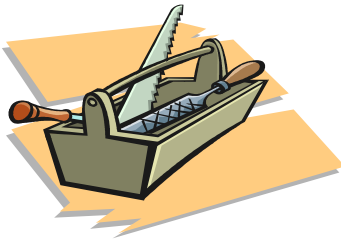


The Worlds of the Bible: Critical Questions



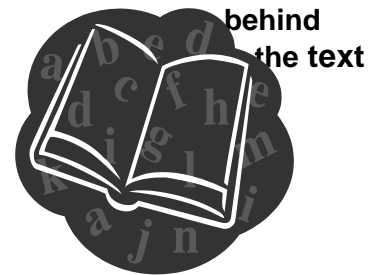
As we already know, to help us understand the Bible, we need a variety of **tools**. Some of the best tools are sharp **questions**.

'Biblical Criticism' is about choosing and using questions as tools, to help us understand. Although personally we may have experienced 'criticism' as something negative and destructive, 'Biblical Criticism' (when done well) is a positive and enriching process. It helps us find meaning as we read the Bible.

Finding Meaning in the World Behind the Text ***(Historical-Critical questions)***

'What were the historical events that surrounded the production of this text?'

- **Who was the original author? When and why did they write? For whom was the text written** (Historical and Social-Scientific Criticism)
- **What earlier sources of material did the author of the text use?** (Source Criticism)
- **How did the final editor(s) of the text organise their material? Why did they choose to include some things and leave other parts out?** (Redaction Criticism)



Finding Meaning in the World Within the Text ***(Literary-Critical Questions)***

'What kind(s) of literature are we reading in this book?'

- **Does this text have a structure? How does it begin and end? Does the writer emphasise anything by repetition?** (Rhetorical Criticism)
- **What is the tension/conflict in this story? Is it resolved as the plot unfolds?** (Narrative Criticism)
- **What are the characters in the text thinking, saying and doing? Does the writer want us to approve of them or not?** (Rhetorical and Narrative Criticism)



Finding Meaning in the World in Front of the Text ***(Reader-Focussed Questions)***

'What do we notice and find interesting in this text?'

- **Is there something in this text that stands out for me/us as a word from God? How shall I/we pray and act in response to that word?** (Lectio Divina)
- **How do different readers respond to this text? What do they bring to it to determine (or create) meaning?** (Reception and Reader-Response)
- **How are particular groups, such as women, the poor, or the wider creation presented and regarded in this text?** (Ideological)

