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# guardians of history – 2/12/21

**Guardians of History**

David Horner of the International Bible Society states, “We’ve forgotten our own history. As a result, we don’t fully understand the present and our role in it. To forget our story is to forget who we are and why we’re here.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

How important is it that we know our history?

There are around 933 references to history in the New Testament.[[2]](#footnote-2) Why does history seem to be so important to the New Testament writers?

In short, because it was important to the Old Testament writers and it is important to God. The Old Testament urges, “Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you”(Deut. 32:7 NASB).

History is to be remembered and passed on generation after generation. Are you a guardian of history?

Let’s switch gears for a moment.

Tyranny is a word which describes the rule of one person, or a small group of people. They rule in their own interests and according to their will – it is diametrically opposed to the idea America was founded on, “We the People.”

A new genre of writing emerged in the twentieth century dealing with this style of governing. George Orwell’s *1984* is a good example. So is *Animal Farm*. You may have heard of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* or C. S. Lewis’ *That Hideous Strength* or *Darkness At Noon by Arthur Koestler.*

These books all show the important relationship between truth and history. But they also all show that tyranny has moved to “totalitarianism”. Totalitarianism must have science and technology to accomplish its goal – to control the *totality* of all things. For our topic that includes history, the rewriting or the removal of it.

Totalitarianism relies on the embrace of contradiction. It must groom its subjects and disseminate the idea that opposites can be true at the same time even though they are mutually exclusive. For example, a leader could order that COVID-19 is too great a risk and too dangerous for people to gather at a church service but at the same time rule it would be no hinderance for large groups of people to protest a political issue if it supports the regime’s ideology or agenda.

A recent decision by an Ohio court brings totalitarian principles to light when it mandates that the state could not deny transgender people from going back and changing their legal, historical birth certificates so they read their sexual orientation of choice.[[3]](#footnote-3) Contradiction. A man can be a woman. A woman can be a man even though this contradicts the legal historical birth record of the individual. Even though it contradicts biological fact that a person has the same (male or female) chromosomes their entire life.[[4]](#footnote-4) And so, history is allowed to be rewritten.

I’ll come back to this in a second.

The God of the Bible is the creator and origin of history. However, the history of the Bible is constantly questioned. Much of current Christian scholarship interprets God’s word with suspicion. They reject its historical accuracy. Their stance is, *since the Bible is historically unreliable its theology must be**discarded.[[5]](#footnote-5)*

Now the Bible is not a history book, it is a theology book. In God’s revelation to us He oftentimes used history. Through actual points in history the Trinitarian God disclosed Himself to us and His plan of salvation.

The pagan world like a post-truth society had no consistent standard for the evaluation of truth. God’s word, on the other hand, *is* the standard for the evaluation of truth. He makes clear that the falsification of history is destructive to humanity. In fact, God is always truthful and reliable even if it is not to His advantage. The history of the Judeo-Christian faith centers on a relationship with God and that relationship is illustrated through real, factual, historical events in human history. Cause and effect are traceable and linked in time and space.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Back to totalitarian thinking.

Larry Arnn interprets George Orwell’s *1984* like this, the main character “Winston Smith works for the state and his job is to rewrite history. He sits at a table with a telescreen in front of him that watches everything he does. To one side is a memory hole – when Winston puts things in it, he assumes they are burned and lost forever. Tasks are delivered to him in cylinders through pneumatic tube. The task might involve something big, like a change in what country the state is at war with: when the enemy changes, all references to the previous war with a different enemy need to be expunged. Or the task might be something small: if an individual falls out of favor with the state, photographs of him being honored need to be altered or erased altogether from the records. Winston’s job is to fix every book, periodical, newspaper, etc. that reveals or refers to what used to be the truth, in order that itconforms to the new truth.”[[7]](#footnote-7)He is only one among millions of workers rewriting the past.

Winston naturally becomes cynical toward life. He knows nothing of real history and says, “Every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute … Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

The world and the church need guardians of history. History that is truthful, transparent, and usable for future generations.

With God, truth, history and theology are married and inseparable for a functional understanding of the Christian faith.

Look at 1 Cor. 15:14-17 (NASB)

*14and if Christ has not been raised,* [if His resurrection is a historical falsehood] *then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain* [if history has not happened your theology is meaningless]. *15Moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God [liars], because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised; 17and if Christ has not been raised* [If this historical event did not happen]*, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.*

The validity of the Bible’s theology is based upon historical fact. It needs to be pointed out that even during Paul’s time the enemies of Christianity were trying to make rubble, the foundational historical truth of the greatest event in human history, verifiably substantiated by over 500 eyewitnesses that Jesus is alive and has risen from the dead! A risen Jesus hung around for 40 days. His resurrection is also testified to by the Roman historian Josephus.

