The all-too-painful truth is, the human memory can be very poor at times, often forgetting a great deal of facts and information. Exams, when properly prepared for, very adequately serve the purpose of refreshing and re-informing the student of significant information which he had forgotten.

In recent years, there have been a few new developments in exams. One is letting seniors skip taking the exams of classes in which they achieve a certain grade (usually an A- or B+). The reason for that is if a student studies hard and learns the material well the first time, there is no need for him to review it and be tested on it again. This may indeed be right and good, but in all fairness, why shouldn’t this privilege be extended to everyone? Underclassmen may work just as hard as seniors, yet they have to take all their exams and seniors don’t. Perhaps this practice should be re-evaluated.

Certain variations in exams are also possible. Semesters can be divided into nine week marking periods, with “mini-exams” given after each period. There would be four exams each year, but they would be smaller in content and much more easy to study for.

Or, exams can be held only once every school year. These exams would cover a broader range of material, but would include only the basics of the course, meaning students would not have to worry about the smaller, relatively insignificant details.

There are other suggestions for changing exams, but it really isn’t necessary to list them all, for each one is based upon the supposition that exams, as they are now held, are not beneficial and should be eliminated or replaced. The task of educators, then, is to wade through the many pro and con arguments and make the crucial decision on the future of exams.

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PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

by Fred Hanko

In the nineteenth century an influential historian, Leopold von Ranke, stated clearly an idea that was prevalent in his time: that the sole duty of the historian is to record as accurately as possible the happenings of the past. If this were true, we would not need to discuss a philosophy of history. Before we begin, then, it is necessary to dispose of this idea, which is also stated in a current textbook, “History is the record of all that men have said or done, up to the present moment.”

I. The Necessity of Interpretation in History

In the first place history as simply a record of facts is impossible. The writing of history inevitably involves selection and arrangement, and in the selection and arrangement of materials the historian cannot avoid interpretation. The fact that the historian chooses to include certain materials in his account and to leave out others assumes interpretation of the relative importance of these materials.
Also, if the historian is to arrange his materials into some kind of continuity, he is going to make some kind of subjective judgment as to the relative value of the materials that he has. If I include in my writings that the Assyrians produced iron weapons and exclude the fact that they also produced fine pottery, I am making an interpretation as to which of these facts I consider more important. If I should include both of these facts, the way in which I present them will imply some subjective opinion as to which of these facts I consider the more important.

Second, history as a record of facts is useless. Uninterpreted facts are both sterile and meaningless. The fact that the Assyrians produced iron weapons, although very important for Sargon II, is entirely meaningless for me and everyone else living today, unless I can show that these iron weapons were a part of the general warlike structure of the Assyrian civilization. And even this is useless unless I show that the warlike Assyrians brought about the downfall of the Kingdom of Israel because of the wrath of God against their sins.

Interpretation is the legitimate and essential function of the historian. It is not the facts of history but the meaning of the facts that gives value to the study of history and meaning to the present time. Thus an important part of the study of history is the search for cause and effect, the search for pattern and unity, the search for answers to the problems of the world today. Mankind searches history for answers to the basic questions for every person: From whence have we come? What is the reason for the things that happen? Where are we going? History itself gives no answers. The answers to these questions depend on the philosophy of history that each man has: whether it is based on the knowledge of God or on the opinions of man. In this discussion we will first examine some of the answers that men have given to these questions, and then discuss and try to formulate some of the principles of a Christian philosophy of history.

II. The Evolutionary Theory of the Origin of Man

Secular historians are generally agreed on the origins of man: that "history" extends far into the distant past and that "prehistoric" extends many times further into the past to the time that the earth was formed from an exploding star or a condensing nebula or some similar natural phenomenon. We need not discuss here the subject of evolution since the general outline is fairly well known and the details can better be the subject of a separate study. We do want to mention a few of the consequences of belief in this theory since they have a bearing on our present discussion. Evolution, of course, presupposes a development of mankind from some early primitive state to his present highly civilized position. Given the fact of a civilized culture existing about two thousand years before Christ, the evolutionist must assume a period of many thousands of years before this time for man to develop the intelligence and social and mechanical aptitudes to produce such a culture. Since no one can say how long it takes man to develop from a cave-dwelling anthropoid to a civilized human being, this creates problems for the historian who wants to know the exact time that certain events occurred. It is this problem that leads to the many discrepancies in the dates given for ancient history.

