

Andrew Fuller
CENTER *for* BAPTIST STUDIES
at THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

God, Time and History

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CONTENTS

God, Time and History

7

GOD, TIME AND HISTORY

It has become fashionable to claim that “history has nothing to do with dates.” On the contrary, history is *all* about dates, because it is coming to grips with the fourth dimension of human experience, time. The goal of history is to tell the story of the human family over time. The historian has the crucial task of helping each generation to find its bearings. Just as loss of memory in an individual is a psychiatric defect calling for medical treatment, so, too, any community which has no social memory is suffering from a dangerous illness which needs urgent treatment.

The fourth dimension

It is important to remember this when anyone—politician, social activist or church reformer—calls for a radical new start, a complete break with the past. That person might just as well cry for the moon. No clean break with the past is possible, just because each generation is what it is as a result of the subtle and delicate influences of previous generations. Frederick Harrison, the nineteenth-century liberal historian, invited his readers to “suppose a race of men whose minds, by a paralytic stroke of fate, had suddenly been deadened to every recollection, to whom the whole world was new.” “Can we,” he asked, “imagine a condition of such helplessness, confusion and misery?” Many centuries earlier the Roman writer, Cicero, said that not to know what took place before you were born was “to remain forever a child.”

Bertrand Russell claimed that one of the great faults of the twentieth century was that it limited itself by a “parochialism in time,” that is deeming important only what engaged the minds and ambitions of the present day. And that is true. The liberal historian, Lord Acton made the same point when he said: “History must be our deliverer not only from the undue influence of other times, but from the undue influence of our own, from the tyranny of environment and the pressures of the air

we breathe.”

History then has to do with the study of the “otherness” of the past. It involves trying to allow that otherness to speak to us. If we are to be liberated from the confines of what we call “present,” we must try to see life with the eyes of other centuries than our own. In that we embrace the past in the present. Accordingly, we must allow the people of the past to pose their own questions rather than imposing upon them our own fascinations, hopes and neuroses. Only in this way will the study of the past open up to us a larger present.

However, for history to be coherent, historians must also accept that there is a valid continuity in the human story, for only as this is recognised will the actions and the records of the past be capable of comprehension in the present. There has to be a measure of common understanding notwithstanding the need to appreciate vital differences. Because of this the historian needs to have a commitment to identifying both change and continuity within the human story.

Essentially this happens as a study of the panorama of the past gives us an understanding of the rich diversity of human actions, hopes and predicaments. History is about the study of people. It is a false history that desires for itself general laws and theories of science and steamrolls the complexities of human personality into uniform categories. We need to guard against a determinist writing of history which makes humankind into puppets of the impersonal forces of economics, class and politics. This is crucial, for it was for the sake of individual men and women that the Word of God was made flesh and came to dwell among us. History without persons is nothing.

Belief grounded in history

Christianity is essentially an historical religion. God reveals himself to his people not in the issuing of a series of doctrinal statements, nor in the articulation of theoretical studies, but in his actions, in the outworking of a story of relationships. Moses instructed the fathers of Israel to have a story ready as an answer to their children’s enquiries: “When your son asks you in time to come, What is the meaning of the precepts, statutes and laws which the Lord our God has given us you shall say...”. And then, once more, the story of the Exodus was to be recounted. In this way the great Old Testament story was told: God’s calling of the patriarchs and his shaping of their lives, God’s graciousness to his people in Egypt and in the wilderness, under David’s kingship, in Solomon’s cultured civilization, in exile in Babylon or fighting under Maccabean leadership. It is all part of the same story that continued after the life and

death of Jesus with the story of the birth of the church, of persecuted Christians in Rome, with the growth and expansion of the New Israel, the life of the church, and yet with its constant need to be reformed and to regain the vision of the apostles.

The mysteries of the gospel cannot be confined within a series of neat factual statements. We must be careful not to mistake the geometry of orthodoxy—important as it is—for the poetry of the gospel. This is poetry that has life and beat, the heartbeat of the Spirit's pulse, as he energizes the people of God in their dynamic journey through history. Regrettably this can be a story of disobedience, those stories in Scripture and in the history of the church and indeed in our own lives when we have resisted the Spirit's urgings and have gone our own way. That certainly has to be recognised but alongside the story of the people of God in obedience keeping pace with the divine purpose.

