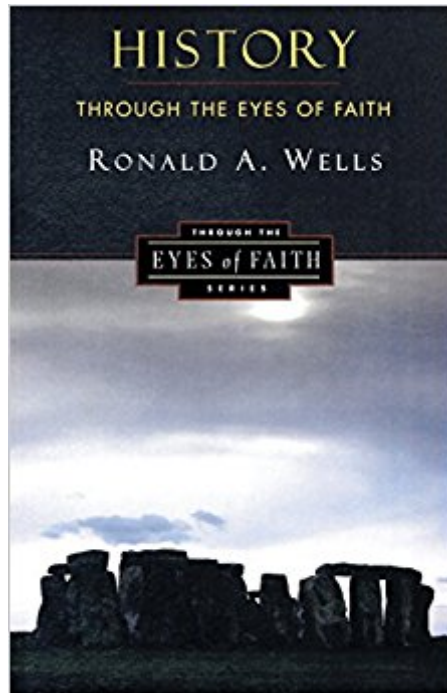




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# History Through The Eyes Of Faith: Christian College Coalition Series



## Synopsis

Integrating faith with introductory Western history, this text provides a Christian perspective on the major epochs, issues, and events of Western Civilization. It details the role of the Greeks and Hebrews, Jesus in history, the Renaissance, and more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Integrating faith with introductory Western history, this text provides a Christian perspective on the major epochs, issues, and events of Western Civilization. It details the role of the Greeks and Hebrews, Jesus in history, the Renaissance, and more.

This comprehensive study, one of a series cosponsored by the Christian College Coalition, integrates Christian faith with a historical view of Western civilization. Ronald A. Wells clearly outlines the roles of the ancient Greeks and the Hebrews, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the modern world and much more, revealing Western history as seen through the eyes of faith.

I used this for a college history class. Very boring

The book is a little dated, but it is still relevant. It is not a casual read unless you are history of philosophy major. He tends to be very supportive of the historical Catholic Church and even criticizes those split instead of trying to purify the church, but he still does do a masterful job in explaining the influences of history and Christian thought on each other. It may not be a must read for a layman,

but it is full of food for thought for the serious thinker.

Good

great condition!

This is a good read for those who wish to have a deeper understanding of the Role of God in history. I recommend it as it is not only a good value, but it will get you thinking.

Putting together God and history is always difficult. I like this book very much for two reasons. 1) The introduction deals with method in history and which place you can give God in historical science. 2) The review of the history of Western civilization(s) is simply great. I don't quite agree with the author's perspective in the introduction, but it is one of the good contributions I have seen on the subject. Studying history of Reformation myself, I found the insights in the book very good and challenging. This book not the ultimate answer to the question God and history, but a good beginning. I'd recommend it to people who study history (whether Christian or not).

I agree with Ronald Wells's view on the purpose for studying history, that it's about "understanding other humans in the past, and in that understanding we may understand ourselves better." (pg. 232) What a brave undertaking to write a Christian-based history of western civilization that will be acceptable to Catholics and Protestants! Typical of his disarming style is this statement about the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, pg. 114: "They were not solely theological (in the narrow definition) but were about the meaning of theology in social and political contexts." This kind of statement helps readers see that "Protestant" or "Catholic" do not just mean doctrine, but also have good and bad potential socio-politically. One of the best qualities of Wells's work is his proactive attempt to avoid generalizing, cautioning the reader at many points to not generalize too much. For example, he presents the Renaissance, which was the revival of humanities and sciences due to the rediscovery of Greco-Roman classicism, as an amoral thing. The humanities and sciences can reveal more about the mind of God but also can encourage man to rely on himself. He also avoids generalizing too much about the Reformation. When talking about the Reformation, he looks at pros and cons on the bases of beliefs and the division and violence that resulted. He remains remarkably objective, given his own Protestantism, because he's looking at how much the Reformation honored God. In his and my belief, the Reformation honored God

