



RECLAIMING THE
CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

HISTORY

A STUDENT'S

GUIDE

Nathan A. Finn

Series Editor: David S. Dockery

“I heartily recommend Nathan Finn’s brisk and thoughtful *History: A Student’s Guide*. I do not know of a better introduction to historical studies, or a more cogent assessment of how Christians should think about history.”

Thomas S. Kidd, Professor of History, Baylor University; author, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America*

“Nathan Finn’s adept introduction to the art and discipline of history and historical scholarship will provide many students, especially those with explicit faith commitments, with the resources needed to participate in the ongoing conversations of the guild.”

Richard A. Bailey, Associate Professor of History, Canisius College; author, *Race and Redemption in Puritan New England*

“This mature, thorough, and insightful Christian treatment of history and the historian’s craft will prove to be an indispensable tool for students. In this concise and engaging book, Nathan Finn employs characteristic wit and wisdom as he guides his readers through the essentials of understanding the ‘foreign country’ of the past. Here’s a book every aspiring historian must read.”

John D. Wilsey, Assistant Professor of History and Christian Apologetics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; author, *American Exceptionalism* and *Civil Religion*

“Nathan Finn has contributed an excellent resource for introducing students to the essential principles and responsible practice of historical studies from a Christian perspective. The text is filled with colorful illustrations from contemporary popular culture that give it a timely relevance while also containing loads of timeless wisdom. *History: A Student’s Guide* deserves a long tenure as an essential text for Christian reflections on the nature and doing of history.”

Scott Culpepper, Associate Professor of History, Dordt College

-SERIES ENDORSEMENTS-

“Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition promises to be a very important series of guides—aimed at students—intended both to recover and instruct regarding the Christian intellectual tradition.”

Robert B. Sloan, President, Houston Baptist University

“Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition is an exciting series that will freshly introduce readers to the riches of historic Christian thought and practice. As the modern secular academy struggles to reclaim a semblance of purpose, this series demonstrates why a deeply rooted Christian worldview offers an intellectual coherence so badly needed in our fragmented culture. Assembling a formidable cohort of respected evangelical scholars, the series promises to supply must-read orientations to the disciplines for the next generation of Christian students.”

Thomas Kidd, Department of History, Baylor University

“This new series is exactly what Christian higher education needs to shore up its intellectual foundations for the challenges of the coming decades. Whether students are studying in professedly Christian institutions or in more traditionally secular settings, these volumes will provide a firm basis from which to withstand the dismissive attitude toward biblical thinking that seems so pervasive in the academy today. These titles will make their way onto the required reading lists for Christian colleges and universities seeking to ensure a firm biblical perspective for students, regardless of discipline. Similarly, campus pastors on secular campuses will find this series to be an invaluable bibliography for guiding students who are struggling with coalescing their emerging intellectual curiosity with their developing faith.”

Carl E. Zylstra, President, Dordt College

HISTORY



RECLAIMING THE
CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

David S. Dockery, series editor

CONSULTING EDITORS

Hunter Baker

Timothy George

Niel Nielson

Philip G. Ryken

Michael J. Wilkins

John D. Woodbridge

OTHER RCIT VOLUMES:

The Great Tradition of Christian Thinking, David S. Dockery and
Timothy George

The Liberal Arts, Gene C. Fant Jr.

Political Thought, Hunter Baker

Literature, Louis Markos

Philosophy, David K. Naugle

Christian Worldview, Philip G. Ryken

Art and Music, Paul Munson and Joshua Farris Drake

Ethics and Moral Reasoning, C. Ben Mitchell

HISTORY

A STUDENT'S GUIDE

Nathan A. Finn

History: A Student's Guide

Copyright © 2016 by Nathan A. Finn

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Cover design: Jon McGrath, SimPLICATED Studio

First printing 2016

Printed in the United States of America

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-3763-9

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-3766-0

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-3764-6

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-3765-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Finn, Nathan A.