This one story that covers both the Bible and church history has a focus. The theologian, Oscar Cullmann, puts it well:

If we consider the Christian faith from the point of view of time we should say that the scandal of the Christian faith is to believe that these few years [the years which embrace the life, death and resurrection of Jesus], which, for secular history have no more, and no less, significance than other periods, are the centre and norm of the "totality of time." But the New Testament claims no less than this: "When all things began, the Word already was, but the Word became flesh, he came to dwell among us and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

The birth of Jesus, the Christian church argues, is reality breaking in on time, the real and the true breaking in upon our shadowy world of uncertain vision. In Jesus' life on earth, the scales are removed from our eyes and we glimpse ultimate truth. This so affects us that all other experience must be judged in relation to this and to this alone. This is the point of reference which makes sense of the whole riddle of human experience.

So, the climax of this most important story comes, not at the end but in the middle—in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Here belief is grounded in history, for these are not legends but historical events. That is why Pontius Pilate rather than any of the apostles or saints is mentioned in the early creeds of the church, for here the world of faith and the world of history meet: Pontius Pilate, right outside the family of faith, becomes the check-point for the authenticity of Christian

claims. The Messiah is not some legendary figure of conjecture or speculation, but became a human being in time and place in Jesus of Nazareth.

What does the Story mean?

If Christianity is an historical religion, it follows that all history is God's history. The succession of the years is not merely an unravellable tangle of events without general meaning. History witnesses to a divine purpose, and moves from a divine creative beginning, through all the diversity of human experience, towards a divinely appointed goal, what Charles Kingsley called "the strategy of God." Indeed, it was the Jews and the Christians who introduced the idea of time moving towards a goal as against arbitrary or cyclic views which had previously prevailed. The Christian has an overall scheme of reference by which to judge the particulars of history.

Events taken in isolation, lack a flavour which can only be appreciated when they are seen in relationship with other events. The historian's far-reaching vision can be compared with the lean and thin perception of the journalist, little more than twenty-four hours deep. But history, set in the context of a theology of "beginnings" and "ends," enables the Christian to see something of the true "thickness" of events. He or she can see them not only in their contemporary setting, not only in their setting in human history, but in relation to "In the beginning God," and "I will come again."

In tracing God's continued activity in history, however, care must be taken to avoid naïve arguments about power—as if the great or successful battalions in church history somehow prove the truth of Christianity. One church historian has written: "The glibness with which people still trace what they are pleased to call the hand of God in history is enough to make unregenerate historians sneer, and to shock those of us whose religion teaches them that the ways of God are past finding out, and that you cannot draw morals from the fall of towers in Siloam or from the success or failure of pious rebels in Galilee."

God's work is a secret work. Honesty demands that when we look at a history textbook we admit that it is often difficult to discern there the finger of God. Sometimes we may think we see him at work, but for the most part the story reads in soiled and earthy terms leading too easily to the exclusion of God from the story. It may be easier to recognize God at work in the life of Augustine of Hippo or Francis of Assisi, in the Evangelical Revival or in the heroic devotion of a Mother Teresa: much more difficult to see discover him at work in the Black Death or the dropping of the A-Bomb on Hiroshima. But it is wrong to confine God to the pleasant and the congenial. The chorus in T. S. Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral* takes this wider view of God's

activity in history. Contemplating all the pain and suffering of human existence, they conclude:

...only in retrospection selection,
We say that was the day.
The critical moment
That is always now and here.
Even now in sordid particulars
The eternal design may appear.

The shadows as much as the sunlight, the agony as much as the ecstasy, are part of the divine purpose. In the tapestry of time, the hand of God weaves as many sombre skeins as bright-hued silks. In our perceptions of history we see only the reverse side of things: with all the muddle there presented of loose strands, back-stitching and over-worked patterns. We may see something of the design as it appears on the right side, but we never see it as it actually is: the clarity and beauty of the design as it appears face up are as yet denied to us.

So, Christians both know, and yet do not know, the meaning of history. On the one hand, they have particular insight into the nature of history because they know the end of the story—and therefore can gauge the true depth or thickness of events. But at the same time they do not, and cannot, know the full *meaning* of the story.

