

Critical Thinking Questions For "Sacred Texts Unit"

Author: NA (Anonymous)

Title: New Testament, King James version

Name : Mickelly A.

1. What do you think the work's main argument, point, or conclusion might be?

The text is mainly considered as a collection of christian works from the canonical gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John to the Acts of the Apostles, Epistles and book of Revelation. It is considered a sacred text by christians and non christians alike. It mainly narrates about the arrival, birth and death of significant figures in christianity such as John the Baptist and Jesus. It also refers to their earthly experience as preachers of the gospel.

2. Give three ways the text(s) address the natural world and/or man and woman's place in it:

a. In the book of Mathew we are referred to as being the light of the world, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" therefore our actions have a direct effect on that light and the way it ought to shine. Every one of us is responsible for lighting the world with our deeds. Furthermore, also from the gospel of Mathew "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works" We should be eager to exemplify our actions, so that others can be proudful in imitating them, such actions can only remind us of the famous maxim of Immanuel Kant "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law." Therefore, let us be the light of the world !

b. Another reference can be considered, also from the book of Mathew, " You are the salt of the earth", hence Christians and all of us alike have to remain in constant challenge in making sure that our efforts make differences in the life of others. And should constantly assess ourselves in asking how will we be remembered ? What impact will we have on generations to come ? Will that impact be positive enough to make a difference ? It is imperative to remember the qualities of "Salt" as we have been compared to it. Salt has certain bolded qualities that should be our guide in that comparison, it preserves, it is associated with purity, it flavors and it causes thirst. Therefore, we should be pure in our soul, love one another, be prayerful and sincere in our actions, we should preserve those qualities as humans and even more as christians. We should exemplify our actions in such a way that it becomes contagious to others and they have to follow. That is the righteous way and what is required of us in the world.

c. Another description of the natural world can be found in the following quote : “Enter by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it Matt.7: 13-14” Therefore, it is necessary to be cautious in our actions, making sure that we don't follow the multitude simply because it is numerous, after all can the majority be wrong? Once again, remember that the natural man is an enemy of God and to be a part of that narrow gate the conventional self must die first. Therefore we should not be our natural self but instead die and be reborn as salt of the earth and light of the world !

3. How might the historical period and location (i.e. context) have affected how the content of the text(s)?

The Bible and therefore the New Testament, was written in a climate and era of extreme religious sensitivity. Several christians had been persecuted because of their religious beliefs or affiliations. There were several other gospels that had not survived to be added to the Bible, those non-canonical texts also referred to as Apocrypha never had the chance to be formally evaluated, the decisions of not to have them included were not based on a formal evaluation of their religious content or theological values. Some of the Apocryphas included popular literatures like "The Book of the Secrets of Enoch", "The Testament of Judah", "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs". Now, the idea of discarding those literatures with no formal evaluation might persuade us to further understand the tension or so the disfunctional process that existed in that era regarding the selection of canonical texts. So definitely I remain convinced, that the location and era played a major factor in the content of the Bible or the New Testament.

4. During the time period when the work was created: what social groups (for example: economic class; religious affiliation; political group; ethnic/linguistic group; gender) was being addressed? Why do you think so?

It is only prudent to believe and associate the writings of the New Testament to the people that spoke and undertood the language that it was written in. The main languages spoken by the Jews and Greeks in the Holy Land in the era of Jesus were Aramaic and Koine Greek, at some extent Hebrew. Stressing on the fact that several have agreed that the content of the New Testament was written in Koine Greek. With that consideration, we can only agree that the New Testament was primarily written for the benefit of all mankind, however geography and the era played a major factor on the language and therefore the people that would inherit those sacred texts. Today, it is available to the benefit of everyone, being however a Christian text.

5. What is the role of the human being in the text(s) in the world? In the cosmos and/or afterlife?

Contrary to the old testament, the gospels narrate how Jesus valued the importance of tolerance, forgiveness and love. Rich in wisdom, the sermon on the mountain hinted to the population what was expected of them and their respective reward or curse, "Blessed are the pure in heart:for they shall see God", "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God", wouldn't those statements urge us to be pure in heart or to seek the peace ? Furthermore, it had always or often been taught an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, you slap back when you get slapped by your neighbor and you should punch back at every occasion when you get punched, and we were often taught to love our friends and hate our enemies, for they are our enemies, had we been miseducated ? had we been mislead ? Jesus' new covenant teaches us not to consider all those prior manners, for they tend to lead us to evil acts, but instead we are taught not to slap or punch back but instead to give the other cheek. What greater wisdom can there be ? How grand is it to seek the peace by not responding when afflicted ? As for our enemies, the new covenant teaches us to share our love the same way that we would with our friends, considering that God shines his son on the evil and the good alike. I have found particular interest in the following quote "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That you may be the children of your father in heaven" As we all know that those are contrary to our human tendencies, but we ought to remember that we can only achieve greater wisdom by the death of our conventional self, for the natural man is an enemy of God. Those teachings of extreme wisdom, forgiveness and love can only be understood at a divine plane unless one is ready to be reborn and childlike, with a pure heart and ready to serve, which is indeed what is expected of us. Our journey here and associated actions define our fruit here or the afterlife.