Evolution also teaches a progression in the history of the world not only from simple to complex but also from "lower" to "higher". This teaching involves both an explanation of the origins of the earth and an interpretation of the history of the world. This means that all of the events of the past are simply rungs on the ladder of time upon which man has now ascended part way and will continue to ascend until the world ends in a chaos created by
either man or nature. As we shall see, this results in a variety of different ways of explaining the progress and purpose of history.

The teachings of evolution also imply a particular way of judging the importance of man. The man who crawled out of the primeval slime is a great deal different from the man that was created in the image of God, and who now bears the image of Satan. Evolutionary man lives for a brief time on earth and satisfies his biological drives or maybe even strives for the ideal of social equality, self-expression, or peace on earth and then dissolves into eternal dust.

III. Naturalistic Theories of History

It is generally on the question of the causes and meaning of events that most secular historians differ. In ancient times people believed that all events were caused by their gods. If they wanted rain for their crops, they simply had to appeal to the particular god involved and they would be supplied with rain. On the other hand, if they displeased their gods, they could expect prompt disaster to overtake them. The evil in the world was the work of the wicked gods who would sometimes scatter disasters indiscriminately on good and bad alike. Since ancient times men have adopted a number of "natural" explanations for events. Generally, historians adopt one of three naturalistic explanations or a combination of these: the geographic, the "great men" idea, or the economic.

A junior high textbook expresses the geographic interpretation of history in this manner: "In a sense one might even say that history is the story of how men have reacted and adjusted themselves to their environment." The geographic interpretation of history sees the major forces that cause events in the operations of mountains and plains, fertile soils and deserts, rivers and seas. An extreme form of this position is expressed by Lombroso who maintains that revolutions usually occur on limestone formations. Mason has worked out an entire system based on this idea in which he finds that prophets and poets come from mountains, artists from riverbanks, and monotheism from the desert. Von Treitschke, a German historian, finds a lack of artistic development in the Swiss due to the influence of the overpowering mountains, while the lower mountains of his own country are ideal for the production of poets and artists. Grant Allen sums up the geographic position in this way, "the differences between one nation and another ultimately depend... simply and solely upon physical circumstances to which they are exposed."

We recognize, of course, that the geography of a certain area is important to an understanding of its history. It is important that the Phoenicians developed their civilization on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea instead of the Arabian Desert. Nevertheless, to say that the geographic factors are the sole or even the most important factors in the history of a people is entirely wrong. Even when they recognize a human factor, as most of them do, they are still far from the basic factor of history which is the counsel of God.

The economic interpretation of history has been described as follows: "The key to history is asserted to be man’s economic production and consequent antagonisms. Naturally such a view rests to no small degree upon a geographical view of history. The explanation of social institutions and morality is to be found in the fact that nature apparently is more willing to provide inhabitants than inhabitable areas, hungry mouths than food, and cold and heat than fuel and shade. Relative economic scarcity is therefore the incentive to progress and in the effort to solve the problems which arise from such scarcity history is said to emerge.

"The intermediary between the limitations of nature and the development of human civilization is declared to be
social antagonism. The disproportion between human wants and the means of satisfying them results in an attempt to subdue and to establish with nature a harmony which did not at first exist. Out of this lack of harmony between man and nature emerges, however, disharmony between man and man. By this principle of antagonism not only is property explained, but the conflict between the individual and the group, out from which morality emerges, as well as the conflict between classes in society from which comes the state.”

One of the best-known exponents of the economic interpretation of history is Engels. He summarizes his view in this statement: “that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into classes against one another.” Engels along with Karl Marx adopted the economic interpretation of history and combined it with the teaching of the German philosopher Hegel to form the doctrine of dialectical materialism. They believed that historical progress occurred by means of an economic thesis that developed in opposition to an economic antithesis. The thesis and the antithesis eventually combine into a synthesis which becomes the thesis for the next cycle. For example, they believed that in the medieval times the landlord (the thesis) was opposed to the merchant (the antithesis) and that these eventually combined to form bourgeois society (the synthesis). The bourgeois society then becomes the thesis which is opposed by the proletariat, the antithesis, and these combine to produce communism, the synthesis.

