

A Biblical Philosophy of History

A HUMANIST PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

- **M**an is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labor of the ages, all the devotion, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins - all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built - *Bertrand Russell*, philosopher and mathematician (20th century).
- **T**he universe has turned its face against man; it was bored with him and man will eventually die out like the dinosaurs and be forgotten - *H.G. Wells*, author and historian (20th century).
- **T**he universe is indifferent. Who created it? Why are we here on this puny mud heap spinning in infinite space. I have not the slightest idea and I am quite convinced that no one has - *Andre Maurois*, philosopher (20th century).
- **T**he plight of man is pitiable. We are wanderers in a vast universe, helpless before the devastations of nature, dependent upon nature for food and other necessities, and uninformed about why we were born and what we should strive for. Man is alone in a cold and alien universe. He gazes upon this mysterious, rapidly changing, and endless universe and is confused, baffled, and even frightened by his own insignificance - *Morris Kline*, mathematician and historian (20th century).
- **H**istory is little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind - *Edward Gibbon*, historian (18th century).
- **S**ome ... years ago at an annual meeting of the American Historical Association I had the occasion to meet informally with a group of the more famous historians in attendance at that conference. The subject under discussion was the meaning and purpose in history. These half dozen scholars were of the opinion that history lacks any decisive meaning and any discernible purpose. I then posed to this group of distinguished scholars one question: *IF THIS BE THE CASE, THEN WHY DO WE TEACH HISTORY?* The scholars looked at me with surprise and even disgust, but no answer was forthcoming from any one of them. The group broke up as each went to his own particular luncheon group and discussion of various phases of a subject which they could not really justify as part of the university curriculum and yet which they continue to teach as if the knowledge of it had some inherent value. This incident is by no means unique. The professional historians in this country and in Europe have come to the place where they have little faith in the subject to which they have devoted their lives. Historians with increasing and

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distressing frequency are openly admitting that history has no meaning and shows little or no purpose or goals The negation of Christian theism has brought in its wake an intellectual sterility which has now penetrated nearly every segment of Western culture. This sterility does not merely discourage meaningful intellectual activity. It virtually denies that such activity is possible - *C. Gregg Singer*, historian (20th century).

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- **H**e doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, "What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35).
- **H**e shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River unto the ends of the earth ... Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him (Psalm 72:8,11).
- **J**ehovah hath established His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all (Psalm 103:19).
- **O** Jehovah, the God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? And art not Thou ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? And in Thy hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee (II Chronicles 20:6).
- **A**sk of Me, and I will give the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now therefore, be wise, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, for His wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him (Psalm 2:8-12).
- **F**or when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9).
- **T**he king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah as the watercourses; He turneth it whithersoever He will (Proverbs 21:1).
- ... according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11).
- **O**f the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:7).
- **A**ll authority hath been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations ... (Matthew 28:18-19).

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- **J**esus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5).
- **I**n the infinite wisdom of the Lord of all the earth, each event falls with exact precision into its proper place in the unfolding of His divine plan. Nothing, however small, however strange, occurs without His ordering, or without its particular fitness for its place in the working out of His purpose; and the end of all shall be the manifestation of His glory, and the accumulation of His praise. This is the Old Testament (as well as the New Testament) philosophy of the universe - a world view which attains concrete unity in an absolute decree, or *Purpose*, or plan, of which all that comes to pass is but its development in time - *Benjamin B. Warfield*, theologian (20th century).
- **H**istory has as its mainstream the Messianic purpose of Jesus Christ; the Messianic purpose is the main tide of history; all others are tributary. The Messianic purpose holds together the entire fabric of history integrating all things in Christ - *Robert Rendall*, theologian (20th century).
- **T**he events of history are not accidents. There are no accidents in the lives of men or of nations. We may go back to the underlying cause of every event, and discover in each God's overruling and intervening wisdom. It has been said that history is the biography of communities; in another, and profounder sense, it is the autobiography of Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will," and who is graciously timing all events in the interest of His Christ, and of the kingdom of God on earth - *S.W. Foljambe*, minister and historian (19th century).
- **H**istory is the preparation for and the extension of the gospel among the nations - *George E. Ladd*, theologian (20th century).
- **T**he march of the gospel throughout the world is the proper theme of world history - *C.E. Eavey*, church historian (20th century).
- **C**hristian missions is in fact the largest and longest standing concerted effort in the annals of human history, and certainly the most influential - *Ralph Winter*, missionary statesman (20th century).
- **O**nly a small minority of Christians, throughout history, have obeyed the last great command of Jesus in each generation. But that small minority of Christians has been for 2,000 years the single most powerful determiner of human history. This incredible story has been purposefully underemphasized or even overlooked by secular historians - *Don Richardson*, missionary and author (20th century).
- **T**he purpose of Biblical history is to trace the victory of Jesus Christ. That victory is not merely spiritual; it is also historical ... in terms of a glorious destiny for which the whole creation groans and travails as it awaits the fullness of that glorious liberty of the sons of God. The victory is historical and eschatological This victory was set forth in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who destroyed the power of sin and death and emerged victorious from the grave ... Had Christ merely arisen as a spirit from the grave, it would have signified His Lordship over the

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world of spirit But by His physical resurrection, by His rising again in the same body with which He was crucified, He set forth His Lordship over creation and over history. The world of history will see Christ's triumph and the triumph of His saints, His church, and His kingdom. History will not end in tribulation and disaster: it will see the triumph of the people of God and manifestation of Christian order from pole to pole before Christ comes again - *R.J. Rushdoony*, theologian and historian (20th century).

- **T**he issue of the great scheme of redemption is by no means uncertain, His cause must prosper, His throne must be established, and the will of the Lord must be done. Let us brace ourselves up this morning with the delightful prospect of the predestined triumph of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ - *Charles Spurgeon*, Baptist minister (19th century).
- **T**he truth is this: the march of providence is so slow and our desires so impatient: the work of progress is so immense and our means of aiding is so feeble: the life of humanity is so long, that of the individual so brief, that we often tend to see only the ebb of the advancing wave and are discouraged. It is history that teaches us to hope - *Robert E. Lee*, commanding general of the Confederate army and University president (19th century).
- **W**e believe that the Great Commission includes not merely the formal and external announcement of the Gospel preached as a "witness" to the nations ... but the true and effectual evangelization of all the nations so that the hearts and lives of the people are transformed by it. That seems quite clear from the fact that *all authority* in heaven and on earth and an endless sweep of conquest has been given to Christ and through Him to His disciples specifically for that purpose - *Lorraine Boettner*, theologian and author (20th century).
- **I**f the prophecies concerning the increase of Christ's kingdom be true, and if what has been advanced, concerning the commission given by Him to His disciples being obligatory on us, be just, it must be inferred that all Christians ought heartily to concur with God in promoting His glorious designs, for *he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit* - *William Carey*, Baptist missionary to India (18th century).