History : a student's guide / Nathan A. Finn.

pages cm.— (Reclaiming the Christian intellectual tradition)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-3763-9 (tp)

1. History—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BR115.H5F475

2016

261.5—dc23

2015020204

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For my beloved wife,
Leah Phillips Finn
You have walked with me
and encouraged me
and challenged me
and supported me
and, most important, loved me
as I have pursued the vocation
of Christian historian.

CONTENTS

Series Preface	11
Acknowledgments	15
Introduction: History and the Christian Worldview	17
1 Understanding History	25
2 Historical Interpretation	43
3 Faith and the Historian	61
4 History: An Invitation	83
Questions for Reflection	101
Glossary	103
Resources for Further Study	105
General Index	107
Scripture Index	111

SERIES PREFACE

RECLAIMING THE CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

The Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition series is designed to provide an overview of the distinctive way the church has read the Bible, formulated doctrine, provided education, and engaged the culture. The contributors to this series all agree that personal faith and genuine Christian piety are essential for the life of Christ followers and for the church. These contributors also believe that helping others recognize the importance of serious thinking about God, Scripture, and the world needs a renewed emphasis at this time in order that the truth claims of the Christian faith can be passed along from one generation to the next. The study guides in this series will enable us to see afresh how the Christian faith shapes how we live, how we think, how we write books, how we govern society, and how we relate to one another in our churches and social structures. The richness of the Christian intellectual tradition provides guidance for the complex challenges that believers face in this world.

This series is particularly designed for Christian students and others associated with college and university campuses, including faculty, staff, trustees, and other various constituents. The contributors to the series will explore how the Bible has been interpreted in the history of the church, as well as how theology has been formulated. They will ask: How does the Christian faith influence our understanding of culture, literature, philosophy, government, beauty, art, or work? How does the Christian intellectual tradition help us understand truth? How does the Christian intellectual tradition shape our approach to education? We believe that this series is not only timely but that it meets an important need, because the

secular culture in which we now find ourselves is, at best, indifferent to the Christian faith, and the Christian world—at least in its more popular forms—tends to be confused about the beliefs, heritage, and tradition associated with the Christian faith.

At the heart of this work is the challenge to prepare a generation of Christians to think Christianly, to engage the academy and the culture, and to serve church and society. We believe that both the breadth and the depth of the Christian intellectual tradition need to be reclaimed, revitalized, renewed, and revived for us to carry this work forward. These study guides will seek to provide a framework to help introduce students to the great tradition of Christian thinking, seeking to highlight its importance for understanding the world, its significance for serving both church and society, and its application for Christian thinking and learning. The series is a starting point for exploring important ideas and issues such as truth, meaning, beauty, and justice.

We trust that the series will help introduce readers to the apostles, church fathers, Reformers, philosophers, theologians, historians, and a wide variety of other significant thinkers. In addition to well-known leaders such as Clement, Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and Jonathan Edwards, readers will be pointed to William Wilberforce, G. K. Chesterton, T. S. Eliot, Dorothy Sayers, C. S. Lewis, Johann Sebastian Bach, Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, George Washington Carver, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Michael Polanyi, Henry Luke Orombi, and many others. In doing so, we hope to introduce those who throughout history have demonstrated that it is indeed possible to be serious about the life of the mind while simultaneously being deeply committed Christians. These efforts to strengthen serious Christian thinking and scholarship will not be limited to the study of theology, scriptural interpretation, or philosophy, even though these areas provide the framework for understanding the Christian faith for all other areas of exploration. In order for us to reclaim and

advance the Christian intellectual tradition, we must have some understanding of the tradition itself. The volumes in this series seek to explore this tradition and its application for our twenty-first-century world. Each volume contains a glossary, study questions, and a list of resources for further study, which we trust will provide helpful guidance for our readers.

I am deeply grateful to the series editorial committee: Timothy George, John Woodbridge, Michael Wilkins, Niel Nielson, Philip Ryken, and Hunter Baker. Each of these colleagues joins me in thanking our various contributors for their fine work. We all express our appreciation to Justin Taylor, Jill Carter, Allan Fisher, Lane Dennis, and the Crossway team for their enthusiastic support for the project. We offer the project with the hope that students will be helped, faculty and Christian leaders will be encouraged, institutions will be strengthened, churches will be built up, and, ultimately, that God will be glorified.