Many secular historians find it hard to live with this continuing necessity for ignorance, for it seems to suggest professional incompetence. As a result, some strive overmuch to account for everything, so that they become like gods, manipulating the past by their rival theories and hypotheses. Christian historians see the search for such total explanation as impertinent, for this is the time of God's secret work. Thus, although Christians believe that God is the Lord of history in all its totality, they do not now pretend to know the plan of God, and cannot, therefore, construct a pattern of history upon that basis. Only at the end of time, when we are allowed to view history from God's viewpoint, will we fully see how exactly the hand of God has been at work in the process.

Does church history matter?

The Christian not only claims that all history is God's history, but that within history the Holy Spirit has not left himself without witness in any generation. This is what is meant by the word "catholic," used in its primary sense: the presence of the living

Christ recognized, adored and obeyed, securing the catholicity of the church in every age, granting it its proper wholeness. At the beginning of the Christian era the Holy Spirit worked through the apostolic community. As that community responded to the passing of the years, to the pressures of the society in which it was set, and to the emergence of dangerous trends amongst its own members, so it both produced written records and defined its doctrine.

To make the Bible stand over against tradition at this period would be entirely false. The two are one. Scripture is the tradition of the apostles as committed to writing by them, or by those closely associated with them. But at the same time, our knowledge of the apostolic church depends almost entirely upon the record we have in the New Testament. Scripture is the vital source for our knowledge of the apostolic tradition and it is within that tradition that Scripture is fashioned and recorded and bequeathed to the church.

But from the middle of the second century AD the word “tradition” comes to have a secondary meaning, namely the teaching of the early Fathers of the church. At that period tradition was still regarded principally as an interpretation and unravelling of Scripture, but it gradually came to stand over against Scripture. At the Council of Trent (1545–1563), Scripture and tradition were defined as two distinct authorities. But Protestants were very clear that the Bible “contained all things necessary to salvation.” That is why Luther insisted on *sola scriptura* alongside *sola fide*.

But what of the relationship between Scripture and tradition today? Cullman restates the question: “The problem of Scripture and tradition concerns the place we give to the period of the church with reference to the period of the incarnation.” The period of the church is crucial to Christian understanding, but equally clearly it is not “the period of the incarnate Christ and of his apostolic eye-witnesses.” It is because Paul was an *eye-witness* of the risen Lord that his writings stand in a quite different category from, for example, those of Augustine, however important Augustine may be as a theologian. Cullmann rightly wrote:

The fixing of the Christian canon of Scripture means that *the church itself*, at a given time, traced a clear and definite line of demarcation between the period of the apostles and that of the church, between the time of foundation and that of construction ... between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition. ... By establishing the principle of a canon the church recognized that from that time the tradition was no longer a criterion of truth. ... It declared implicitly that from that time every subsequent tradition must be submitted to the

control of the apostolic tradition.

Where is the church in history?

If it has been the error of the Roman church since the Council of Trent to magnify the authority of tradition, independent of the authority of the Bible, modern Protestants have sometimes been guilty of the opposite error—of neglecting tradition altogether. It is dangerous to suggest that the Holy Spirit was inactive in a particular period of history. Some of the Protestant historians of the nineteenth century preferred not to admit that in the medieval period the Spirit was at work in the mainstream of Catholic faith and devotion. Instead they attempted to trace the work of the Holy Spirit from the time of Constantine to the Reformation in an “apostolic succession” of heresies. Some of these we properly regard as reform movements, often challenging institutional corruption, but others were heretical by any standard, very often in their Christology or their theology of evil. Similarly, the claims of a number of modern deviations from Christianity (for example, the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses) that they, in the latter years, have received a special revelation that promotes their supporters to the numbers of the elect, but excludes all others, must be rejected. Quite apart from other factors, they err in denying the Spirit’s activity throughout history.

The same objection must also be made with regard to all attempts to restore “the primitive church.” Continuity of spiritual experience must not be so easily rejected for there is in history an apostolic succession of faith, devotion and spiritual response, if not of bishops. Too many Protestants have adopted an unnecessarily negative attitude to tradition, and have therefore failed to inform their faith by the study of the story of the church. It is said that the Acts of the Apostles are more correctly described as the “Acts of the Holy Spirit.” But it is all church history which should be written under that title and be appreciated as such. Any Christian movement which neglects this story loses the dimension of solidarity with Christ’s church in all ages. The slogan “Back to the New Testament!” represents only part of the truth. “Onwards with the Spirit!” is the other half of this truth; together such injunctions make up the authority of the Reformers—which was always that of “Word *and* Spirit.” It is the same Spirit who inspired the Bible who is alive in the church, creating the tradition and bringing afresh to every age the authority of the once-given Word.