theologically, but the strife, for which Protestants were as much to blame as Catholics, was sinful. I find his material about the 1700s a bit less helpful because I think he misinterprets the Enlightenment. Emphasis on the natural rights of mankind increased in the Enlightenment era, but it was not a result of rejecting God. The French philosophes, whose rationalism influenced the French Revolution through their rejection of religion as "superstitious", were not the originators of the idea of natural rights, and I believe they are overemphasized in discussions of the Enlightenment era. The idea of natural rights has always been present in Christian political theory. Wells does correctly state that the major Protestant reformer John Calvin's political theory heavily influenced the United States Constitution, but he misunderstands the Declaration of Independence as an expression of humanistic Enlightenment thought. He believes the Declaration of Independence was liberal and the Constitution conservative, creating an unhelpful distinction he generally does well avoiding. The Declaration of Independence's last paragraph is completely the opposite of the French Revolution's godless Declaration of the Rights of Man, for it appeals to divine justice and to the help of an active God, with the phrases "appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions" and "with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence". I would have liked for him to delve into the background of the Founders' political theory, looking at the 1600s in Britain, when the Reformation directly led to a limitation of the king's power and an English Bill of Rights. The Christian origin of John Locke's political theory would have also been helpful to include. I think the best part of the book covers the 1800s-1900s, because at this point, Wells can at least get consensus from all Christians and no longer devote as much attention to balancing Catholic and Protestant viewpoints. Every Christian reading his book can agree that Europe's decline in the 20th century was due to mankind forgetting God. The French Revolution, which with time led to greater secularization of all of Europe, forms a kind of bookend with World Wars I and II, which put to death the western ideal of continuous progress, as Wells explains. Wells discusses the reason why people prior to World War I believed true progress was inevitable, and views "manifest destiny" in America as a humanistic movement couched in religious terms, which I agree with. On pg. 178, he explains why progress was considered inevitable back then. "Early in the century, slavery was abolished in the British Empire, and later it was abolished in two large slave-holding nations, the United States and Brazil. The serfs in Russia were also freed, and human life seemed to be valued in other ways as it had never been before." He does a fine job explaining how World War I's long, drawn-out struggle and World War II's Holocaust and nuclear destruction led the western world to an identity crisis. Industrialization, which was linked to the perception of progress, had created disillusionment among workers in the 1800s, but now it had created an enormous death count, disillusioning all of

society. Strategy was no longer valuable when there was an endless stalemate in the trenches. The purposelessness of it all made a deep impact on the public consciousness, even more so after "the war to end all wars" (WWI) gave way 20 years later to World War II. The second world war's worst atrocities included Stalin's gulags, the Holocaust, and the atomic bomb. I think Wells does a great job discussing the cause of present-day cynicism in America, as well. America was very optimistic about its own permanency and the promise of progress after World War II, and materialism was far more influential than faith in God in this mindset. Wells does well discussing the impact of Vietnam on America. The fact that America did not win the war and committed atrocities in Vietnam caused Americans to have a deep national identity crisis, and American self-confidence has not recovered since then. Wells considers John F. Kennedy the embodiment of the humanist ideal, which I think is an interesting thought, helping to explain the impact of his assassination on America. Wells links these decisive 1960s events to the Enlightenment's exaltation of humanity above God. I would have liked for him to also discuss the counterculture, describing the roles of Darwinist indoctrination and materialism in making the youth susceptible to godless hedonism. James Dean's *Rebel Without a Cause* film, the most influential movie in escalating the "generation gap", connected Darwinism and recklessness very clearly. There is helpful and interesting information all throughout. I enjoy reading quotes from other interpreters of history, which Wells uses neither too little nor too much. And though the purpose of his book requires a lot of philosophy and commentary, I think he gives neither too little nor too much of it. There is one statement he presents which I wonder if he misinterpreted from his source, found on pg. 179: "As the available figures seem to indicate, during the nineteenth century in America, at least one-fifth of all pregnancies were aborted, with Michigan having the national high at thirty-four percent." There was no safe way to get an abortion back then, and abortion was surely not an open matter that would have been recorded. I wonder if the statistic actually pertains to miscarriages. I like it that Wells ends the book with several encouraging, brief biographies of Christians who made a difference. It is praiseworthy that he warns Americans not to become jingoistic about their country as the only way God's kingdom can be advanced in the world. This is his message throughout the whole book: to not become so attached to a single viewpoint that it becomes more important than the Christian faith. This book is a very noble undertaking, and I think Wells carried it out very well.

Prof. Wells has written a book that is a must reading for all Christian history teachers at every level of education and for all Christians who aspire to be informed. I note that the work is most beneficial for history teachers because, for the layperson, the historical references to Rousseau, Locke,

Newton, and many others moves by very quickly, and it will probably be helpful if one already is familiar with these figures because a lot is not explained. This is a "no frills" work that brings us to the present historical situation or crisis (the term "crisis" is important to Prof. Wells, and I concur). He shows us that the secular-scientific-humanist world view that is dominant today is, indeed, a new religion that is in opposition to Christianity. The Christian person and the Christian worldview is at a disadvantage in this present historical crisis, but there is hope. Devotion to one's Christian faith can still produce wonderful accomplishments in one's personal activities as well as in the social and political realm. (He gives examples of five great people who have gone forth in the name of Jesus Christ to help a fallen world.) Still, our greatest hope for Prof. Wells is that the "City of Man" was, is, and always will be passing away as the tropism, so to speak, of Western Civilization is always towards "the City of God." The book is overwhelmingly satisfying, but I have given it four stars instead of five because, insofar as it is aimed to Christian readers as the author states, it could only have been strengthened by quotations from Scripture. Also, the writing might have been more carefully edited in sections. Nonetheless, again, I say to all educated Christians and especially to Christian history teachers: Read this book.

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