)

Despite believing in the role of the Holy Spirit in illumination, evangelical hermeneutics rejects claims of new revelation or subjective interpretations that go beyond the text: "The Holy Spirit does not give new meanings separate from grammatical-historical meanings, but rather illuminates the intellect to understand and apply existing meanings" (Erickson, 2015). Subjectivity is limited through the accountability of the scientific community (theological discussions, academic exegesis) and adherence to methodology (Osborn, 2010).

Literal-Historic-Grammatical:

In this case, the meaning of "Literal" does not always mean "literal" or reject figurative. This means interpreting the text according to the author's normal intentions in the context of its genre and culture. If the author uses a metaphor, then the metaphorical meaning is taken. If the author writes history, then it is interpreted as history.

The emphasis is on avoiding spiritualization or allegorization that ignores clear historical and grammatical meanings (Silalahi, 2018; Yuliana, 2018).

Christocentric:

Evangelicals believe that Christ is the pinnacle of God's revelation and the center of the entire text of the Bible. So in practice the whole Bible (Old and New Testaments) is interpreted in the personal light and work of Jesus Christ (Lontoh, 2025; Mujono et al., 2024). The Old Testament is seen as a preparation, a foreshadowing, and a prophecy pointing to Christ, while the New Testament is its fulfilment and explanation. However, this does not mean imposing Christ into each verse artificially, but rather looking at how the text contributes to the overall Christ-centred narrative of salvation (Erikson et al., 2023; Silalahi, 2018; Yuliana, 2018).

Unity of Canon:

The Bible is seen as a single complete canon, even though it is made up of different books and authors from various time periods. This unity allows the use of "Bible Interpreting the Bible" (Bartholomew, 1998)

The Ultimate Goal of Evangelical Hermeneutics is: 1) Understanding God's Will: To know what God reveals about Himself, His plan of salvation, and His will for His people. 2) Life Transformation (Not Just Information): Correct understanding is expected to result in obedience, worship, self-sanctification, and service. Interpreted truths must be applied in life (Hendricks, 2016). 3) Evangelism and Church Building: To preach the gospel accurately and build the church on a sound foundation of doctrine (Grudem, 1994a).

Overall, evangelical hermeneutics seeks to be methodical and based on strong theological beliefs about the nature of the Bible, with the primary goal of finding the original meaning of the text to be applied transformatively in the lives of believers and the church (Kaiser & Silva, 2009).

Implications for the Sacred Text (Bible)

When Derrida stated that text constitutes a "network of markings", he fundamentally dismantled the illusion that we can access reality beyond the system of signs themselves. The consequences of this view for sacred texts are significant: there is no "pure" or transcendent meaning hidden behind the words of the text, because meaning is always produced through the relationship between signs. Further, there is never a truly neutral or objective reading of the sacred text; Every attempt at understanding is always shaped by the context and preconceptions of the reader. As a result, authority over the meaning of sacred texts is not something absolute or given, but is always the result of cultural negotiations that have taken place continuously throughout the history of interpretation.

Derrida rejected the concept of original meaning in sacred texts, arguing that they did not have a fixed "original meaning". *First*, through the idea of the Death of the Author, Derrida argues that the divine or human intent underlying the text is not directly accessible to the reader; there is only an interaction between the reader and the text that takes place in a process of negotiation. *Second*, he shows the existence of an internal ambivalence in each text, which contains a dismantlable contradiction, or *aporia*. For example, in the Bible, the story of Isaac's sacrifice (Genesis 22) can be interpreted both as a high obedience of faith and as an act of divine violence, reflecting the complexity and uncertainty of meaning contained in the text (Hardiman, 2015).

Vanhoozer criticizes Derrida's view because it has serious implications for biblical authority, namely that if the text does not have a stable meaning, the Bible cannot be an authority. The death of a human writer has the potential to lead to a rejection of the authority of the Divine Author (God). Christianity is considered "logocentric" because it believes in the Word (Logos) as absolute truth. If Derrida is right, the foundations of the Christian faith collapse (Vanhoozer, 1998).