Spirit and structure

Pentecost is the story of the outpouring of the Spirit upon waiting disciples. Such was the force of that experience that the structure of synagogue and temple were made

obsolete in the worship of the new Israel. But, equally, the coming of the Spirit not only renewed the personal lives of individuals, it created a new community of shared life and work, new fellowship in the mission of a gospel to be proclaimed. And this new community was to be of strategic importance. For, called into being by the Spirit, it was also to be his witness and his agent in the world. Life in the apostolic church consisted of an interplay of Spirit, community and witness. In one sense church history is the story of the struggle to keep those three elements in proper relationship. It is the story of the tension between the church as God's people, born of the Spirit, and its visible, human organization. To describe this relationship people have often spoken of the "church visible" and the "church invisible." The "visible church" is always related to a given culture. As part of history and society it inevitably has shortcomings. Yet, at the same time, however poor its life and its witness, it points to the greater reality of the "invisible church," "the church as it really is before God" (Calvin).

It is tempting to be impatient with the "visible church," to reject its services, and call for direct dependence upon the promptings of the Spirit. The record of church history is full of critics of church structures and organization. But church history also indicates that structures can never be wholly avoided. Try as they might to escape from the notion of the "visible church," reformers have always failed in their attempt. Luther's own biography is a classic example of this. His book, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), has been called "the great renunciation" of the institutions of medieval Christianity. But once he had made his protest, Luther had the painful experience of re-creating church structures to meet the continuing religious needs of Protestants in Germany.

Accordingly, structures can be created that allow the Spirit freedom, through which, and not against which, he may work. We cannot do without organization—though equally it must not take command. All too easily the historian can confuse the two, or concentrate on structures to the exclusion of all else, because this is easier to explain and describe. Even good structures can outlive their usefulness and so must constantly stand under judgement. The people of God must never forget that they are a pilgrim people who have "no abiding city" in time. Throughout the history of the church a variety of movements has protested against static religion. So, over against the history of "churches" in the modern period, for example, the church historian will have to look at the evangelical *movement*, the Oxford *movement*, the liturgical *movement*, the charismatic *movement*, the ecumenical *movement* and the liberation *movement*. In so far as such movements are of the Spirit, institutional churches withstand them at their peril.

History's two harvests

Jesus told two parables about the harvest of time: the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and the tares. The second is perhaps the more appropriate for our understanding of history. An older generation saw things differently. They took the parable of the sower as their model. They saw the seed ripening, cultivated by the church and Christian missions, to bear varying quantities of fruit. Liberals hoped that, when all defects of environment had been removed, society would improve; when education and equal opportunities had been made available to all, then misery and crime would be banished. It was left to the Marxists to re-introduce the element of conflict and tragedy into the story: they reminded Christians that evil, too, is a seed capable of bearing fruit, thirty-, sixty- and a hundred-fold. And so, we come to the parable of the wheat and tares—which speaks of two harvests—a harvest of good and of bad.

Thinking about the two parables perhaps helps us to deal with a series of questions that Paul Tillich poses about the history of the church:

What answer can we give when our children ask about the child in the manger while in some parts of the world all children 'from two years old and under' have died and are dying, not by order of Herod, but by the ever-increasing cruelty of war and its results in the Christian era, and by the decrease in the power of imagination of Christian people? Or what can we answer the Jews when the remnants of the Jewish people, returning from death camps, worse than anything in Babylon, cannot find a resting place anywhere on the surface of the earth, and certainly not among the great Christian nations? Or what can we, Christian and non-Christian, who have realised that the fruit of centuries of Christian technical and social civilization is the imminent threat of a complete and universal self-destruction of humanity? And what answer can we give to ourselves when we look at the unhealed and unsaved state of our own lives after the message of healing and salvation has been heard at every Christmas for almost two thousand years?

There is a harvest of tares as well as of wheat, indeed a harvest that sometimes seems to threaten, the very survival of the wheat.

