

The Concept of God as a Historian

Nwankwo Uchenna Martins⁺

Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria

Abstract. Man has lived through all the centuries without knowing in what manner human history started and where its goals we often remain ignorant of the problems concerning the consummation of human history. Apparently, the full history of man has become a history of salvation to the casual observer of providence and the ordinary reader of this world's account and event, the whole appears like a chaos of incident; no thread, no system, no line of connection running through it. One course of event is seen here and another there. Kingdoms rise on the stage one after another, and become great and powerful and then pass away and are forgotten and the history of the church seems scarcely less a chaos than that of the world. Changes are continually going on within it and around it, concurrently without much order. The human students with their eyes devoutly fixed on the hand of God, looks upon the world and back on the wide field of its history and take altogether a different view. What before seemed so chaotic and disorderly now puts on the appearance of systems, patterns and form? Accordingly all is master minded by one mind and that mind is fate and providence, our mighty God that greatest living historian.

Keywords: Historian, God, Concept, Historiography, Event, Historicism, Bible

1. Introduction

Contemporary writers of history believe their subject to be timely. Perhaps as never before, the minds of the most sagacious writer of our age are watching with profound and pious interests, the progress of human events and the main aim of the writer is to make the work historical, at least so abounding in narrative, anecdote biography and in the delineation of men and things in real life and in these without knowing that they are indirectly revealing at every stop the hand of God ruling the events of History. Harbinson H: (1977)

History, when rightly and effectively written, is but a record and product of providence, and he who would read history rightly and effectively must read with his or her eye constantly fixed on the hand and work of God in manifestation. Right from the Biblical periods thousands of years back, as recorded especially in the old testament of Moses, Elijah, Solomon etc, every change, events and revolution in human affairs has been in the mind and also master minded by God, the progenitor of human fate.

All veritable history is nothing but an exponent of providence and it cannot but interest the mind of intelligent piety to trace the hand of God in all the changes and revolution of our world history. History however, has been written with much intent'' the first thing that it has shown is the relations of all events and life episode to God's grand design which is by most historians quite over looked... Accordingly all past events historical and non- historical are but the unraveling of God's eternal plan. The whole course of human vent is made finally to serve this one great purpose. The philosophy of history can be learned only in the laboratory of heaven- with the eye fixed on the hand that moves the world and the spirit in harmony with the great master that animated the universe. White E: (1940)

2. The Sovereignty of God in History

History is a cyclic process. A linear events leading to a goal of God's own choosing and designs, as proclaimed by several biblical prophets in their books ordinarily, history is no better than a tale told by a mere man who had no control of events transpired around him. History is therefore..."Where we can see"...Behind, above and through all the play and counter play of human interest, power and passions. The agencies of the all- merciful one, silently and patiently working out the counsel of his will.

⁺ Dr. Nwankwo Uchenna Martins. Tel.:+2348033374944;
E-mail address: uchennamartins@yahoo.com

Being referred to as a veritable source of history, the bible has been divinely inspired, and in the bible embodied prophecy which is the demonstration in word that God knows all of history from the beginning to the end as well as all the hearts of man involved in history. Nothing is hidden from him who is the maker and controller of all things. In 2nd Timothy 3:16, we read that "...All scripture is given by inspiration of God, so scriptures must have the stamp of God Upon it..." the prophecies of scriptures show a major part of this wonderful stamp, revealing the great wisdom and power of God. The student of history certainly has surely been strengthened by an in depth study of Biblical prophecy.

Without doubt, biblical prophecy is unique. There is no other religious book on earth that even remotely matches the exactness, accuracy and majesty of the bible's statements concerning history and God's control over history. Prophecy is God's mark on history to let mankind understand that he (God) is providential and will always do his perfect will in both Heaven and Earth. We must believe that God is in control of history which is often recorded by mere men (writers and Historians). Schwante, S: (1963)

Between historiography and biblical prophecy, humanity and God's revelation there is a dichotomy regarding what history is all about? As humans, it is imperative that we be fully informed of the biblical understanding of history; the word of God affirms that God rules over the affairs of men and nations who are the markers and recorders of history. Indeed, God's divine sovereignty in history is deeply embedded in biblical truth. For example, Moses in Deuteronomy 32: 8 asserted... "When the most high gave to the nations their inheritance when he divided all mankind, he fixed the boundaries for the people according to the number of the sons of God..." This has gone a very long way to show the intervention of God in the activities of men. Also in the Book of Daniel Chapter 2 verse 4, 21 he opined that God with his absolute power over nature and humanity changes times and seasons, he set up kings and deposes them. More so, the Apostle Paul in the bible Book of Galatians 4:4 asserted that the coming of Jesus Christ and his death on the cross was within God's reckoning of time in history. He also argued that the Chief end of national and individual existence on Earth is a religious one ordained by God.

God made from one man every nation of man to live on the face of the Earth determined and allotted periods and boundaries of their habitation that they might feel after him and find him. Did God grant to every nation and civilization a time of grace and opportunity to seek after him and find him? Apparently an in-depth glimpse on Paul's Act of Apostles leaves no room for doubt and arguments. Apparently, every nation that has come upon the stage of action has been permitted to occupy its place on earth and the events of history, that it might be seen whether it would fulfill the purpose of the divine one and the master planner and strategist. Bible history and prophecy has also forced the rise and fall of the world's great empires- Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome; including the present day British, Russian and American Hegemony in global affairs. With each of these as with nation of less power, history repeated itself. Each had its period of test, each failed, its glory faded, its power departed and its place was occupied by another.