Soli Deo Gloria
David S. Dockery
Series Editor

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Some books are planned years in advance. Others providentially drop into your lap. This book falls into the latter category. I have been reflecting on the material covered in this book for over fifteen years, first as an undergraduate history major, then as a graduate student studying the history of Christianity, and now as a professor who teaches church history to undergraduates and graduate students and historical method and historiography to doctoral students. I have debated these topics with colleagues, taught them to students, and discussed them with my family and close friends. But I never thought I would write this book. I am grateful to David Dockery for his kind invitation to contribute this volume to the *Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition* series and to my editors at Crossway for their assistance along the way.

I am also grateful to numerous individuals who have assisted me as I have written this book. David Dockery and Gene Fant, formerly the President and Executive Vice President for Academic Administration at Union University, invited me to spend a sabbatical at Union during the first half of 2014. Most of this book was drafted during those five months in West Tennessee. Justin Taylor is not only one of my editors at Crossway, but he has also been a regular dialog partner for several years on the relationship between faith and history, a topic I discuss at length in chapter 3. Conversations with others over the years have also helped sharpen my thinking in various ways; I am especially grateful to Stephen Eccher, Keith Harper, Michael Haykin, David Hogg, Steve McKinion, Miles Mullin, Steve Weaver, and Ryan West. Several friends and colleagues read an earlier draft of this manuscript and offered suggestions that I am certain have significantly improved the book. I

want to thank Richard Bailey, Keith Harper, Tommy Kidd, Danielle Renstrom, and John Wilsey for making this a better book. Of course, any errors and shortcomings that linger on are my own.

Final thanks are due to my wife, Leah, and my four children: Georgia, Baxter, Eleanor, and Fuller. They were flexible enough to relocate to another state for six months and gracious enough to share me with this book and several other writing projects during that time. Once we returned to North Carolina, they were patient with me as I finished this book while also assimilating back into my regular teaching routine and launching a new Center for Spiritual Formation and Evangelical Spirituality at Southeastern Seminary. In reality, though, my thanks to Leah in particular extend back to long before I undertook the actual writing of this book.

Leah, you have been by my side since the earliest days when I first considered pursuing the vocation of Christian historian (remember that conversation at Zaxby's in Vidalia?). While friends and colleagues have come and gone over the years, you have remained my most constant conversation partner on the topics discussed in this book, as well as just about every other topic under the sun. Leah, you have been a blessing to me for every second since I first winked at you in the college cafeteria (everyone knows that wink is why you sat by me that day). I am the historian—and the man—I am today in large part because of you. This is not the first book I have written, nor is it the biggest, but it is the one that encapsulates the heart of my work as a historian more than any other. Thus, it only seems fitting that this book be dedicated to you.

INTRODUCTION: HISTORY AND THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

Most of all, perhaps, we need intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet need something to set against the present, to remind us that the basic assumptions have been quite different in different periods and that much which seems certain to the uneducated is merely temporary fashion. A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village; the scholar has lived in many times and is therefore in some degree immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age.¹

C. S. Lewis

The words quoted above are taken from an address C. S. Lewis first gave in 1949. Lewis was a renowned scholar of medieval literature, a popular Christian apologist, and the author of the beloved *Chronicles of Narnia* series of children's books. Though he was not a professional historian by training, as both a scholar and a Christian, Lewis understood the importance of the past. The past takes us places. The past provides needed perspective. The past keeps us humble. Lewis prized the past so much that he famously suggested that the reading of old books is preferable to the reading of new books. "It has always therefore been one of my main endeavours as a teacher," Lewis writes, "to persuade the young that firsthand knowledge is not only more worth acquiring than secondhand knowledge,

¹C. S. Lewis, "Learning in War-Time," in *The Weight of Glory: And Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 58–59.

but is usually much easier and more delightful to acquire.”² Any historian worth his or her salt would agree.