Although most historians in this country reject the system of Engels and Marx, they do place a great deal of emphasis on an economic interpretation of history. While it is true that one cannot understand the history of the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia without recognizing the struggle between those that had the fertile land and those that did not, or the history of the United States in the last century without recognizing the struggle between the employer and the employee in the rise of the labor unions, this is not and cannot be the only or even the major factor in the understanding of history. The explanation of history as the operation of economic forces is the attempt of unbelieving man to deny the operation of the Providence of God.

A third view of history that is held by some historians is the “great men” theory. This view holds that history is mainly shaped by a few men who have had more influence or ability than the rest of mankind. This view is expressed by Carlyle, “the history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the history of great men who have worked there.” The study of history, in this view, is primarily the study of the biographies of the most influential men. They are believed to be the makers and shapers of history. France today is the work of men like Rousseau or Napoleon and the history of the United States is shaped by men like Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln.

In recent years this idea has resolved itself into a discussion of whether social situations produce the man who is the embodiment of the situation or whether the man determines the character of the situation. The majority are on the side of those that emphasize the social situation.

From the point of view of a Christian philosophy of history this discussion is entirely meaningless. That men have a part to play in the history of the world, we accept as obvious; that they are ultimate makers and shapers of the history of the world, we deny. We can no more say that men are the makers of history than we can say that the hammer and saw are the
designers of the building.

IV. "Spiritual" Interpretations of History

Some philosophers of history, while recognizing that geography, economics, and "great men" are important in history maintain that these are secondary factors and posit some kind of "spiritual" force in history. An example of this kind of idea is that of the philosopher Hegel, whose famous dialectic became the basis for Marxism. While Marx taught that the basis of history is the economic conflict between social classes, Hegel taught that the basic conflict was one of ideas. He believed that the important force in history was something that he called the World Spirit. History, according to him, was the record of the struggle of the absolute idea to impose itself upon the world scene. The struggle of pros and cons would ultimately result in a world that was the embodiment of divine reason. The dominating principle in history becomes an abstract idea, the social mind, the Weltgeist.

While the system of Hegel is pretty much ignored today, many historians do teach some kind of "idealism". "History is...the mass of men and women, like ourselves seeking....to realize in the midst of the process from impersonal to the personal, their own spiritual capacities in the adventure, not always simple or easy, of actual living."8 Others may see in history the struggle for democracy, the struggle to realize the importance of the individual, or the struggle for human "rights". All of these teachings of "idealism" ignore the work of God in history and the principles taught in the Word of God.

Some secular writers profess to find "spiritual" forces in history. To some these "spiritual" forces are the beliefs—any beliefs—that the people of a particular civilization may hold. "I believe that the main factors in the political and economic development of any society are its general view of life and system of values."9 To others, these spiritual forces are in the creative human personality. "The spiritual interpretation of history, accordingly, must be found in the discovery of spiritual forces cooperating with geographic and economic to produce a general tendency toward conditions which are truly personal. And these conditions will not be found in generalizations concerning metaphysical entities such as the older psychologists assumed, but in the activities of worthwhile individuals finding self-expression in social relations for the ever more complete subjection of physical nature to human welfare."10 We must recognize that these references to "spiritual" forces in history are humanistic and ungodly. While speaking of a spiritual force in history, these writers explicitly deny the existence of God and the work of God in history.

V. The Goal of History

Although history is primarily concerned with the past, most historians like to use history as a means of seeing into the future. They would like to find in the past some kind of goal for the future, or at least to see the direction in which history is moving. There are some who see in history a normative past (usually it is the "golden age" of Greece) which they strive to recreate in the future. Most people today, however, believe in a natural law of inevitable progression. (This is sometimes made conditional: if our civilization does not destroy itself.) The proponents of this idea point to the "progress" of mankind from the caveman to modern civilization and project this "progress" into the future. In the eighteenth century, when the idea of progress was first stated, it was believed that nature would inevitably promote this progress itself. Now it is generally believed that man, society, and government, have to work to secure this progress.

