

**HT 501  
Church History  
From  
the Beginning to 1650**

**Lecture #2  
January 11, 2021**

**Dr. Robby Dean**

- 1. To get the student to think about the nature of history and the issues of history.**
- 2. To acquaint the student with the basic issues of doing history and historiography.**
- 3. To understand the importance and meaning of history, why church history is so important to understanding who we are as individual, 21<sup>st</sup> century believers, what we believe, why we believe it, and how we got here.**

# **I. What is History, and what is Church History?**

**A. The importance of ultimate beliefs in the outworking of history.**

**B. Why is church history important?**

**C. How this course will benefit you.**

**D. What then is history?**

**E. Is history random and meaningless?**

**F. The Structure of History**

# The Structure of History

## 1. Is history random and meaningless?

**“I can read poetry and plays, and things of that sort, and do not dislike travels. But history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in. Can you?”**

**Jane Austen puts this words in the mouth of Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey***

## **2. The Structure of History**

### **a. What is *Historiography*?**

**COED “*the study of the writing of history and of written histories.*”**

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**Voltaire: “*no more than critical or scientific history, a type of historical thinking in which the historian made up his mind for himself instead of repeating whatever stories he found in old books.*”**

**Hegel and other used it to mean world history or “simply universal” history.**

**Late nineteenth-century positivists saw it as simply the discovery of general laws governing the course of the events which it was history’s business to recount.**

- 1. Is history cyclical? Linear?**
- 2. What is the causation in history?**
- 3. Is there a purpose to history?**

# GOD

Personal-Infinite

INFINITE-  
IMPERSONAL  
Universe

FINITE UNIVERSE

*Man*  
*Animals*  
*Vegetation*  
*Matter/Energy*

*God*  
*Man*  
*nature*

# The Basis of Knowledge

	SYSTEM	STARTING POINT	METHOD
Autonomous Systems of Perception	RATIONALISM	Innate ideas; <u>Faith</u> in human ability	Independent use of logic & reason
	EMPIRICISM	Sense perceptions; External experience; Scientific method; <u>Faith</u> in human ability	Independent use of logic & reason
	MYSTICISM	Inner, private experience; Intuition; <u>Faith</u> in human ability	Independent, Nonlogical, Nonrational, Nonverifiable
Divine Viewpoint	REVELATION	<u>Faith</u> in the objective revelation of God	Dependent use of logic and reason

**Application**

**Political/National or Individual Decisions**

**This is where we talk and argue.**

**Ethics: What is right? What is wrong? What is good or bad?**

**Epistemology: How do we know truth? Right from wrong? Just or unjust?**

**Metaphysics: Ultimate reality, i.e., God, matter, energy, nothing**

**Foundation of *all* thought**

**Logical Sequence**

**These are the real issues, usually ignored.**

**Pressures of life**

**“Thomas J. Altizer holds that the ‘first requirement’ of any intellectual inquiry which will break the impasse of modern thought ‘is a forthright confession of the death of the God of Christendom, a full acknowledgment that the era of Christian civilization has come to an end, with the result that all cognitive meaning and all moral values that were once historically associated with the Christian God have collapsed.’ ”**

**~R. J. Rushdoony, *The Meaning of History*.**

**“God has died in *our* time, in *our* history, in *our* existence.”**

**~Althizer, 1963**

**“This meaning of ‘historical’ is intimately related to the modern idea of ‘historicity’: for, in this perspective, ‘historicity’ means a total immersion in historical time, an immersion that is totally isolated from any meaning or reality that might lie beyond it.”**  
**Emphasis added**