Unfortunately, not everyone would agree that knowledge of the past is valuable—or at least interesting. I have taught history courses for almost a decade to well over a thousand undergraduate students, seminary students, and research doctoral students. More than a few have informed me that they are not really that “in” to history. A few have even nodded off in class—doubtless a reflection of their lack of sleep rather than my abilities as a teacher! Truth told, I can remember a season in my life when history seemed less than appealing, though that changed my junior year of high school in an advanced placement United States history course taught by Coach Joe Haluski. At best, many people have a utilitarian view of history; they care to the degree they find history useful for the stuff that *really* matters in life. Almost everyone can quote at least a paraphrase of George Santayana’s famous quip, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”³

The purpose of this book is to provide an introduction to the discipline of history from the perspective of a Christian worldview that is shaped by the great tradition and is in dialog with other key voices in the field. In keeping with the purpose of the Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition series, I am writing primarily for an undergraduate audience, especially those who wish to major or minor in a field such as history or history education. However, I hope this book will also prove useful to graduate students, college professors, teachers, home educators, public historians, and even armchair historians—anyone who is interested in the study of the past. It is not intended as a comprehensive introduction to history. There are many

²C. S. Lewis, “On the Reading of Old Books,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 200. This essay was originally published in 1944 as Lewis’s introduction to a new edition of Athanasius’s *The Incarnation of the Word of God*.

³George Santayana, *The Life of Reason: Or the Phases of Human Progress* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 284. Many people claim that Santayana himself was paraphrasing the famous Irish politician and orator Edmund Burke (1729–1797), but I have not found this quote in Burke’s writings.

important topics I discuss only in passing or even pass over completely such as historical fallacies and questions of causation, contingency, or counterfactuals.⁴ This book will be most useful if it is read as a companion volume to a standard introductory historical textbook that covers these topics and others in a more substantial manner.⁵

HISTORY AND CHRISTIANITY

History is important for several reasons. History is normally considered one of the core disciplines in a modern education. Furthermore, history is foundational to the other disciplines one might choose to study. Every discipline arose at a particular point in time, developed in particular contexts, and possesses a history unto itself. Any good English teacher, ethicist, philosopher, political scientist, musician, doctor, lawyer, pastor, or businessperson has some awareness of the history of his or her vocation. Students who aspire to become historians need to understand foundational issues such as the nature of history, different approaches to history, and the various ways the study of history benefits historians and others. Christian students in particular also need to understand how to address these topics from the perspective of a Christian worldview and how to engage the controversial issue of the relationship between one's faith and the study of history.

Christians should be keenly interested in studying the past since the very truth of the Judeo-Christian tradition is dependent upon certain historical events. Some religious traditions are ahistorical; whether the events referenced in their sacred writings really happened has no effect on the religion. This is not true for the Christian religion, which is at its root a historical faith. Christianity is

⁴For helpful introductions to these topics, see Eileen Ka-May Cheng, *Historiography: An Introductory Guide* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012); David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 91–110.

⁵I would recommend Gaddis, *Landscape of History*; and James M. Banner Jr., *Being a Historian: An Introduction to the Professional World of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

grounded in events that Christians believe were real, historical occurrences. For example, we believe that at particular points in history Abraham migrated from Ur to Palestine; Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery; David became the king of Israel; Isaiah and Jeremiah served as prophets; Jesus of Nazareth preached and was crucified; and Paul established churches all over the Roman Empire. Furthermore, Christians believe that the miracles described in the Scriptures are just as valid historically as the more mundane events recorded. In fact, the most important events in Scripture are the miraculous, especially the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his bodily resurrection from the dead. When Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, they confess that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead."⁶ The truthfulness of Christianity depends upon the historical validity of the events recorded in the Bible.

Christianity is a historical faith. Yet, the Bible is much more than simply a historically rooted—and historically accurate—book. The Bible also provides Christians with a particular worldview that affects every aspect of our lives. According to Philip Ryken,

A worldview—or “world-and-life view,” as some people call it—is the structure of understanding that we use to make sense of our world. Our worldview is what we presuppose. It is our way of looking at life, our interpretation of the universe, our orientation to reality.⁷

As Albert Wolters rightly suggests, “everyone has a worldview, however inarticulate he or she may be in expressing it.”⁸ Your worldview provides the framework for how you answer life’s ultimate

⁶ Contrary to legend, the twelve apostles did not write the Apostles' Creed; the document dates to the fourth century. Most versions of the creed suggest Jesus descended into hell, but because Christians debate precisely what that language means, some traditions omit it from the creed.