On the other hand, history shows that God's allotted periods were not entirely fruitless. In Persia, in the 7th century BC for instance, Zoroaster distinguished himself by remarkable insights into religious truths. He replaced the conflicting claims of Persia polytheism by a belief in Ahura Mazda, the god of truth and light. Zoroastrianism recognized a protracted struggle in which the forces of evil and good would eventually prevail in the fight for judgment. In the dimness of such light and in the brightness of biblical revelation, God's role in history is clearly recognized. Moreover, in a perfect harmony with biblical writers endorsed the providential views of history. St. Augustine

In the annuals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires etc. appears as dependent on the will and prowess of man. But in the world of God, the curtain is drawn aside and behold, behind, above and through the play and counter play of human interest, power and passions, the agencies of all merciful one, silently and patiently working out the counsel of his own will and the bible which as an embodiment of God's prophecy contains the revelation of the true philosophy of history.

As to say that history proves God's absolute role and sovereignty over human affairs, also that history in its inevitable march towards a divine goal reveals God to the age of faith, just as nature in all its beauty and pain reveals God to the eye of faith; of God's over- ruling providence in history; there is enough evidence to sustain faith through never so over-whelming as to compel. A simple illustration may classify how human

activities in history and God's sovereign oversight can readily depart to a destination known only to the captain of the ship. The general direction of the ship as it crosses the ocean is under the captain's control. He knows the port of destination and the best route to reach it. At the same time, the passengers on board are free to act and move at will with elbow room for all. The captain's control of the ship's destination does not interfere with the relative freedom of the passengers. Thus the ship of history moves forward under divine guidance and direction from God while plenty of freedom is allowed to every human being to make personal choices providence may use any events according to a heavenly plan. This divine supervision is admittedly discreet so as not to thwart human freedom on the one hand and not to deprive the human necessity of walking by faith on the other. Bruni L: (1960)

Many a time, events and history repeat itself. Seasons keep manifesting again and again. The sun rises again every 24 hours; creature is born, it grows old and then dies. Again this is repeated in the following births. The earth rotates around the axis for 24 hours and once in a year, revolves around the sun. This has been going on since time immemorial billions of times. Stars, planets etc. too rotate and revolve again and again. The cycle of creation and destruction too get repeated. Ocean gives rain, rains enter the ocean and all this keep repeating. What we are trying to understand is the way every instance and event in this world functions in a repetitive manner and comes back to the same point where it started. This holds true for history too. World events and changes make history do take place as far as individual and nations are concerned. God is where providence and God's ultimate control of events comes in. How we view history is very important. Do we see God in control? Do we understand his providential power? Do we observe his appointed time and period? Affirmative; the stork on the heaven knoweth her appointed times and the crane and the turtle and the swallows observe the time of their coming. God appoints the time. God declares the end. God is in control of history. While men are just mere observers of history already designed and approved by God; the greatest historian that ever lived. Holis A.H: (1974)

The terms of history as we shall see are set by God, not man. Since the power of God is greater than anything of man. All the inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing, and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the Earth, and none can stay his hand. One of the titles of God is "...Lord God almighty..." This tells us that nothing is too hard for God. God rules in history, regardless of men's intellectual power and capabilities to record and keep events. To understand the providential power of God over events and affairs of men is to start to understand history efficiently and also to discern the importance of bible prophecy as God's events in utmost and he also reigns over time. Our thoughts about history must be guided by the word of God, and biblical prophecy helps to focus on the will of God in the world.

Whoever will read the history of the world must have his or her eyes fixed on the providential agency and plan as fixed and controlled by God, who everywhere and time over rules the events of the one in the furtherance and well- being of the other. History apparently is an event animated by a spirit of which the mere chronicles of historical events knows nothing will learn that history has a sacred philosophy which has been arranged and ordained by the greatest historians. Savige G: (1996)

3. Conclusion

This work has tried to look at the concept of God and the position of History in human development and societal values. We have attempted to actually identify the relevance of every event as was directed by God and each event makes history, while the historian determines the nature of the interpretation of events.

4. Acknowledgement

I may not go this way but it is really vital to thank my research assistants; Okolie Chris, Chukwudi P. Tims-Lewechi and then my family; Ijeoma Veronica Martins(my wife) and my children; Ebubechukwu Martins, Ekenedirichukwu Martins (RIP), Esomchukwu Martins and Elochukwu Martins. My God bless you all.

5. References

- [1] Christopher Dawson. *Enquires into Religious and Culture*. New York: Sheed and ward, 1963.
- [2] Harris Harbison. *God, History and Historians*. New York. Oxford Press, 1977.
- [3] Ellen- White. *The Desire of Ages*. California: Mountain View Pacific Press, 1940.
- [4] Siegfried Schwante. *God and History; Biblical Perspective*. New York: Heinemann Books Ltd, 1963.
- [5] Cracy Savage. *Understanding God's Role in History*. New York: Eftan Press. St Augustine: *City of God*. vol. 11, 1996.
- [6] Leonardo Bruni. *History of Christianity*: New York: Double Press Ltd, 1960.
- [7] A.H Hollis. *The Hand of God in History* Philadelphia: John .E. Potter Company, 1974.
- [8] Grauge Savige. *Understanding God's Role History*: New York Eftan Press Ltd, 1996.