

MOOT: SCRIPTURAL SPACE

Introduction

In January 04 Moot started a once-a-month space to develop a group-hermeneutic exploration of the scriptures. Like many emerging and new forms of church, we are in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water when it comes to scriptures. Many of us know that we don't believe the simplified black and white literal interpretation of scripture. But we do believe these words are God inspired, but need to be interpreted to draw out meaning for us today living in the 21st Century. So we want to maintain a high regard towards people and culture as well as a high regard towards scripture, where mature Christianity is about living with the tension of holding such a position. In response, we have set up the Moot Scriptural Space on the 4th Wednesday of every month to fit into the monthly cycle of worship mission and community that is moot.

Scripture space is not aimed at being a cold intellectual exercise, but a way of deepening our faith and understanding to enrich our spiritual lives and how to approach our world which is increasingly complex and grey. Such an approach will enable Moot as community of faith, to become an 'interpretative community' to help us develop a shared understanding and application of scripture.

Background

When approaching reading and understanding ancient texts, we have to remember that we stand in the 21st century looking back through the lens of a modern world through the upheaval of the industrial revolution, world wars and technological change to a time at its closest relates to the Roman Empire right back to early civilizations in the Ancient Near East. We therefore need to be aware and critical of our human nature to simplify texts and our ability to project our modern understandings onto these texts. Many of us have experienced preaching and forms of bible study that make this major mistake. To help us with this, we have created a tool that combines questions that relate to narrative, literary, historical, form, redactive and social critical questions to analyse a text. There is no perfect tool, but hopefully questions that relate to these forms of analysis will help us to draw out what texts say about themselves, and other knowledge that throws light onto their context and meaning.

Hermeneutics, (the process of how you interpret texts) is a large and complex area of life. Biblical hermeneutics (what we are attempting to do) is specific and quite different to other forms of hermeneutics, so we are all going to learn how to do this better with the tool we are using.

Process

The following process was agreed as a way of using the time we have constructively:

1. There is to be a facilitator to the session.
2. 7 People in Moot will have agreed to explore the seven set areas relating to the 10 questions on the sheet:
Questions 1-3
Question 4
Question 5
Question 6
Question 7
Question 8 & 9
Question 10
3. Facilitator then to lead a discussion on the application of the material.

Assumptions

There has been much argument in Church history about scripture texts, and to assist us having a level playing field the following is assumed:

1. Following Karl Barth, it is assumed that the Bible has limited inherency. Which means that it is the inspired Word of God but that it is written through Human Beings. Texts therefore do hold the word of God, but also human content. We therefore need to approach texts critically to work out what is of God and what is human or cultural.
2. The Bible as the Word of God is not God. The bible is writing that inspires us and reveals the character of God. Jesus is the word of God, so we do not treat the bible as inherent. Some forms of fundamentalist Christians are quite idolatrous in their treatment of the Bible.
3. When doing scriptural questing we will be mindful of the history of interpretation, and hold these in tension with the doctrines of the faith.