Paul is a guardian of history defending the faith and the reliability of Biblical history.

What do you know of your family’s history? Your town’s? Your state’s history? Does it matter? What do you know of United States’ history? What will you pass on to the next generation?

Christians are to be guardians of history and truth because the movement of God is seen through their lens. His character is not left to the whim of current fashion but to the rock-solid foundation on which human events take place. Those stories need to be told accurately and retold.

Who is Jesus? Remove the historical record and in the minds of human beings He could either cease to exist or be made to be whom ever we want Him to be.

Today children learn dishonest things about Thomas Jefferson. I say dishonest because to tell a half truth is to lie and a deceive. They learn Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and make a point of emphasizing that he was a slaveholder.

What do they not learn?

That Jefferson wrote regarding slavery ***–*** *“I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just”* … speaking of the contest between master and slave, Jefferson states, *“the Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest.”* [[9]](#footnote-9)

Another thing they don’t learn is that the first expansion of the U.S. in 1787 was the Northwest Territory (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin) where slavery was forbidden. And they don’t learn that the condition, under the Northwest Ordinance for receiving that land, was that slavery would be eternally forbidden.[[10]](#footnote-10)

A history passed down must be full and it must be honest. I heard Joe Battaglia once say, *“If it is not true, it’s an agenda.”* Totalitarians politicize everything because, in their view, everything needs to be controlled. My opinion is history tells us that the move toward totalitarian control is always built upon lies in order to further their agenda.

Why are the original colleges and universities like Harvard, Princeton and Yale so secular? They were originally theological centers for the training up of pastors. Because they have chosen to relinquish their founding history and goals.

Why is the YMCA now the Y because the organizational heads forgot their history and the principles on which they were founded? Their organization lost the guardians of their history and calling.

Do we live in the eternal now or as George Orwell writes, *“The endless present?”*Media cycles tend to keep us there. If a post is a day old, we don’t waste our time reading it. We feel we’ve got to stay up with the current, hour to hour stuff.

What does the historical event on Mt. Sinai have to do with the historical event on the Mt. of Beatitudes? They were separated by 1300 years. That is your history. Find out and be a guardian of the history.

As I said at the start, today those writing Christianity for the next generation believe the text is lying (it is to be interpreted with suspicion) until there is hard evidence to prove differently.

For instance, they address the Bible assuming the Exodus never really happened. The conquest of the land of Canaan never took place. David might have been a local chieftain but no evidence points to him as a great King of Israel. Solomon probably didn’t exist; he is only an illustration of a religious point the human writer is trying to make. What do you know of history and how will you be a guardian in order to transfer it to the next generation?

Beware of the speed in which politicians, social media, publishers, radio talk shows, and TV rush to establish or falsify the facts to fit a narrative they want to promote. It is a rush to define history in terms of how it will benefit an ideology.

George Orwell is right on when he said, “The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

We understand God’s grace because it is based in human history. We understand God’s love, mercy, justice, wrath, because it is based in accurate, factual, human history. We understand salvation and sanctification because it is based in real life human experience. Our history. We *have* lived it and *are* living it right now.

Are you a guardian of that history? Do you tell the history of your salvation, God’s faithfulness, God’s intervention at your time of need, and pass it on to others? Tyranny hides and selects history. Totalitarians can erase history or re-write it. *“Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”*[[12]](#footnote-12) Freedom remembers and applies accurate history seeing God at work in it.

Ronald Reagan said in 1989 during his farewell address, *“We have got to teach history based not on what’s in fashion but what’s important …”*[[13]](#footnote-13)

If we teach what is in fashion, we live in the endless present but teaching the next generation what is important is living from the lessons God taught us through history. This is true for the Church as well as the culture.

Be a guardian of His story.

1. David Horner, *Remembering to Remember: The Stories of God’s People*, Biola.edu/blogs, Nov. 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Google, How many times does the New Testament Quote the Old Testament? Christianity.Stackexchange.com, Jan. 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Marc Kovac, *Federal Judge Sides With Transgender Residents On Changing Ohio Birth Certificates*, dispatch.com, Dec. 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Tiffany Nguyen, genetics.thetech.org, March 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. As an example see, *Ehrman’s Statement: The New Testament Gospels Are Historically Unreliable Accounts of Jesus*, thebestschools.org, March 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John Oswalt, *The Bible Among The Myths*, Zondervan, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Larry Arnn, *Orwell’s 1984 and Today*, imprimis.hillsdale.edu, Dec. 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XVIII: Manners*, teachingamericanhistory.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Northwest Ordinances United States [1784, 1785, 1787],* Britannica.com. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. George Orwell Quotes, allauthor.com. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 2 Corinthians 3:17, NASB. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Larry Arnn quoting Ronald Reagan, *Orwell’s 1984 and Today*, imprimis.hillsdale.edu, Dec. 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)