

THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Historical interpretation is the process by which we describe, analyze, evaluate and create an explanation of past events on primary and secondary historical sources. History is important to study because it is essential for all of us in understanding ourselves and the world around us. There is a History is absolutely necessary of every field and topic to know about past. By the Theological Interpretation, human action are considered as motivated by divine will. It is believed that there must be some reason for all that had happened in the past. God created the whole universe and everything takes place by his dispensation. This conception of the past has been advocated from time immemorial and has its adherents even in Modern times. Generally, great Historians believe in divine will. So History was treated as co-ordinate with the purpose of creation. It cannot be denied that religion Eastern or Western has played a very significant role in moulding human character and values.

Keywords: Historical Interpretation, Past Events, History, Divine Will.

Introduction

History is the knowledge of and study of the past. It is the story of the past and a form of collective memory, history is the story of who we are, where we come from and can potentially reveal where we are headed. In every age, humans have been overwhelmed with the curiosity to know more and more about their human relationship.¹ History is response to that. Therefore, History can be accepted as a description of the study and achievements of human works. So the main duty of the Historian is to present the events of the past and explain their correlation. Historians have drawn attention to Historiography in every era. The nature of social needs has either evolved or changed due to the dynamics of the era. The needs of society form the main basis of the concept of history. It is the duty of every historian to present history after finding actual facts according to social needs. By the comparative method, the sense of ethnicity can be eradicated by removing the prejudice prevailing among Historians. Only then can History be read and understood in real terms. As the personal view of the Historian keeps on weeping over time. Therefore, there is also a change in view towards its era-era History.² Initially, the scholars had adopted the religious approach towards History, but in the course of time that attitude changed. At the attitude of man is flexible there has always been changed in it, the approaches of History has also altered from time to time. In the beginning people adopted theological approach of History which was later on replaced by several new approaches emerged-Idealistic, Orientalist, Imperialistic, Marxist, Nationalist, Subaltern and Post Modernist attitude of History and each one has its own significance in History.³

Theological Interpretation of History

In the beginning writing of History was strongly influenced by religion which gave rise to different religious concepts of History according to the principles and beliefs of the own religion of writer.⁴ Theological Interpretation sets up psychological and emotional barriers. Violence and Bloodshed occurred due to the clash of rival groups on religious basis. Meaningless wars, the suffering of innocent people due to exploitation, wastage of men and materials in destructive activities and the rest are explained with great difficulty. When there is a clash between Christianity and Islam or between Islam

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and Hinduism how is the success of one party at a particular juncture and of the other at a different juncture to be explained and interpreted.⁵ This kind of explanation leads to philosophical speculations on the nature of man, universe and God. The Historian should be interested in discovering and explaining human factors and not to take shelter under the shade of theological values. It can not be denied that religion of Eastern or Western has played a very significant role in moulding human character and values.

Different Theological Concept of History

Parsi's Theological concept of History, there is constant conflict between truth and false and the victory of truth is the main aim of History. This is also the need of society. Everything is guided by a supreme power in the world.⁶

Jewish's Theological concept of History, man considers himself to be the most dear of God as he has seen the light of the day by his grace Jewish religious scriptures relate that History is not only the study of the past events, but also the expression of the will of God because he is the maker of the universe. So, Jewish concept is very clear that History is not only the presentation of the events of past. History is the expression of the will of God because He is the creator.⁷

Islamic's Theological concept of History, Islam believes that there is constant struggle between the God and evil. It regards the birth of Prophets, the rise of religions of empires as specific events. It is due to the will of God. The prominent Islamic historian Ibn-Khaldun considers dynasties and empires as organism having span of life. After expansion of Islamic territory, the Islamic rulers stressed on the journey of Macca and Madina atleast once in the life of man, therefore it is said that History is a conflict or march of man from darkness to light.⁸

Christian's Theological concept is the will of God is considered supreme and it is believed that all the activities in the world take place because of his will. According to St. Augustine that History is description of the deeds of God. Hence God is considered supreme in the making of History. Modern Historian Ranke also says that God lives in History and great men are the representative of God who play significant role in the making of History.⁹

Hindu's Theological concept of History emphasises on the role of greatman. Hindu mythology says that when the significance of religion reduces, God takes birth to prop the decaying structure of society and makes the human being able to get rid of pain and torture. Religion is also considered supreme in Hindu culture and it is said to be path for the attainment of salvation.¹⁰ Algerian-Roman philosopher and theologian St. Augustine(A.D.354-430)said that **Sacred duty of man is follow of the command God**. A notable German Historian Ranke¹¹ said that **God lives in History**.

Secular Interpretation of History

History is continuous process of interaction between the Historians and his facts. History is very much concerned with the past events. Every human action is destined to divine dispensation. The Interpretation of History through the medium of human understanding frees the historians from religious preconditions. The draw of the past is sought to be explained and interpreted to present from human angles. This gives greater elbow room for the Historians to scrutinise the events and plausible causes.¹² The Historians in trying to understand the past also understand the present in a more meaningful way. The perils of early voyages of discovery, the fearlessness in landing upon unknown continents after chartering the turbulent oceans raises in the hearts of the present a thrill and pride in the adventurous spirit of human beings. At the same time the follies of the past, the obstacles in the form of ignorance and prejudice, shake off the present to strive for great attainment. In short the Historian is able to survey the past and present events though perils and pleasure.¹³ **The most distinctive feature of the Historical Interpretation of course is its emphasis on the time dimension. This forces as to look at the present as the product of the past, and also as a transitory point in an on going evolutionary process.**¹⁴ In this connection certain Modern Interpretation have been given on this point : A fresh reorientation of Historical studies began to appear at the close of the Middle Ages. Truly speaking a **reaction began with the Renaissance which brought about secularization of thought**. Therefore, the main task of the Renaissance period was to bring about a fresh reorientation of Historical studies. The outbreak of Renaissance was made to a humanistic view of History based on that of the ancient.

Thus, we can say that no doubt man and religion are closely related to each other but it is essential that a scholar must be secular while writing History. Marxist Historians have altogether rejected the theological interpretation of History and emphasised on the Economic aspect of History. Their thinking is not religion but Economy. So, the significance of Theological concept of History writing was based, but now a days the Historians began to think about new interpretation or approach of History.

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