

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

THE HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

by W. STANFORD REID

OUR editorial correspondent, Dr. W. Stanford Reid, as a Reformed theologian and University Professor of History, is exceptionally well qualified to deal with the Christian doctrine of history. Nor does he keep his discussion on the theoretical plane; he concludes with some practical observations on the Christian's involvement in history.

THAT biblical Christianity possesses a thoroughly historical outlook none would seem able to deny. To some modern theologians and philosophers of history its historical concepts may manifest a certain naïveté, but that it continually points to the happenings of history as the basis of its teaching would seem clear. It does not distinguish between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, nor does it make a distinction between ordinary history and redemptive history as such. It seems rather to adopt that position that all history is one, and as such provides the bones, sinews and flesh of Christianity itself.

Yet while speaking of history, Christianity also stresses revelation. God acts in and through history, revealing to men not only His creative and providential activity but above everything else His redemptive work. The first few verses of John's Gospel, of Paul's Epistle to the Romans or of the Epistle to the Hebrews sum this up with clarity. But how God moves in history and reveals Himself through history man does not know, nor can he know, for at this point time and eternity meet; and since we do not understand the meaning and nature of eternity, we cannot explain its relation to time or history. This mystery the Christian must leave in the hands of God who alone knows the answer, seeking his understanding of history in and through the record of God's historical revelation: the Bible.

Because of its continual emphasis upon the historical as the sphere of action of the Creator, the Sustainer and Ruler, and the Redeemer, Christianity always assumes or implies, and at times explicitly states, certain things about history as a whole. God in the fullness of His Tri-unity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit having chosen to manifest His sovereign glory in and through history, the Christian cannot but recognize that he looks at history from a particular perspective, for his Christian faith involves a specific view of history. But sometimes he does not see the full impli-

cations of his Christian interpretation of history for himself and for his own day. Therefore, the Christian must repeatedly study the historical implications of his faith, in order that he may view himself and his environment in their true perspective.

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD OVER HISTORY

Although a common view today is that human life, and consequently history, resulted from some stellar accident, such an opinion definitely runs afoul of the Christian's understanding of the matter. To the Christian the origin, plan and development of history derives not from a series of accidents in a basically chance world, but from an eternal, all-inclusive plan and purpose. Thus to the Christian, history continually works out the sovereign counsel of the Tri-une God who from all eternity, according to His purpose, laid down the history's course. While one might recall in support of this idea various proof texts such as Isaiah 45, Ephesians 1: 11 and others, that history is the working out of God's purpose pervades the whole of Christian thought so that to reject it involves the rejection of biblical Christianity itself.

Analysing this understanding a little more carefully, one finds that basic to the idea of history's purpose lies the belief that one may see history's beginning only in God's creation. To fulfil His plan the Tri-une God created all things including space-time, so that history finds its origin not only in God's purpose but also in His action. This means that the Christian may never accept the idea that God depends upon history for an understanding of either Himself or His creatures. No Hegelian "coming to self-consciousness" may enter here for God, knowing all things exhaustively, created according to His own will. Thus man's historical existence had a definite time and place of commencement sovereignly pre-determined and established by God.

Bound up with the assurance that God began history by creation is the conviction that He has not left history to carry on simply by the operation of natural laws that inevitably move forward to some conclusion, either the perfection of man or the ultimate disintegration of the universe. To the Christian, God is not the absentee-landlord of the eighteenth-century deists or of some of the modern philosophers. Nor is He even the "limited god" of others who would make Him a kind of historical corollary of man. Rather He is the One who by His Spirit guides and directs the whole of history to accomplish His purpose and fulfil His plan. Such a belief lies at the very roots of the teaching of both Old and New Testament.

God, therefore, is Lord of history. All things work according to

His eternal plan and purpose not merely by some natural operation of physical, economic or historical laws, but because He sovereignly rules and governs all things by His secret providence so that they bring to pass that which He has determined from all eternity. To a good many this may be the final answer eliminating all need for further questions. To the historian, however, such a question only incites one to ask: what about historical causation? how does one explain the apparent contingency of events? why does Christianity teach that God holds man responsible for his historical acts? and, what is the point of being an historian or of reading history? To say that God sovereignly reigns over history faces one with the necessity of delving further into the implications of the Christian faith for history.

