

Hermeneutic Triangulation as an Epistemological Framework for Cross-Textual Canonical Stratification in Abrahamic Scriptural Traditions

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Abstract. Contemporary comparative theology confronts persistent methodological inadequacies in reconciling intertextual dependencies across divergent canonical corpora. This study proposes a structured hermeneutic triangulation framework (HTF) integrating redaction-critical analysis, narratological layer mapping, and semiotic convergence indexing to systematize cross-textual canonical stratification within Abrahamic scriptural traditions. Drawing upon primary textual evidence from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament Apocrypha, and Quranic exegetical literature, the HTF was applied to 47 thematically homologous pericopes. Results demonstrate statistically reproducible patterns of theological sedimentation and intertextual borrowing, with convergence indices exceeding previously established benchmarks. The framework enables precision identification of doctrinal nuclei shared across traditions, offering a replicable, epistemologically rigorous instrument for interfaith hermeneutics and canonical source criticism. Implications for systematic theology, textual philology, and religious historiography are substantiated.

Keywords: hermeneutic triangulation, canonical stratification, Abrahamic intertextuality, redaction criticism, semiotic convergence indexing, scriptural exegesis, comparative theology, pericope analysis, interfaith hermeneutics

Introduction

The methodological landscape of comparative religious studies has undergone considerable transformation over the past three decades, yet a persistent lacuna remains in the epistemological architecture available for systematic cross-canonical analysis. As global interfaith dialogue intensifies and the scholarly community faces growing demands for transparent, reproducible methodologies in theological research, the absence of a formalized framework for canonical stratification across Abrahamic traditions represents not merely an academic inconvenience but a structural impediment to the advancement of the discipline. In 2024–2026, amid renewed geopolitical interest in religious identity formation and the proliferation of digital critical editions of sacred texts, the urgency of developing precision instruments for intertextual theological analysis is self-evident. Existing methodologies — including form criticism, source criticism, and tradition-historical approaches — while foundational, operate largely in isolation from one another and from the quantitative tools increasingly available to humanities scholars. Redaction criticism, pioneered by Willi Marxsen and further elaborated within the Tübingen tradition, has offered granular insights into editorial layering within individual corpora but lacks a transferable architecture for cross-traditional comparison. Similarly, narratological approaches drawn from structuralist and post-structuralist frameworks have illuminated internal coherence mechanisms within discrete texts without providing interoperability across canonical boundaries. The result is a methodological fragmentation that impedes cumulative scholarly progress and limits the utility of comparative theological findings for both academic and applied interfaith contexts. Semiotic analysis, particularly as theorized within the tradition of Charles Sanders Peirce and subsequently developed by scholars such as Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco, introduces a potentially unifying metalanguage capable of traversing textual traditions without imposing confessional presuppositions. However, its application within rigorous canonical studies has remained largely unsystematized, relying on case-by-case interpretive flexibility rather than reproducible protocols. The present study addresses this gap by proposing and empirically testing a Hermeneutic Triangulation Framework (HTF), which synthesizes redaction-critical stratification, narratological layer mapping, and semiotic convergence indexing into a cohesive epistemological instrument. The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 provides a theoretical genealogy of the three constituent methodologies and argues for their epistemological complementarity. Section 3 details the operationalization of the HTF, including selection criteria for pericopes and the construction of the convergence index. Section 4 presents the results of the framework's application to 47 thematically homologous textual units drawn from Hebrew Bible, New Testament Apocryphal, and Quranic sources. Section 5 engages critically with the limitations of the framework and its boundary conditions. Section 6 discusses the implications of the findings for systematic theology, textual philology, and institutional interfaith hermeneutics. A concluding section synthesizes the epistemological contributions and proposes directions for subsequent research.

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