Vanhoozer defends the author's authority with the theory of "meaning as communicative action," which states that the meaning of the text is the communicative action of the author (e.g., promising, commanding, declaring). The intention of the writer is not just a mental state, but an action embodied in the text. Especially for the Bible, this means that its meaning is related to God's actions communicated through human writers (Vanhoozer, 1998).

"Undoing the Author: Authority and Intentionality" is a postmodern assault on the author's authority and intentions in the interpretation of the text. Vanhoozer responded by reviving the author through a theory of communicative action, primarily to maintain the authority of the sacred text. For him, rejecting the author meant opening the door to relativism that undermined the Christian faith (Vanhoozer, 1998). According to Wimsatt-Beardsley's view, literary criticism is a part of objective science. Meanwhile, Derrida sees literary criticism as an *infinite play of meaning* (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946).

Views on the Single Interpretation of the Bible

The concept of a single interpretation (the absolute and only interpretation) of the Bible has been a long-standing debate in postmodern theology, hermeneutics, and philosophy. The following is a multidisciplinary analysis of the claims of a single interpretation, including criticism from a Derridean/deconstructive perspective, as well as responses from the Christian tradition that defends it (Yuliana, 2018).

The Theological Basis of the Argument in Support of the Single Interpretation is: (1) Divine Inspiration, where Christian evangelicals (evangelicals and fundamentalists) believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God (inerrancy), so it has an objective meaning that can be found through literal-historical interpretation methods (Silalahi, 2018). Example: 2 Timothy 3:16 ("All Scripture is inspired of God..."). (2) The method used is the literal interpretation method of Grammatical-Historical Interpretation, where this method emphasizes the original meaning based on the context of the language and history of the author, rejecting relativism. Example: Literal interpretation of creation in 6 days (Genesis 1) (Nathaniel Halim, 2024).

The criticism of Derrida's Deconstruction's Single Interpretation: "There Is No Single Meaning" is due to the concepts of Difference and Textual Instability. According to Derrida, every text (including the Bible) is a network of markers whose meaning is always deferred and depends on the context of the reader. Example: The word "Lord" in Exodus 3:14 ("I am I") can be interpreted as an absolute presence (classical theology) or a trace that is never intact (deconstruction) (Nathaniel Halim, 2024). Likewise, Logocentrism and Interpretive Violence. Where claims of single interpretation are often repressive, because they ignore marginal voices (women, minorities, non-Western traditions). Example: Patriarchal interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 ("I do not permit women to teach...") (Budiatmaja et al., 2022; Sunarto, 2021).

The existence of a plurality of Tafsirs causes no single meaning for sacred texts. This makes sacred texts an arena of interpretive struggle. Example: The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus can be interpreted differently by readers from the mockery of the Roman soldier to the officer's acknowledgment that He was the "Son of God"

(Matthew 27:54). Each interpretation is a subjective construction of the same event. According to Derrida, Deconstruction shows disunity, where the text always contains gaps that make unity impossible (Aziz, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Indonesian evangelical hermeneutics and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction experience a fundamental epistemological conflict. Indonesian evangelicals adhere to the final authority of the Bible as the coherent and meaningful word of God. In contrast, Derrida's deconstruction radically rejects the existence of a stable meaning in any text and emphasizes the text's irreducibility to external contexts such as history, authors' intentions, or transcendent references. The practical implications of this fundamental difference are very real. Indonesian evangelicals rely on literal-contextual methods of interpretation (such as *grammatical-historical interpretation*) rooted in Reformed theology to understand the text's message. Deconstruction, on the other hand, invites the reader to critically realize the hidden power bias, the inherent ambiguity in language, and the subjectivity of the reader in the process of interpretation. Despite significant opposition, certain synthesis potentials can be identified. A common point emerges, for example, in the emphasis on the role of the interpretive community (in this case, the church for the evangelical) as a space for the negotiation of meaning. Moreover, both approaches recognize, albeit on different grounds, the imperfections of human understanding; This recognition of *fallibility* is in harmony with the principles in the evangelical tradition. However, the application of deconstruction in the context of Indonesian Christian theology carries serious risks and criticism. Deconstruction was seen as threatening the foundations of biblical authority and the stability of the doctrine it held so firmly in. Nevertheless, this approach is also recognized as opening up valuable space for ideological criticism of interpretations of Scripture that might perpetuate structures of injustice.

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