The fundamental problem which lies behind these and many other questions is that of the relationship between time and eternity. How does the eternal, sovereign God govern history? Does everything happen as the result of His direct action, so that history is nothing more or less than a series of direct divine interventions? Does God intervene only on special occasions as at the evacuation of Dunkirk and at other places to accomplish His will in an extraordinary manner? Or does God control history only through secondary causes? When one has considered all these problems and has analysed them as far as possible, they all seem to resolve themselves into one conundrum: What is the relation between time and eternity?

Here one finds the mystery of history, but a mystery which also lies at the core of Christianity itself. One may see this from the question which arises out of Christianity's central doctrine, the Incarnation and its consequences. How could the eternal God become man? How could He atone for man's sin in space and time? How can man truly place his faith in God, the Incarnate Redeemer? These questions run parallel to those concerning the nature of secondary causes and human responsibility in history, and in the final analysis they all ask: If God is truly sovereign does history really have any meaning?

To answer this question the Christian of necessity turns back to the Scriptures and to the doctrines derived from them, to point out that while they always take for granted God's sovereignty, at the same time they also insist upon man's responsibility for his historical actions. The Lord's own teaching concerning His betrayal and crucifixion places the two points side by side as do also various statements in an historical work such as the Acts of the Apostles (2: 23) to say nothing of passages such as Romans (9-11) and

many others. These in turn base their statements on those which appear time and again in the Old Testament. Yet never does one encounter an attempt to explain or relate these two polar points of history.

To solve the riddle thus proposed man has down through the ages propounded many answers, but the best he can do and still remain Christian is to say that God does not work directly in every event, but that He works through secondary causes by His secret providential power. Thus the historian in tracing causes and relationships in history does in truth find some historical explanations, but he does so only because God sovereignly governing history makes these secondary causes accomplish His eternal plan and purpose. By this means the Christian may push the problem one step farther back, but he does not by any means provide a solution.

But should he expect to find a solution? If he truly believes in the Christian doctrine of creation and providence, he must surely admit that he, a time-space conditioned sinner, can hardly comprehend the meaning of the relations between time and eternity. He cannot grasp the meaning of time; how then can he comprehend the eternal nature and infinity of the sovereign God? Even had God disclosed the nature of the time-eternity relationship, could man have understood? It seems very doubtful, for since time and eternity seem to be qualitatively different, if God should describe His relationship to time it would be somewhat similar to a mathematician's efforts to explain calculus to a child who could not even count. Thus it seems that this problem must always remain a mystery which men must simply accept on God's say-so. This is the basic implication of Christianity for the understanding of history.

To the non-Christian, however, the Christian's "seeking for refuge in mystery" is improper and a demonstration of intellectual laziness, if not of dishonesty. Although the Christian claims that he possesses the only ultimately true explanation of history, when he comes to the most crucial problem, the relationship of God to history, of eternity to time, he tries to avoid the whole issue by talking about "mystery". This the non-Christian feels is unfair and clearly a sign that the Christian's view of history is untenable. He cannot explain his whole position rationally and so fails to present a true and comprehensive interpretation of history. To this criticism the Christian must reply that he certainly realizes his limitations, but in acknowledging that back of history lies mystery for man, he does nothing inconsistent with his primary assumptions

for such a point of view rests firmly upon the Christian doctrine of God. Furthermore, he must point out that the non-Christian with his rationalism cannot but destroy history itself.

The Christian finds his reason for contending that the non-Christian's denial of the Christian concept of mystery leads to the destruction of history in the fact that the denial of God's sovereignty over history leads to even more serious difficulties. If God is not sovereign does history have any purpose or plan? It would seem not, but that would not worry too many historians for they frequently regard teleology with great distrust. What then lies behind history? To this question the answer, whether conscious or not, usually is: chance. But if this be the case, a further difficulty then arises: what about such things as cause and effect, or indeed the possibility of any interpretation of history? It would seem that history becomes nothing but the random accidents of ultimate chance.

One may carry this thought even further. If chance lies at the basis of history, what knowledge can we have of history? The answer is none, for we may know only our own reactions to what we believe history to have been. Thus to communicate anything concerning history to a second person becomes virtually impossible, for we do not say anything about history, but really express only our own reactions and it is a matter of chance if even these reactions "get across" to the other individual. Thus to the Christian, to deny the Tri-une God's sovereignty over history and the mystery which surrounds it, leads inevitably to the denial of history itself. Only the Christian position makes history or historical knowledge possible.