But even this double harvest authenticates the Christian diagnosis of our ambiguous nature, with its impulses for both grief and glory. Sir Herbert Butterfield finds in history evidence of that "serious gravitational pull"—which the Bible calls

sin: “One of the reasons why it is so difficult to secure Utopia in our time or even of a [United Nations] is the fact that no man has yet invented a form of political machinery which the devil would not find a way of exploiting for evil ends.”

So, alongside the harvest of creativity and self-sacrifice, of scientific investigation and social conscience, of mission and spirituality, there is this second harvest. But this is what the Christian faith, centred on the cross, is all about: on the cross, triumph and victory are shot through with rejection, disaster and dereliction. There the true nature of human history stands displayed. The Christian faith does not have to contort itself to embrace the hard facts of history. It admits that the tragedy of history cannot be avoided, but claims there is a power that redeems tragedy. Butterfield finds this one of the rewards of his own study of history:

There is something very moving at times in Negro Spirituals—something which makes me feel that human nature under pressure can reach a creative moment, and find a higher end of life than the mere continuance of material comfort had seemed to offer them. ... It would seem that one of the clearest and most concrete of the facts of history is the fact that men of spiritual resources may not only redeem catastrophe but turn it into a great creative moment.

So the two harvests belong together—the harvest of the wheat is not *despite* the tares, but *because* of them. As it becomes clear that all the pain, rejection and suffering is worthwhile, so history finds its meaning.

Weighing up the evidence

How then does the Christian historian in his study and writing of history deploy such a vision in his scholarly work? The historian must always start with the evidence. Accordingly, he or she needs to start with as rich a diversity of records as they can muster, searching for it sometimes in the most unlikely places. At times the problem will be that little remains; at other times so much is available that a justifiable and satisfying method of sampling has to be devised. The historian must always be ready to admit that the evidence is too incomplete to permit of any confident conclusions. But since history is more of an art than a science it often proceeds by way of reasonable conjecture, rather than by way of unshakeable deduction. The historian will be happiest if his evidence shows a pattern which converges and will be suspicious of any theory that arises out of the study of only one particular type of data alone.

Having examined all the evidence, historians set about writing their accounts. They have to be selective, not in the sense of rejecting that which will not fit their theory, but in excluding the irrelevant and the extraneous. At the same time they need to have an eye for negative evidence: what reasonably could have been expected and has not materialised, for evidence of this kind may add a crucial dimension to the picture, the dog that in the detective story does not bark.

Evaluation

The collecting together of source material must be followed by the all-important task of evaluation. Who is the writer? What do we know about his/her attitude to life? What qualifies them to speak authoritatively about the subject on which they have written? Is this document backed up by other evidence on the subject? And a host of other questions. In particular the historian will examine the document to see if it is consistent with itself. If it is not then it must be suspect.

One judgement is crucial to the historian. Is the material being studied significant simply for the particular situation being investigated, or does it, with other examples, suggest a more general pattern of developments. On the one hand issues of significance are very important, but equally to mistake the eccentric for the typical is a common fault.

Consider, for example, one historian's judgment on the English Victorian home:

The real strength of Evangelicalism lay not in the pulpit nor on the platform but in the home. To those who believe that the typical Victorian sermon was about hell-fire, that the typical Evangelical layman is represented by the father of Sir Edmund Gosse and that the typical Victorian parent was Mr Barrett of Wimpole Street, this may sound surprising. But to judge from memoirs and biographies, the Evangelical families of England were conspicuously happy families and it was in the hearts of Victorian mothers that evangelical piety won the most signal and the most gracious of its triumphs. [Canon Charles Smyth]

As he or she examines the evidence the historian is bound to find disharmonies. But this does not necessarily mean that such evidence is rendered useless. If it reflects different viewpoints about an event it may in fact help to establish that the event really took place. For example, Hitler's guard and chauffeur gave evidence which differed over details concerning the burning of the bodies of Hitler and Eva Braun. But it is

properly argued that their evidence was bound to be different because they viewed the event from different viewpoints. If their evidence had been identical that would have been a sure sign of them being briefed with a particular story. The historian, Hugh Trevor-Roper, shrewdly comments: “the truth of the incident is attested by *the rational discrepancy of the evidence*.” This is a judgement that could be helpfully applied to the study of the New Testament record.