The goal of this progress varies with different philosophers and historians. For
the Marxist the goal of history is the ultimate triumph of the proletariat that will redeem the world and suppress all other classes. For others the goal of history is the establishment of democratic government in all nations, the establishment of a world-wide government, economic equality among all people, social equality among all people, self-realization of each individual, or peace—or all of these. One current textbook concludes in this way, "The poet Tennyson once wrote of a time when 'the war drum throbbed no longer and the battle flags were furled, in the Parliament of Man and the Federation of the World.' Can we make such a vision a reality?" 11

Some so-called Christian writers are also carried away by this vision of a brighter future. They speak of a universal kingdom based on a common brotherhood of man and a universal fatherhood of God. Others see a time when the whole world will be dominated by the Church. A few even look for a time when all men will serve God and the Kingdom of God will be established upon earth. They feel that the business of the Christian is to extend his influence through all worldly institutions and to strive to bring all men to Christ.

We only need to say one thing about these beliefs concerned with the goal of history: the Word of God does not teach any such thing. In fact, the Word of God teaches quite the opposite. We will speak of the Christian goal of history later.

This, then, is the way that the worldly historians have attempted to answer the basic questions of history. They all agree that the origins of history lie in the dim past when man evolved from some lower form of life. They see the major causes of history in many different factors: economic, geographic, biographical, philosophical, or "spiritual". Some emphasize one factor to the near exclusion of all others, while others prefer a multiple hypothesis which emphasizes one or the other in different events. Nearly all see the goal of history in an inevitable progression to some future time when the evils of the present will disappear in the arrival of a better world.

VI. Principles of a Christian Philosophy of History

The Christian philosophy of history is based upon the following principles:

1. "History is the temporal revelation of the counsel of God with respect to all things beginning with creation and ending with the realization of God's purpose in the new creation." 12 God's counsel is eternal and unchangeable; it is dependent only upon His own sovereign will. It alone determines all the events of history. "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isa. 46:9, 10) 13

This leads to the following conclusions:

a. History is a unity. Each element in the study of history is understandable only in terms of the whole. There are no random or irrelevant events.

b. The events of history can be interpreted only in terms of God's counsel which transcends history. History is not self-explanatory. It can be interpreted only by means of the Word of God, for in His Word God has revealed His counsel.

2. God controls and directs the affairs of men by His Providence. "We believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment..." 14

a. Geographic, economic, and social factors, as well as men, are the means that God uses, through His Providence, to control and
direct the events of history.
b. This is not to say that the understanding of geographic, economic, and social factors and of the men on history is unimportant. Nor do we intend to say that history is unpredictable. God usually accomplishes His purpose through earthly means. Further, God limits Himself to certain laws in His rule over the earth. For example, the means that God used to bring about the fall of the Roman Empire included economic difficulties, social disintegration, and foolish and wicked policies of its rulers. Also, if a nation today follows unwise fiscal policies, we can reasonably expect that nation to decline.

3. The history of mankind is the story of active opposition to God. When man fell in the first disobedience, he lost the image of God, i.e. he lost the ability to know God and to serve him in righteousness and holiness. As the image-bearer of God he retains his rational and moral faculties but he uses these faculties in active and implacable opposition to God. Rom. 1:18-23.

a. The idea that natural man is searching for God is a delusion that perverts the understanding of history.
b. The difference between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent begins at the Fall and continues throughout all of history. The difference between them is an absolute difference. As history develops the character of this difference becomes more distinct.
c. There is a constant development of sin throughout history. This development of sin is closely related to the understanding of the creation and the subjugation of its powers. As man learns to understand the creation and to use its powers, his ability to commit sin increased.

4. The purpose of God in history is to glorify Himself. God has chosen to glorify Himself in the creation of a chosen people to whom He displays His power, His wisdom, His mercy, His justice, and His glory so that they in turn may praise Him. He does this in displaying the wonder of creation, in demonstrating His absolute control over all the affairs of men, and above all in Christ who bridges the infinite chasm that lies between the perfection of the kingdom of heaven and the evils of mankind in a cursed creation.

a. The peculiar paradox of history lies in the fact that the goal of history is accomplished only when history is finished.
b. This goal is accomplished by the infinite power of God, Who uses man as His instruments.
c. Clearly the history of the Church is of the greatest importance. The history of the Church includes the gathering of God’s people from all nations, the growth of knowledge and understanding of things pertaining to God and the Kingdom of Heaven, and an increased distinction between the Church and the world. All nations, cultures, and events contribute to the development of God’s Church. “But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel. Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine...For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy
seed from the east, and gather thee from the west... Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.'15