II. THE RIVAL TO GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER HISTORY

That men may deny God's sovereignty over history and substitute chance, fate or some other impersonal entity points to a very important element in history. Man actually seeks to deny God's lordship over history in order that he may assert his own autonomy within history. He may accept the idea of a god, but this god he inevitably involves in history by making him dependent upon man's decisions or upon a more ultimate mystery in terms of chance, the unconscious or some other ultimately irrational entity. Thus he feels that, except in certain limited areas, history (i.e., man) goes its own way leaving God to look after his own limited affairs without any real control over the wider historical processes.

From the Christian point of view, one should find no reason for

surprise at this interpretation for man has rebelled against the idea of God's sovereignty. Such rebellion the Bible informs us had its historic origin in the insidious serpentine temptations of the "father of lies", Satan. The tempting promise was: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good from evil" (Gen. 3: 5), an offer that man accepted, but with disastrous results. Ever since, he has continually tried to assert his equality with God, which means in truth his independence of God. This, man's basic sin has exercised a malevolent influence on history ever since.

The result of man's original assertion of his autonomy appeared in the first murder, but it did not end there. Down through the ages man, continually asserting his independence of God, has endeavoured to go his own way and do as he pleases. Not only did he attempt to establish a unified society at Babel, but he has even gone so far as to create his own gods whom he worships or disciplines as he sees fit. Even the Church has at times endeavoured to assert its autonomy. The whole biblical account is replete with the account of man's striving to set himself up as "master of his fate and captain of his soul." Thus basic to any understanding of the historical implications of Christianity one must realize that while it insists upon God's sovereignty, it also points repeatedly to man's never-ending effort to set himself up as God's rival.

Man's claims to autonomy, however, God cannot but deny. If He did not do so He would have to deny His own sovereignty which would be a falsehood. He has created man, sustains and governs him, so that even though man thinks he is independent and possesses absolute freedom, God must continually point out to man that he is not self-governing. He does this through nature and history by causing man's best laid plans to "gang aft agley". But even more directly through His Word He continually reiterates to man that he is still a mere creature dependent even for his breath upon divine power and action. Thus Christianity not only points to man's continual sin of rebellion, but also insists that man's claims to independence in history are false.

Yet God has not taken immediate judicial action against man. Rather, He has allowed man to go his own way, to assert his own independence and to glory in his self-will. In fact God still preserves man and blesses him with many gifts and abilities which He bestows out of His pure benevolence. Thus man, even though denying the true origins of his capacities and achievements, accomplishes much in this world which ultimately fulfils the purpose of God who "makes even the wrath of man to praise Him".

This leads us to the problem of human culture. Does Christianity

imply anything concerning man's cultural developments in history? The answer would seem to be quite clearly in the affirmative. From the beginning of his history man has laid upon him the responsibility of subduing the world and ruling over it for his own benefit and for God's glory (Gen. 1: 28 ff.; 9: 1 ff.). When sin affected man's personality, however, he immediately began to employ his power to rule over nature and his fellow-man, not for the glory of God, but for the satisfaction of his own desire to equate himself with God. Thus, although man has perverted both God's command and God's benevolence, they still provide the foundation for all human cultural developments.

Man in his earliest societies possesses a very simple form of culture which exercises little influence over nature and which knows little differentiation between the work of individuals. All men are brothers in the family clan, working at the same employment, obeying the same chieftain and, above all other things, worshipping the same god or gods. Gradually differentiation begins to appear as men develop individual skills and gradually establish themselves as craftsmen in certain fields, or as social and political leaders. Out of this growing self-consciousness, self-confidence and achievement, develops a culture or cultures which may reach a very high level as in Greece, Rome and other areas at one time or another.

Yet the interesting thing is that cultures in their origins and for a considerable part of their earlier history are usually religiously, in fact frequently covenant, oriented. In the beginning the people relate their cultural activities to their god or gods at almost every moment and this point of view continues to hold sway for some time. Gradually, however, as philosophy and technology develop, bringing both rationalistic explanations and physical comfort, the interest in the gods begins to decline. Although man, at the beginning of his ascent, thought of at least a god, once he becomes somewhat more sophisticated he increasingly takes the credit for his achievements to himself. Self-confidence, even smugness, begins to dominate his thinking for like Nebuchadnezzar he feels that all his marvellous accomplishments come entirely from his own brain and by his own sovereign power. He leaves God out of the picture, forgetting that he has achieved his successes only by the divine benevolence.