Interpreting the facts

Although the evidence is crucial to the writing of history, evidence without commentary does not constitute history. Nor should history be a bare narrative presented like a set of financial accounts. Historians will rarely be content with a mere description of past actions. Rather they will want to reflect what happened in terms of some kind of an explanation that has depth of meaning. They will want to indicate what the most significant elements in their story were, and by contrast what aspects were of only limited significance. If history were to be limited to those elements which could be agreed by all those engaged in a particular study with machine-like precision, the subject would lose all interest and ability to instruct. What would the discipline be, if, for example, the historian had to limit his account to simply recording that on April 14, 1865, Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth—with no opportunity to draw on his or her wider knowledge of preceding events to suggest the significance of the event, both in relationship to the past and to the future?

Historians may work out their accounts in terms of a number of different patterns of connection. These may, for example, be written in terms of causes and consequences, of development and decline, or of comparisons and contrasts.

Only at this last stage does a description emerge which bears any relationship to what actually happened in the past. The past is more than a collection of documents or articles: for this reason interpretation is crucial to the description. It is not an optional layer of theorizing with which to decorate the superstructure, which can be dispensed with at will. That is to say: history moves not from the facts to a theory or a law, but from the sources, the evidence, to the facts, to a valid reconstruction of past events which must include all the complexity of human psychology.

For the historian, an event can never be confined merely to action. It must always be concerned with action and agent, with all the discussion of motives that this involves. For an account of an action without the agent, without the complexities of mind and emotion, would not reflect any past reality. It would only exist as an analytical abstraction grounded only in the present. History without people is nothing.

So, as they reconstruct the past, historians bring together a variety of elements: a diversity of evidence of different kinds, weighed critically by researchers, who select from it the materials that will help them to construct a pattern of relationships. Finally, they explain this pattern in terms of an interpretative narrative—a story complete with cause and consequence, with the men and women of the past brought to life both as those who shape events, and those who suffer the consequences of the actions of others, a story which arises out of the evidence on the one hand, and out of their experience and imagination on the other.

Can history be objective?

Historians have often debated the extent to which the study of history can, or indeed should, be objective. This is a goal that many judge to be unachievable. Others are not even sure that it is a desirable goal, believing that that over against the values of criticism, detachment and analysis as ways of knowing, the historian must also use such insights as commitment, sympathy and imagination to penetrate the mysteries of the past. One historian advised his students so to read into the historical period they were studying that they could begin to hear the people of the past speaking to them in meaningful encounter.

Accordingly, one attractive way of thinking of historical study is as a meeting-place, a point of rendezvous, where lively conversation with people from the past can take place, not a kind of eternal mortuary, in which king and peasant alike are trapped, each neatly labelled with a confident analysis of both their achievement and their faults. Just because the historian is concerned with encountering real people from past ages and gaining from them what they most can give, certainty will prove elusive. But this is gain and not loss: it is a sign that the encounter is with real people and not merely historical stereotypes—or, more dangerously still, reflections of the historian's own confidences and neuroses. Only history approached in this way has the capacity to increase and deepen human understanding.

The supposed detachment of the historian is rarely what it claims for itself. The historian who claims to be making an objective judgment may simply be imposing his own secular prejudices on his subject. As it has been said, "We cannot see our own ideological spectacles, and because our eyes are protected by them, we do not notice that as we throw our sand against the wind, the wind blows it back again." It is not that a high standard of diligence in pursuing sources or complete rigour in scrutinising them are not important. They are essential. But in themselves they are not enough. Only when the historian's imagination is brought to bear does the past come

alive. Who is the historian, what is his or her make-up? As a colleague once wrote, "Having entered imaginatively into the experience of the nomad, the agriculturalist, the city dweller, having been marked by the sorrows of the persecuted, and having been uplifted by the steadfastness of just men, having striven with Lenin and known the serenity of St Benedict, the historian is constantly recapitulating in his own person the history of man." It is all of this that has to be brought to bear on the historian's mature judgement.

Accordingly, there is a razor-edge division between integrity and prejudice, between doing justice to the sources and justice to one's personality. There can never be any excuse for handling documents casually or sloppily. But in the end the historian has to combine the precision of the scientist with the creativity and humanity of the artist. The historian needs not only all the critical talents that he or she can muster but also those less tangible gifts of personality and experience, empathy and perception, if they are to use all the resources at their disposal for a complete and realistic understanding of the past, a real past inhabited by real men, flesh of our flesh, mind of our mind, with emotions that the historian also possesses. History, if it is to be any worth, must always be written from person to person.

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