5. God carries out His purpose in history through Christ. The heavens and the earth were created by God through Christ. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." All of ancient history looks forward to the incarnation of Christ, and all history since His coming looks forward to His return. Throughout all of history God reveals Himself through Christ. Finally, the goal of history is fulfilled in the new creation when the whole earth is renewed in Christ, and the whole Church is glorified with Him. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory..."16

VII. Patterns in History

Now with these principles in mind, let's look at the history of mankind briefly and point out a few of the important patterns that the Christian historian must see in history.

Immediately after the Fall God spoke to the serpent. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed..." Here the lines of the battle of history are drawn. This is the battle between Israel and the nations, between the Church and the world, between Christ and the Antichrist. The lines are drawn and the battle is joined, which continues without truce or armistice to the end of time. Sometimes it is a physical battle displayed in the attacks of the heathen nations against Israel, in the persecutions of the early church, and in the horrors of the Inquisition. Often it is an ideological battle of the church against idol worship, Arianism, Mariolatry, Deism, skepticism, or modernism. The church and the world are irreconcilably opposed to each other. As history progresses, the struggle becomes greater and the differences stand out more clearly.

The confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel is another event that sets the pattern for history. As a result of this event we find throughout history not only lingual differences but also cultural competition, racial animosity, and political rivalry. These produce division in the forces of the Antichrist. History records the gradual closing of that breach. When this breach is finally healed, the kingdom of the Antichrist can begin, and the final assault upon the Church can also begin. Many events in history point to the healing of the breach of Babel: the Roman Empire, the political-religious unity imposed by the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, the imperialism of the modern national states, and the more recent movement toward political, cultural, and economic amalgamation.

Another pattern that we can see in history is the increase in knowledge about God and about the requirements that He makes of us. In the Old Testament we can see how God gradually revealed more about Himself, about His covenant, and about the Christ whom He had promised. The prophets played a large part in the increase of that knowledge especially in interpreting for the people the meaning of events as they happened. But in the time since the coming of Christ the church continues to grow in knowledge. There is the growth of doctrine in the writings of Christian theologians and in the confessions of the church. There is a growth in knowledge about the world through
which we may see more clearly the power and the wisdom of God. An interesting and significant fact about the growth of knowledge and doctrine in the Church is that they always grow as a reaction against heresy and worldly ideologies. For example, we can see that our knowledge of the Trinity was increased as a result of the Arian heresy. The study of the rise of capitalism results in a better understanding of our position in the world as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We can see in history the spread of the preaching of the gospel to all nations. We are told that before the end of time the gospel will be preached to all nations. The increase in scientific knowledge to improve communications contributes to this spread of the gospel. Through this spread of the preaching of the gospel God gathers His people from all nations. We know that by the end of time God will have saved every one of His elect people.

Throughout history there is a continuous development of secular culture. Man finds out more and more of the facts about the creation and about the uses of the materials of the creation. He is able gradually to put in subjection the forces of creation. Natural man uses this knowledge to deny God and to glorify man, and he uses the forces of nature to promote evil. The sin of man is in the interpretation and use of the facts that he discovers.

We find from a study of history in the light of the Scriptures that peoples and nations commit a fundamental sin when they begin to claim their own self-sufficiency, when they say that the things that they have accomplished are the works of their own hands; and when they claim themselves to have the key that will solve the problem of man's inhumanity to man. The basic sin of mankind is, in one word, pride. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness." 17

These observations are, of course, very general and certainly not exhaustive of all of the patterns of development to be found in history. They are included in order to give a few brief glimpses into a field that needs and deserves a great deal more study than it has received among Christians in the past.

VIII. Concluding Remarks:

It must be remembered that the study of the Word of God is basic to a proper interpretation of history. The church of the Old Testament had a tremendous feeling for the importance of history. They were constantly admonished to tell their children about the things that God had done in the past. They also had a continuous commentary on events supplied by the prophets. The principles that they proclaimed hold for all of history. Also, we can find in several places previews of the entire New Dispensation. Such previews may be found in the prophecy of Daniel, in the words of Christ in Matthew 24, and in the entire book of Revelation.