⁷ Philip Graham Ryken, *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide*, Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 19.

⁸ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 4.

questions. Where did humanity come from? What is the meaning of life? Is there a God or gods who are in control of this world? Is there such a thing as right and wrong? Does life continue after death? Is knowledge even possible? As your worldview helps you answer these questions, it in turn influences everything about you, including all of your actions, attitudes, and priorities.

The Christian worldview is rooted in the story of God’s creation, humanity’s fall into sin, and the redemption accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—what has been aptly called the true story of the whole world.⁹ It helps us to think rightly about God and live rightly before him. It gives shape to our worship, witness, and ethics. It provides the proper grid through which we should interpret all of life—including history. In chapter 3, we will elaborate on the Christian worldview and discuss some specific ways that it ought to inform a Christian approach to history.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENTS AND THE CHRISTIAN HISTORIAN

Within the broader story that makes up the Christian worldview, we find many motivations, priorities, and ethics that arise from the biblical narrative. Along those lines, the two “great commandments” represent a key biblical theme with particular importance for Christian historians. In Matthew 22:34–39, a lawyer asks Jesus’s opinion about the greatest commandment in God’s law. Jesus responds by giving two commandments that are closely related to each other. The greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself. When all is said and done, the most important difference between a Christian historian and a non-Christian historian is primarily a matter of motivation. The great commandments speak directly to this point.

⁹See Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 1–10.

For the believing historian, historical inquiry—as with every other aspect of life—is ultimately an act of worship done for the Lord. Paul writes, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). This includes the study of history, which should always be to the Lord and for his glory, whether the subject is the history of Scotch Presbyterian immigrants in the Appalachian mountains or the history of agriculture in medieval Europe. Quality research that conforms to the highest standards in the historical profession brings glory to the God who alone is perfect and who is reflected in our own imperfect attempts at excellence.

The second great commandment, also known as the Golden Rule, is especially relevant to the way we study the past. Christian historians are called to practice neighbor-love toward their subjects by empathizing with them. This means the believing historian is called to truly understand and appreciate why people in the past did what they did, even when the historian disagrees with the action itself. Christian historians also seek to interpret past events as honestly and charitably as is possible. This is sometimes very difficult. What historian wants to be charitable to pirates who raped and pillaged British sailors or to Nazi soldiers who gassed Jews at Auschwitz? The past can be an ugly place. Nevertheless, believing historians will do their very best to interpret the past in the same way they would want future historians to interpret them in the present—honestly and charitably, disagreements notwithstanding. As Beth Barton Schweiger argues, we must love the subjects of our history, even when we disagree with them, if we are to accurately understand them.¹⁰ Rightly remembering the past is a spiritual discipline for Christian historians (and all believers).¹¹

The Golden Rule also affects the way Christian historians ap-

¹⁰Beth Barton Schweiger, “Seeing Things: Knowledge and Love in History,” in *Confessing History: Explorations in Christian Faith and the Historian’s Vocation*, eds. John Fea, Jay Green, and Eric Miller (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 61.

¹¹For more on this theme, see Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); and Margaret Bendroth, *The Spiritual Practice of Remembering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).

proach their sources. In 2002, two of the best-selling popular historians in America, Stephen Ambrose and Doris Kearns Goodwin, were charged with plagiarism.¹² There is hardly a more serious offense for a researcher, especially a historian. The Writing Tutorial Services at Indiana University offers an excellent, simple definition of plagiarism: “Plagiarism is using others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information.”¹³ For the Christian, plagiarism is not only a matter of stealing from another—a practice certainly incompatible with a Christian ethic (Ex. 20:15)—but it is also a clear violation of neighbor-love. When you cite the work of another historian without giving credit for his or her ideas, you are not treating the other historian as you would wish to be treated if you were in his or her place. When interacting with the writings of others, the Christian historian gives “honor to whom honor is owed” (Rom. 13:7).