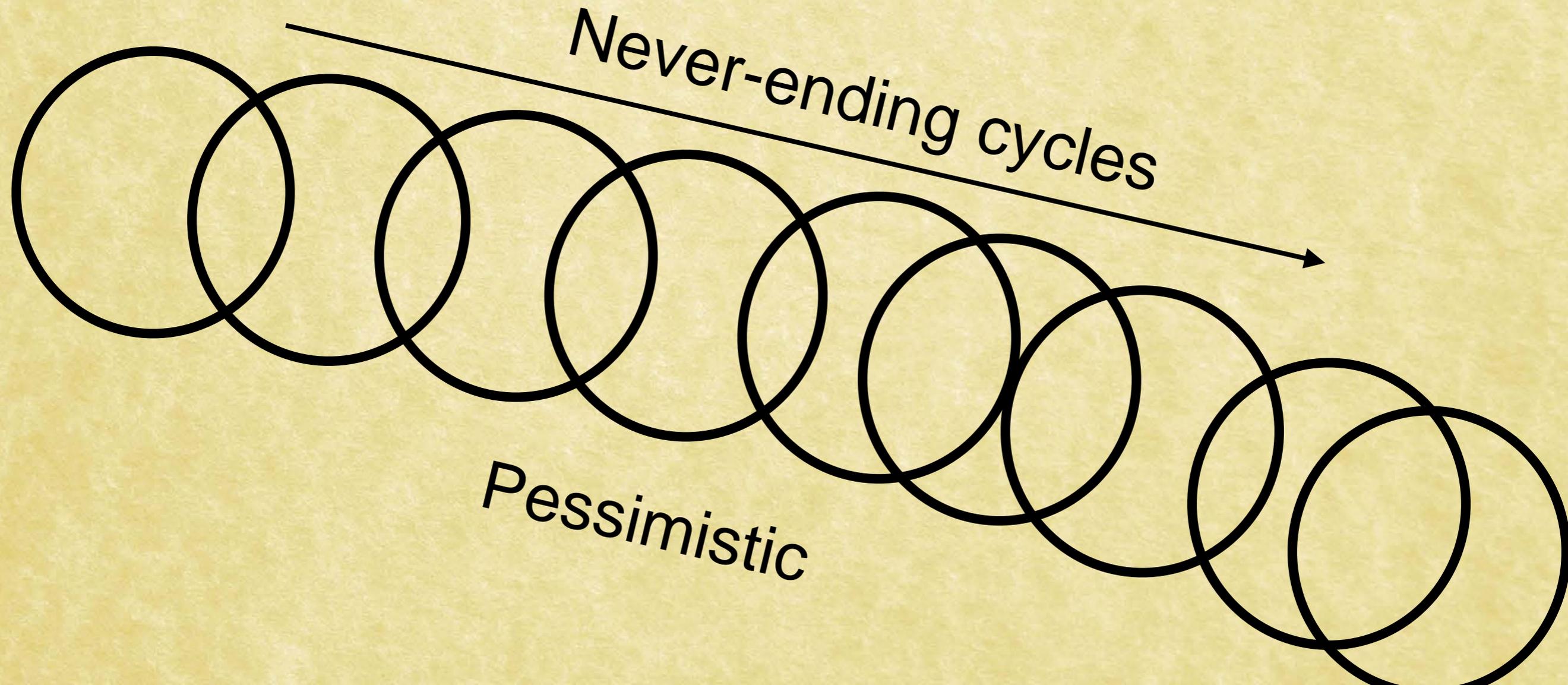
**~Althizer**

**Rushdoony concludes about this that:**

**“In terms of this faith, history can have no transcendental meaning. The life of Jesus must be read in exclusively naturalistic terms; nothing can be ‘historical’ if it represents a supernatural power, act, or influence. Jesus is accordingly ‘demythologized,’ and this ‘Jesus of history’ bears no resemblance to the Jesus of Scripture, who is God incarnate and the Messiah of prophecy.”**

1. ***The Cyclical School.*** The cyclical view of history is perhaps that underlying view of all non-Christian views of history. It is the view which is part of all Asian religions as well as ancient civilizations.

Causality is always the same, history is a never ending treadmill. No resolution of evil.



## **2. The Judeo-Christian worldview of history.**

**A straight line which leads to the resolution of evil.**

**History is the outworking of a personal-infinite-Creator God who is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. Thus, He creates all things, but stands outside of His creation. He is totally other and self-existent.**

**Causation: God directs the course of history indirectly through His providence, directly through divine interventions, and most significantly through the incarnation.**

**Resolution in the  
Kingdom of God**



**Two key figures:**

**Augustine of Hippo (354–430) *City of God*.**

**Joachim of Fiori, three dispensations:**

- **The Age of the Father (OT)**
- **The Age of the Son (Church Age)**
- **The Age of the Spirit (Future resolution and conversion of the whole world)**

**3. *Progressivism.*** The Enlightenment brought out a third view which focused on progress. This is the root of modern ideas of progressivism. The straight line optimism of Christianity was kept, but they dumped the idea of God and any Christian rationale. God no longer guided history, but humans did. Mankind became the mover and the sole agents of change.

**Morality and technology are viewed as centered in man, so this is the humanistic worldview coming to fruition in a godless universe.**

**“emancipated from his shackles, released from the empire of fate and from that of the enemies of progress, advancing with a firm and sure step along the path of truth, virtue, and happiness.”**

**~Marquis de Condorcet, Enlightenment philosopher**

#### **4. Historicism.**

**This fourth view also developed out of the Enlightenment, but this came out of Germany in a reaction to the progressive ideas out of England and France. Historicism abandons both God and the idea of a linear view of history.**

***The central idea is culture.* Each nation has a distinctive culture and the historian must understand cultures other than his own through the use of empathy. The forerunner of this view was an early eighteenth century Italian, Giambattista Vico. It led to the development of romanticism in late-eighteenth-century Germany which became one of many factors leading to the Nazi philosophy of Hitler.**

## **5. Marxism.**

**Karl Marx kept the idea of a linear history from Christianity, but coupled it with the dialectic of Hegel.**

## **2. What is “history?”**

**A. Robert F. Rea, “History is the study of the past in order to understand the present and to improve the future.”**

**B. Hannah provides a definition of history on p. 25**

- a. History is “His Story” the outworking of God’s plan in time. The Story of God’s grace, redemption, and glorification through and in spite of the rebellion of the angels and the rebellion of mankind.**

## **B. Hannah provides a definition of history on p. 25**

- b. “As a discipline, history is the study of the recorded past, with the goal of presenting it to contemporaries; it is learning through historical inquiry, the gathering of records with a view to telling a story. Ultimately, it is an attempt, through the search of the past, to explain the meaning and function of the present while providing hope and direction for the future.”**