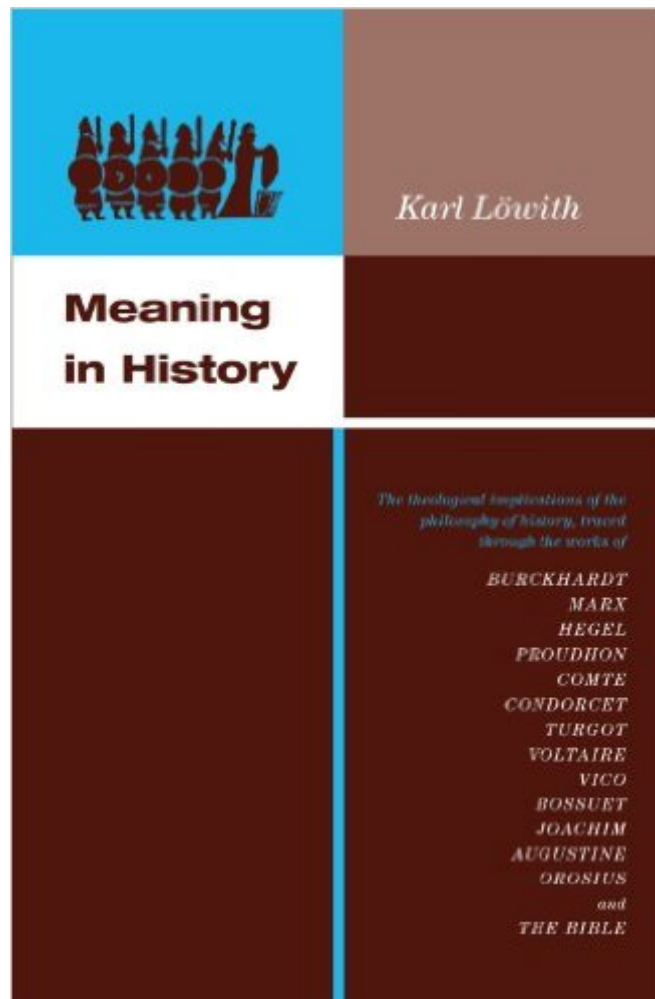


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Meaning In History: The Theological Implications Of The Philosophy Of History



Synopsis

Modern man sees with one eye of faith and one eye of reason. Consequently, his view of history is confused. For centuries, the history of the Western world has been viewed from the Christian or classical standpointâfrom a deep faith in the Kingdom of God or a belief in recurrent and eternal life-cycles. The modern mind, however, is neither Christian nor paganâand its interpretations of history are Christian in derivation and anti-Christian in result. To develop this theory, Karl LÃ¶withâbeginning with the more accessible philosophies of history in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries and working back to the Bibleâanalyzes the writings of outstanding historians both in antiquity and in Christian times. "A book of distinction and great importance. . . . The author is a master of philosophical interpretation, and each of his terse and substantial chapters has the balance of a work of art."âHelmut Kuhn, *Journal of Philosophy*

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Karl LÃ¶with (1897-1973) was a German philosopher; he wrote in the Preface to this 1949 book, "I have tried to be honest with ... my reader about the possibility, or rather the impossibility, of imposing on history a reasoned order or of drawing out the working of God. History as a partial record of human experience is too deep and, at the same time, too shallow to put into relief the humble greatness of a human soul which can give meaning... to what otherwise would be a burden for man. History no more proves or disproves the incomparable value of a single man's righteousness and heroism in the face of powers of the world than it proves or disproves the

existence of God... [Nietzsche] was wrong in assuming that the pseudo-religious makeup of nature and history is of any real consequence to a genuine Christian faith in God, as revealed in Christ and hidden in nature and history." (Pg. v) He considers the ideas of philosophers such as Augustine; Joachim; Bousset; Vico; Voltaire; Condorcet; Comte; Hegel; Marx; Burckhardt, etc. He concludes, "The attempt at elucidation of the dependence of the philosophy of history on the eschatological history of fulfillment and salvation does not solve the problem of our historical thinking. It rather poses a new and more radical problem, for it raises the question of whether the 'last things' are really the first things and whether the future is really the proper horizon of a truly human existence." (Pg. 204) He adds, "The modern mind... eliminates from its progressive outlook the Christian implication of creation and consummation, while it assimilates from the ancient world view the idea of an endless and continuous movement, discarding its circular structure.

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