The Christian worldview impacts the study of history in many ways. Unfortunately, many historians never give so much as a passing thought to the relationship between their discipline and the Christian faith. Fortunately, there is good news: even historians who are not Christians have been influenced by the Christian worldview in more ways than they realize. John Sommerville notes six different “vestiges of Christian scholarship” that can be found among most professional historians in the West: (1) a sense of human sinfulness; (2) a linear view of history; (3) a focus on history as a story with a beginning, middle, and end; (4) skepticism of the idea of progress; (5) belief in human freedom; and (6) an ironic approach to historiography.¹⁴ I will tease out many of these ideas in the coming chapters. As Jim Patterson suggests in his own discus-

¹²Fred Barnes, “Stephen Ambrose, Copycat,” *The Weekly Standard*, June 14, 2002, accessed May 14, 2014, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/000/7381fdv.asp>; Bo Crader, “A Historian and Her Sources,” *The Weekly Standard*, January 28, 2002, accessed May 14, 2014, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/000/793ihurw.asp>.

¹³“Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It,” Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University, accessed May 14, 2014, <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>.

¹⁴C. John Sommerville, “Christian Historiography? A Pragmatic Approach,” *Fides et Historia*, Winter/Spring 2003: 2–3.

sion of Sommerville's list, "Christians who study, teach, or write history should be encouraged by these signals of common grace."¹⁵ I agree. In many ways, the Christian historian openly owns certain truths that many nonbelieving historians seem to know only by intuition. Unlike the non-Christian historian, the believing historian is able to give praise to the One who has provided these intellectual tools to those who study the past.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Now that we have addressed some important preliminary considerations, we are ready to dive deeper into the discipline of history. Chapter 1 will answer the question, "What is history?" by making a key distinction between the past and history. It will also introduce the basics of historical research and identify several different types of history. Chapter 2 will discuss different schools of historical interpretation and critique them from the perspective of the Christian worldview. The chapter will also briefly introduce the topic of historiography. Chapter 3 will focus upon the oft-debated relationship between faith and history. How do various Christian historians interpret the past? How does the doctrine of providence relate to historical interpretation? This chapter, more than any other, will examine some of the challenges uniquely faced by Christian historians. Chapter 4 extends an invitation to the discipline of history. It will discuss some of the various vocations for which formal historical training can help prepare a student. It will also suggest ways that history can be brought to bear in other disciplines and vocations.

¹⁵ James A. Patterson, "The Study of History," in *Faith and Learning: A Handbook for Christian Higher Education*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 235.



CHECK OUT THE OTHER BOOKS IN THE **RECLAIMING THE CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION SERIES**



For more information, visit crossway.org.

+ Knowledge of the past is integral to understanding the present and looking forward to the future. An appreciation of what came before is indeed foundational to nearly every other field of study.

This guide by professor Nathan A. Finn explores the nature of history and historical context, compares different schools of historical interpretation, and addresses contemporary issues related to the intersection of faith and history. This volume will help students critically engage with history in the light of God's providential care over the past, the present, and the future.

"I do not know of a better introduction to historical studies, or a more cogent assessment of how Christians should think about history."

Thomas S. Kidd, Professor of History, Baylor University; author, *The Great Awakening*

"This mature, thorough, and insightful Christian treatment of history and the historian's craft will prove to be an indispensable tool for students."

John D. Wilsey, Assistant Professor of History and Christian Apologetics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; author, *American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion*

NATHAN A. FINN (PhD, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) is dean of the School of Theology and Missions and professor of Christian thought and tradition at Union University.

The Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition series is designed for Christian students and those associated with college campuses, including faculty, staff, and trustees. These guidebooks address the common challenges in major academic disciplines by reclaiming the best of the Christian intellectual tradition—demonstrating that vibrant, world-changing Christianity assumes a commitment to the integration of faith and scholarship. With illustrations, reflection questions, and a list of resources for further study, this series is sure to be a timely tool in both Christian and secular universities, influencing the next generation of leaders in the church, the academy, and the world.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION / HISTORY