

Pastor Stef's Book Review – September 2016

There are now over thirty books in the *Views* series. Titles like, “Two Views on Women in Ministry”, “Three Views on God’s Will and Decision Making”, “Four Views on Hell” and “Five Views on Law and Gospel” abound. The books are all put out by the evangelical publishing house *Zondervan* and show just how diverse and abundant the perspectives are on different topics within the church. Some Christians feel threatened by this and others (I include myself in this second category) find their faith invigorated by it. I certainly appreciate the tone of the books as reflecting the work of the Holy Spirit, who cares more about us loving each other and getting our hearts right than getting all of our ideas right. Each chapter is written by a Bible teacher who adheres to one of the positions on the topic being addressed. The chapters are then followed by the other author’s rebuttals. They express where they agree and where they take issue with the view just presented. Though they often disagree with each other profoundly, they model Christian maturity for us in the way they respect, listen, learn and dialogue with each other - a trait missing in most online posts.

The book in the series that I just finished was called ***Genesis: History, Fiction or Neither – Three Views on the Bible’s Earliest Chapters (2015)***. The authors are James K. Hoffmeier (who takes the “historical” position), Kenton L. Sparks (who takes the “fiction” position) and Gordon J. Wenham (who takes the “neither” position). I put each of their positions in quotation marks because, though those words make for a good title, none of the words alone truly represent their positions. Hoffmeier, for instance, believes in a historical Adam and Eve, but does not believe that God created in 6 days of 24 hours each. Sparks’ position is labeled “fiction”, but he certainly does not think that the story of Adam and Eve is untrue. He would ask, “Does it change the point of the message if the parable of the Good Samaritan never really happened in history?” And Wenham’s position of “neither” doesn’t mean he rejects all the elements of the other two views. Instead, he sees the story of Adam and Eve as a tale based on the grand story of real early history. (As you can see just from this, there can be even more views on this topic than three).

As I stated at the beginning, though this is an important topic to study and debate, the most important point comes in the last paragraph of the book, written by the general editor Charles Halton:

Let us discuss matters such as the genre of Gen 1-11 and debate them vigorously if we desire..., but how we regard Gen 1-11 should not come between us. May our God forgive us if this topic and even this book spur division in place of unity and strife instead of love.