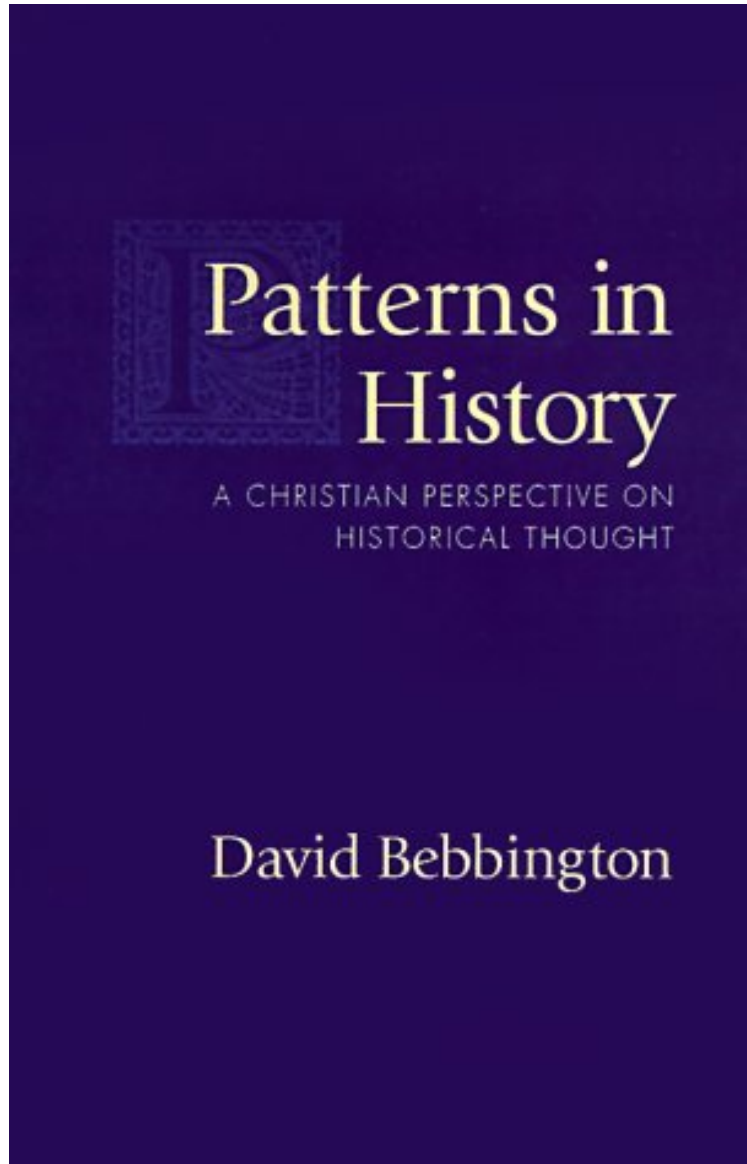



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Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought

David Bebbington

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David Bebbington : Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. AN EVANGELICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY By Steven H Propp David Bebbington is a lecturer at the University of Stirling in Scotland. He has written other books such as Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s, Baptists through the Centuries: A History of a Global People, etc. He wrote in the Preface to this 1979 book, "The purpose of this book is to analyze historical thought. It examines beliefs about the meaning of the course of history. The subject is itself approached historically. How have societies and individuals down the ages have conceived the historical process? The book... pays special attention to the more recent developments in western civilization. It explores some of the ways in which understandings of the historical process have affected how history has been written. It also offers brief evaluations of some of the chief schools of thought." He suggests about Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence, "His explicit object was to dismiss the Christian view that history was guided towards a specific goal by the divine will--and indeed any system of belief setting its hope on the future. Cycles remained for the adventurous an alternative to the dominant linear view." (Pg. 38) He observes about Arnold Toynbee's A Study of History: Abridgement of Volumes I-VI, "Religion emerges from the downswing of a cycle of civilization... because spiritual progress depends on suffering. With the rise and fall of each civilization, man's knowledge of God increases. This belief bordered on orthodox Christianity, but did not quite correspond to it because Toynbee did not see any religion as final. But what Toynbee did was to superimpose on a cyclical view of history a Christian view of history. All things are moving... towards a goal." (Pg. 39) He suggests that Bousset "shows traces... of thinking in ways alien to traditional Christian understandings of history. In particular he betrays the influence of Descartes in seeing God as working not directly in history through miracle but indirectly through men's minds." (Pg. 63-64) He argues, "The main historicist idea is that human groups are moulded by history. To a great extent this is undeniable. It is a premise of the argument of this book that the ways people think are affected by social and intellectual conditions. But historicism takes a further step. It holds that the flux of history eliminates any constancy in man. There is no such thing as human nature." (Pg. 113) Bebbington's book will be of most interest to those seeking a Christian commentary on the philosophy of history.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. "Good, but not religious good"! (Hardy) By Anthony M Ludovici I am a professor at a Christian university, and I teach historiography once every year. As I do critical theory also, and as I am trained in history and philosophy of science, I have found that my students over the years--most of whom are evangelical Christians--find mainstream, state-of-the-art historiography rather heavy going. After all, they are history students and favor the concrete over the abstract. The canteen and bullet school and all that. Truth to tell, they would happily do without the historiography of my ilk as it were, altogether. This is to say that teaching this cohort of students over the years has discouraged me from going too "postmodern". The students just do not process well this threshold of meta-level inquiry. Additionally, it often rubs against the grain of their unreflective epistemology. David Bebbington's has been one of the few texts that has worked for my purposes. Bebbington has an appreciative, non-fundamental, approach to historiography that, while hardly rigorous, registers with my students. It works. There may be others in my position, and I offer these observations for what they are worth. Bebbington is to be praised for having produced a "niche text". I shall use his book in the spring.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. General Summary of five philosophies of history By Nathan William Anderson This book covers the Cyclical, Christian, Progressive, Historicist, and Marxist historiographical views. It concludes with a Christian synthesis of positivism and idealism which are relative to progressivism and historicism.