

# ***Approaching History Biblically***

## *Sources*

Edward M. Panosian, et al., *The Providence of God in History* (1996)

Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism* (1964)

Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931)

Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Our Thinking About History: A God-Centered Approach* (2022)

## I. Judging History

### A. What is history?

#### 1. Viewpoints

- a. History is what happened. (Divine view; ideal)
  - b. History is what historians do. (Human view reflecting human limitations)
2. History is the record of the past based on surviving evidence. (Historians striving after the ideal)
    - a. History is a true story about the human past.
    - b. An inspired book is an absolutely dependable record of what happened.

### B. OT Pattern

#### 1. Samuel & Kings: Prophetic History

- a. Tradition: Jeremiah as author of Kings
- b. Pattern: God's judgment on sin

#### 2. Chronicles: Priestly History

- a. Tradition: Ezra as author
- b. Pattern: How to approach & worship God

#### 3. Scripture's doxological celebrations (e.g., Ps. 105) & prophetic warnings (e.g., Ps. 78)

### C. History as "warts and all" (1 Cor. 10:1-11)

1. Israel joined in covenant to God (vv. 1-4)
2. Israel sinned and was judged (vv. 5-11)
3. These things happened as examples for us (vv. 6, 11)
  - a. The bad as well as the good
  - b. Examples across time and culture

### D. Cautions about judging

1. Remember the universality of sin (Luke 13:1-5)
2. Remember God's ways are often inscrutable (John 9:1-3)

## II. "Mechanics" of History (Luke 1:1-4)

### A. Luke as Historian

1. Researcher, not an eyewitness
2. Wrote Acts, the first church history
3. Classified as both "Greek" & "Hebrew" historian
  - a. Prologue: classic pattern of Greek histories
  - b. Subject matter is more typically Hebrew (cf. OT, Apocrypha, Josephus)
  - c. Approach to truth
    - 1) Greeks: Truth found in critical research for plausibility
    - 2) Hebrew: Truth found in revelation from God
4. Presents Christ in *human* history (Luke 3:23-38)

### B. Principles from His Prologue

#### 1. Approach to History

- a. Based on research of sources (Dependable sources: “eyewitnesses”)
  - b. Grounded in real events
  - c. Orderly presentation according to a theme
  - 2. Special Qualifications
    - a. Luke had a providential preparation to write
    - b. Luke was under divine inspiration
      - 1) Guarantee of accuracy & clarity
      - 2) Quality limited to scriptural history
- III. Principles of Approach
- A. An evangelical approach
    - 1. Evangelicalism: Centrality of conversion experience to the Christian life
    - 2. Awareness of true spiritual life
    - 3. Limitations
      - a. Not an attempt to determine conversion of figures in history
      - b. Not just “edifying topics”
      - c. Still concerned w/ everything calling itself “Christian”
  - B. A doctrinally-conscious approach
    - 1. Apply a doctrinal framework to evaluate history
    - 2. “Evangelical” → gospel content
    - 3. A truly Fundamentalist approach
      - a. Central essentials to Christianity
      - b. Essentials are the basis of Christian fellowship
  - C. History vs. Scripture
    - 1. Nature of History
      - a. A record based on research of sources
      - b. “Certainty” (Luke 1:4) a key difference
        - 1) Scripture gives us certainty
        - 2) History gives degrees of likelihood
    - 2. History is not Scripture
      - a. History has no ultimate authority
      - b. History not the best apologetic
  - D. Other Principles
    - 1. Providence
      - a. God’s providential control is a fact
      - b. Question: our ability to discern providence
    - 2. Causation: “God uses means”
    - 3. Design: Fall → Redemption → Second Coming → Consummation