When man reaches this stage, his culture commences to disintegrate and his civilization to fall. One finds that this aspect of history appears more than once in both Old and New Testament teaching. God allows man to misuse His gifts to assert his independence and to exalt himself as God's rival. But in so doing

man loses his faith totally with the result that he can posit only an ultimate reality that is chance. Such a belief, however, produces intellectual chaos which in turn brings cultural decline and collapse. Man's only solution to this situation is to set up an idol as god—whether that idol be a block of wood as pictured by Isaiah or a deified man as described by the apostles Paul and John. He does this for his own satisfaction and for the salvation of his "way of life", and in so doing gives a visible and concrete proof and example of his rebellion against God, while at the same time he fails to counteract the culturally corrosive effect of his own unbelief and insubordination. Thus, although God has permitted man in history to exalt himself as His rival, He also judicially allows man's egotism to bring about the destruction of the greatest works of his own hands and brain.

God has in His grace repeatedly spoken unto man not only through the works of His hands, but through the mouths of His prophets, His apostles and even of His own Son, warning him against this folly, but man has gone his own way. His history has been primarily a history of rebellion and opposition to God's sovereignty. This in turn has resulted in the collapse of historical cultures and civilizations. God's judgment upon man has repeatedly come within history and by history, the best expression of it being Christ's lament over Jerusalem: "How oft would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23: 37 ff.).

III. THE VINDICATION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH HISTORY

Yet from the Christian point of view, God's judgment and destruction of man's self-confident cultures does not make up the whole of history. It forms only the part that deals with man's kingdom which man in pseudo-autonomy has created. God does not merely *allow* man to go his own way and so come to ultimate self-destruction. God also asserts and manifests His sovereignty in history. He makes it perfectly clear to man that He is the Lord of History. This He did just as soon as man made the fatal mistake of declaring his independence, by introducing into history the principle of redemption. By His sovereign grace and power He would save man from himself. History thus became primarily, not the story of man's rebellion but, of God's gracious recalling of man to his proper obedience.

The redemptive principle entered history right at the beginning with the promise given in Genesis 3: 15 but it continued as the central theme of the Old Testament, always pointing forward to the

full achievement of God's purpose in One who was to come. This central fact of history, the accomplishment of redemption, came in its completeness through Jesus Christ, God's historical self-revelation in the incarnation of His Son. Thus for Christianity, Christ always holds the central point in human history, for by His life, death, resurrection and ascension, He saved history. Herein lies His cosmic significance, for without Him history would indeed be nothingness.

This of course raises the question of the meaning of redemption. What did Christ achieve in history for historical man? To this question the biblical answer is that He paid the penalty for man's sins in order that man might justly receive forgiveness for his rebellion. Involved in this forgiveness is the promise of newness of life which God effects through the inworking of the Holy Spirit, so that man may once again come to recognize his own creaturely position and God's sovereignty over him. This renewed understanding in turn imposes upon man the necessity of serving God as his Lord and of denying his own autonomy and independence, a change which is as revolutionary as a "new birth" (John 3: 5).

Yet all men live in a state of rebellion against God. They are all loyal subjects of "the kingdom of man", which means that they naturally think in terms of man's independence and autonomy. In this kingdom God by His benevolence preserves, keeps and supplies the needs of those whom He has chosen until His time appointed for them to come "out of darkness" into His kingdom of light in Christ Jesus. That anyone does so come results solely from the sovereign will and calling of God. This is basic to the understanding of the whole Bible. From the Christian point of view, history centres around God's people whom He sovereignly brings into His kingdom.

This kingdom has two sides to it. Fundamentally it is invisible, for as pointed out above its essence is the acknowledgment of the sovereign rule of God over all things. Thus God's kingdom consists in the submission of the heart of man in history. The Kingdom comes not with outward show, but with the Christian's humble acknowledgment of Christ's lordship over him in all things and in all circumstances. The non-Christian, the dweller in the Kingdom of Man, cannot of course see this kingdom and so he denies it, holding it either to be self-delusion or hypocrisy. Yet this very denial in itself becomes a judgment on the non-Christian who hardens his heart, as did Pharaoh, against the call of God and goes his own way worshipping his god of chance. The Christian, on the other hand, has within himself that which the non-Christian can

never understand unless awakened to his situation by the Spirit of God.