In the study of history we are constantly required to make judgments upon men, nations and civilizations. The basis of these judgments must always be the moral law of God. The law of God is one constant in the change and flux of history. "The moral law, however, with its multiple corollaries, as found throughout the Scriptures, is considered to be universal, not merely Jewish or Christian. Its precepts apply to everyone in all situations and, hence, are a sure basis for judging men, their ideas, and the institutions they create. It supplies the Christian historian with a basis for judging civilizations such as that of the Incas of Peru, which never made contact with the Hebrew-Christian tradition, as well as for judging the political, economic, and
religious practices of Western European civilization, which is generally called Christian, though perhaps dishonoring the name.

"When a Christian historian stands on this moral Sinai, he likewise sees beyond the traditions of his own country, of his own racial group, or of what is called the Christian world. He speaks, rather, from the perspective of the Kingdom of God. He recognizes that his moral judgments must fall equally on Augustine's Rome, on Calvin's Geneva, and on his own United States or Canada. He recognizes that even though God seems silent on the particular form of government, of society, or of the economic system He requires, each must be judged by his moral law, and none can be equated with the Kingdom of God."

Note that the perspective of the Christian historian is the perspective of the Kingdom of God. Let us by all means avoid the shallow chauvinism of so many current history textbooks. Our perspective for understanding, for interpretation, and for judgment must be that of the eternal kingdom of God.

Let us also remember that many things remain to be revealed to us only in the world to come. Sometimes we feel as that wisest of all men did, "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Prov. 20:24)

FOOTNOTES

1 Smith, Muzzey, Lloyd, World History, Ginn & Co., 1955
3 The persons named and opinions expressed in this paragraph are described by Mathews, The Spiritual Interpretation of History, Harvard University Press, 1917, pp. 12-16.
4 ibid page 17
5 Engels, Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, p. 19.
8 Mathew, S., op. cit. p. 198.
10 Mathew, S., op. cit. p. 34.
12 Rev. H. Hanco, History, notes on the principles of teaching history, written and duplicated for the Educational Committee of Hope Prot. Ref. Chr. School. Several ideas for this section were derived from this source.
13 See also Ps. 33:11; Eph. 1:11; Ps. 115:3.
14 Confession of Faith, Art. 13. See also Calvin's Institutes I-V-I, Prov. 21:1; Dan. 4:35; Heb. 1:3.
15 Isaiah 43:1,3,4,5,7. See also Deut. 32:7-9.
16 Ephesians 1:10-12.
17 Ezek. 31:10,11. This is a theme that runs through all of Scripture. For a few more references see Isa. 10; Rev. 18:7,8; Ezek. 28:6-9; Dan. 5:20.

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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIN IN THE PREDILUVIAN WORLD**

by Peter Vander Schaaf

I. Introduction

A. Why study the development of sin?

We are assured in Holy Scripture that the people of God are more than conquerers in Christ. This means not simply that we have the victory over sin, the Devil, and all his forces, but also that all these must serve the salvation of Christ's Church. This is because Christ is from eternity the only begotten Son of God. God's people, the Church, are from eternity fellow heirs with Christ in the New Heavens and the New Earth. Therefore God so orders all of history that all things, sin and the devil included, work together to bring about the salvation of the Church of Christ. All things work together to bring Christ and His people into their inheritance.

It often does not seem this way. It often seems as though the Devil and sin reign supreme with nothing at all to oppose them. During these times the Church seems small and insignificant. The Word of God is laughed at and scorned as foolishness. But however it may seem, God is always supreme in His creation. God always has Christ and His Church first in His eternal counsel. He always holds sin and Satan in subjection to them.

Why then study a part of the world's history from the point of view of the development of sin? There are a couple of good reasons. First, the study of what man has done in God's creation is the study of sin as it is manifested in man's deeds and thoughts. It is important for the child of God to understand how sin manifests itself as natural man develops worldly culture, as he tries to put God out of his mind in order to serve the creature instead of the Creator. Second, it is essential that the child of God understand how sin is used by God to save His people. Sin, as it manifests itself in the world and in God's people themselves, forces the