

Here is an old question that I received that continues to be pressing — something I think and talk about all the time!

QUESTION:

Would you please explain more on the differences between Biblical history and theology? Is it difficult as an historian to keep these separate in your personal beliefs?

RESPONSE:

I deal with this question in each of my three textbooks for undergraduates, since, for them, it is a confusing issue. How can you study the Bible as a historian without religious perspectives guiding your reading. Here is how I explain the issue in the Excursus to the first chapter of my Bible Intro.

EXCURSUS

Most of the people who are deeply interested in the Bible in modern American culture are committed Jews or Christians who have been taught that this is a book of sacred texts, Scripture, unlike other books. For many of these - especially many Christian believers - the Bible is the inspired word of God. In communities of faith that hold such views, the Bible is usually studied not from a historical perspective by situating it in its own historical context, or in order to learn about its discrepancies and inconsistencies, or in order to learn that it may have historical mistakes in it. You yourself may find the historical approach to stand at odds with what you have been taught to believe. If so, then it is for you in particular that I want to provide these brief additional reflections in this excursus.

Here is the question: how can a person who is committed to the Bible affirm that its authors may have a wide range of perspectives, that they sometimes disagree with one another, or that they sometimes have made flat-out mistakes? I can address the question by...

To see how I address this issue you need either to buy the book or join the blog. Joining is cheaper. So why not! And in this case, all the money goes to charity. Help the needy! Help yourself! Join!!

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