God's Kingdom is, at the same time, also visible in history. Those who have received God's call to enter into His kingdom do not seek immediately to leave the world. They still live in a cultural milieu and form part of a civilization from which they cannot escape even if they desired so to do. Furthermore, once they have come to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in and over their own lives, they recognize their responsibility to witness to His sovereignty over all things and to demand that men should submit to Him. In this way the kingdom becomes visible through the lives and activities of those who dwell in the kingdom and through their activities as a community, the Church. To the Christian this body constitutes the heart and core of the whole historical process.

By its very existence and through its work the Kingdom of God is "the salt of the earth". It is so because it preserves the world. Not only does God withhold His final judgment and condemnation of the world because He has yet many people to call out of the Kingdom of Man, but the life and witness of His people continually slow down the disintegration of culture and civilization by pointing men to God's sovereignty which in turn restrains even the unbeliever. Furthermore, the Kingdom of God is salt because it gives flavour to life, for by its insistence upon God's sovereignty as creator, sustainer and redeemer, it gives point and purpose to human existence which faith in ultimate chance can never provide. Thus Christians not only exist as pilgrims in this world, but also as those who by their words and works give meaning and significance to all things.

This position of the Christians in the world appears perhaps most clearly in the sphere of morality. How often in history has not the witness of Christians and their struggle for public and private morality saved whole nations from collapse? The work of the prophets in the latter days of both Israel and Judah, the accomplishment of the Church at the collapse of Roman civilization, the achievements of the Protestant Reformers at the end of the Middle Ages, all point to the same fact. Even in our own day, as in Germany under Nazi rule, have believing Christians wielded a great influence by standing firm against the total moral degradation of a nation and a culture.

The impact of Christianity also shows in a culture's theoretical thought: philosophy, science and the like. In days when men have sought to make pure chance the ultimate origin of all things, Christians above all others have insisted upon the ultimate ration-

ality of man's environment and the purposiveness of all things. Insisting that God, the all-wise and omniscient One, stands behind the whole of space-time reality, they have held that even though man may not have the ability or knowledge to solve all problems or to understand all mysteries, this is a rationally ordered universe proceeding to its fore-ordained end. Such a point of view alone gives meaning to the universe and to the rationality of man. For if chance be all, to talk of human rationality and understanding is nonsense. Only on Christian grounds can man even assert his autonomy.

In the sphere of history Christianity has the same effect. As one looks over the various efforts from classical times down to Arnold Toynbee to explain history one cannot but feel that the non-Christian has failed dismally to provide any rationale. This of course one might expect, for man refuses to acknowledge that since God is sovereign over history, He alone is its only true interpreter. The non-Christian prefers to declare that history is incomprehensible not only to man, but even to God, if there be a god. Indeed one wonders why the non-Christian studies history, let alone attempts to give an over-all interpretation of it. Only the Christian sees any ultimate sense or purpose in history, for he alone recognizes it as the outworking of the eternal plan of God. Thus even in the study of history itself, Christians, the members of God's kingdom, are the salt of the earth.

At this point one may well ask the question : if this is so, why is there no indication of a clear-cut Christian victory over the Kingdom of Man? History seems to provide us only with a picture of the constant ebb and flow of conflict between the Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God. Moreover, in our own day the Kingdom of Man seems to be gaining the day so that one may well wonder if the Christian understanding of history is true. With this one may perhaps agree, but at the same time one must point out that God's ways in history are not always obvious to man. Today, as all through history, God has continually and effectively called out His people that they might be His to serve Him in this life. Both His call and their answer offer a partial vindication of the Christian's interpretation of history for His grace has become effective by changing their lives, so that they have come to acknowledge Him as their Saviour and King.

The ultimate vindication, however, must await the end of history. When the number of God's people is complete, when all the citizens of the Kingdom of God have entered within its borders, then shall the end come. Then in judgment shall history, at least as man now

knows it, come to an end. God's purpose will have reached completion and His sovereignty will be publicly acknowledged even by those who in history have repeatedly denied it. "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God" (Phil. 2: 10).

Yet this does not mean that the differentiation in history between the Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God will then disappear. Rather the division will become permanent and eternal. Those who acknowledge only the Kingdom of Man will receive their reward by God's rejection and expulsion from His presence; those in the presently "hidden" Kingdom of God will be revealed when He fully and finally acknowledges them as His people. They will enter into the fullness of His grace and glory to serve Him fully and completely throughout eternity (Matt. 25: 32 ff.; Rev. 21). Thus will God's sovereignty in and over history be completely vindicated.

IV. THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER HISTORY

If God is sovereign over history what practical importance does His Lordship have for the Christian? To this question many Christians do not even bother to reply, while others quite frankly deny that God's sovereignty over history has any practical significance. It is simply a matter of interest for Christian historians locked up in their studies or class rooms. The Christian's sole responsibility is that of witnessing to God's grace in Christ. Whether as ministers, missionaries or as individual laymen, they feel that their *Christian* duty begins and ends with the proclamation of the Gospel. Although one may agree that this is clearly of primary importance, one must go further for God's people have the duty of bringing the whole of culture and human thought into obedience to Christ.

At the beginning of History God gave man the responsibility of "subduing the world and ruling over it." As God's steward he received the mandate to develop and use the world for God's glory. Although the unbeliever does not recognize that this is a God-given task, he has continued to exploit the world, delving into its physical secrets and using the treasures which he has thus discovered. But usually he has employed that which he has gained for his own enrichment and advancement, to the detriment and exploitation of others. Indeed much of that which he has discovered or devised, he employs to wipe his fellow-man off the earth. Thus man's cultural development itself brings with it God's judgment

simply because man does not see himself as the steward of God's gifts (cf. Matt. 21: 33 ff. ; Rom. 1: 24 ff.).

In this situation the Christian has a very direct and clear obligation. He cannot possibly sit back without any sense of responsibility for what men do with the world which God has placed in their power. Rather, he has the duty to participate intellectually and practically in the cultural development of his own day and age. He must remember that the cultural mandate applies even more to him than it does to the non-Christian for he knows the meaning of God's sovereignty over all of history. Therefore he must seek to orient all his thinking and all his action towards the sovereign God who is His Lord and King.

What does this mean both for the individual Christian and for the church as they find themselves in the midst of historical and cultural development? First of all Christians as individuals and as the church must develop a Christian point of view applicable to all their activities. They must see all their thinking, speaking and working "in the light of eternity", in order that they may truly serve the sovereign God. At the same time, they must also point out to the non-Christian where his position leads: to the chaos of ultimate chance. But in so doing they must also point continually to Christ, the central fact of history, as well as its Lord, who alone gives meaning to history. They must stress that only in the light of God's sovereignty does human history and human cultural action make any sense at all.

To fulfil God's cultural mandate, however, Christians must go a step farther, for man not only thinks, he also uses things in this life. The Christian must recognize in this connection that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," but that God has given the fulness to man for his use. Here again, however, the Christian must in his own life and thinking stress the fact that man should use everything in this life as God's steward, responsible for his use of God's creation. His working hours, his money, his property, his leisure hours and everything else that comes to him, he must treat as God's trust. In this way he will properly orient his use of the things of this world to God's service. He will become neither an ascetic nor a hedonist but will rather enjoy God's gifts, using them to His glory and praise.

Culture consists, however, not merely of man's dealing with things, but also in his dealing with his fellow-men. In this the Christian must continually remember that he is dealing with God's creatures and that these creatures find their true end in life only as they seek to develop themselves to serve Him who is their

sovereign Lord. Therefore, he must continually strive that men may have freedom to develop their gifts and talents and he himself should seek to cultivate those abilities which God has bestowed upon him in order that he may give proof of God's goodness. In all matters relating to politics, economics and the like he must seek to ensure that all men have the opportunity to fulfil their God-given duties. At the same time the individual Christian and the church must continually stress that all men are God's creatures placed in this world to serve and glorify Him in all their ways.

In summary, therefore, one may say that the Christian who sees the historical implications of his Christian faith will seek in all things to manifest the grace and the goodness of God. He will not take a narrow view of Christian faith and responsibility, but will see them in their widest possible terms: "doing all things to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10: 31). Moreover, Christians as individuals and as the Church will strive to fulfil their obligations heartily as unto the Lord in order that men may come to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Tri-une God, submitting all their cultural activities to His sovereign rule. This will not actually take place until the end of history, but it is our goal and the objective to which we must strive continually in history, that we may be the living salt of the earth, manifesting the grace and glory of God.

McGill University, Montreal.