

# Battlegrounds of Natural History III: Historicism

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## Abstract

In 1970, George Gaylord Simpson discussed six foundations of natural history. Although his understanding of each foundation was largely in error, the six foundations are important. The third foundation, historicism, again shows that misunderstandings among modern scientists spring from their worldview of naturalism and that those errors are corrected by biblical theology, which remains the ultimate foundation for truth in natural history.

## What Is Historicism?

This is the third part in a series addressing the six foundations of natural history (Figure 1) proposed by George Gaylord Simpson (1970). After having affirmed a materialist worldview in his foundation of *naturalism* (Reed and Williams, 2011), and having affirmed his belief that natural history was firmly within the province of science through his belief in *actualism* (Reed and Williams, 2012), Simpson defined *historicism* as follows:

The term historicism is here used, with some stretching, as a tag for various principles and problems that arise from consideration of the configurations of the earth and the observable universe in relationship to time. (Simpson, 1970, p. 66)

Broadly, historicism is the belief in an external, objective reality that progresses in a linear fashion irreversibly through time. It is quite different from Eastern ideas of illusion (*maya* of Hinduism) or endless cycles. Furthermore, it implies the existence of purpose, unlike the innate randomness of materialism and postmodern nihilism. Simpson's various "principles and problems" are derivative of his materialist and positivist worldview. By "configurations," he meant the geological evolution of the Earth and the cosmos, and the snapshots of that history found in the rock and fossil records.

However, his misimpression that the study of history is a scientific endeavor creates significant internal tensions for

several reasons. First, the Western view of history is built on Christian theology (Reed, 1999). Second, Simpson's own view is inconsistent because his optimistic humanism cannot survive his bleak materialist determinism. This has become even more evident in the decades since Simpson. His views are largely outmoded in academic circles, and a more pessimistic nihilism threatens his confidence in truth being resident anywhere, even in science. This is not an isolated trend (Schaeffer, 1968; Rose, 2009).

But a review of Simpson (1970) is still profitable. His six foundations represent a keen insight into the modernist view of reality. Although postmodernism (contextualism, rejection of reason) is growing, there are still many people—especially in the sciences—who are operating with a modernist point of view. Many in the fields of geohistory or biohistory who are unaware of or reject recent philosophical developments

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BATTLEGROUND	SIMPSON'S DEFINITION
<b>naturalism</b>	Basic postulate of science; supernatural excluded from scientific explanation by definition.
<b>actualism</b>	Synonym of "uniformitarianism" in Lyellian sense. Present processes only options for past explanation.
<b>historicism</b>	Problems and procedures coming from consideration of state of Earth and cosmos over time.
<b>evolutionism</b>	"historical model or theory of life as changing directionally and irreversibly in the course of descent."
<b>mode of history</b>	Fuzzy gradualism; catastrophes occur, but not sudden, great, and worldwide.
<b>methods of scientific history</b>	Historical inferences are scientific as long as they are based on actualism, naturalism, and evolutionism.

Figure 1. "Historicism" is the third of Simpson's (1970) six foundations of natural history.

share Simpson's view. We will, therefore, address his concept of historicism here and discuss more recent developments in a later paper.

### **Why Historicism is Important**

For many centuries, the nature of time and history was a subject of intense interest to thinkers, from Plato to Kant. Historians generally addressed the contents of records and artifacts of the past, while philosophers dealt with context questions of time and existence. But the advance of secularization brought the growth of positivism—the idea that science was a superior source of truth compared to philosophy and theology. Development of scientific histories followed—politically and economically

with ideas such as Marxism, and biologically and geologically with natural history.

The Enlightenment dream has largely been achieved. Near the turn of the nineteenth century, Cuvier had waxed rhetorical: "Would it not be glorious," he said, for geologists to "burst the limits of time" just as Newtonian astronomers had "burst the limits of space?" (Rudwick, 2005, p. 1). Cuvier had more in mind than a legitimate knowledge of the past. He and his secularized peers were primarily interested in "bursting" history's connection with God. Deep time was an important step, removing the act of Creation (and its Creator) into a distant, fuzzy past. It is best understood in the context of Romans 1; secularists repressed the truth by pushing God so

far away in time that He held little relevance to man. Many Christians went along for the ride (Mortenson, 2004), in spite of Paul's assertion in Acts 17:27 that the Creator is near to every man.

Historicism matters to modern scientists because modern biology, geology, and astronomy have come to play prominent roles in the philosophical understanding of the nature of time and history. But scientists who dismiss theology and philosophy are poorly equipped to address its problems and puzzles. Their refusal to face the fact that their understanding of history is linked to their naturalistic belief system has compounded their error. Attempts to answer those kinds of questions scientifically distorts both history and science (Reed and Klevberg, 2014a).

Historicism matters to historians because in their attempts to make their discipline "scientific," they got the worst of science while losing the best of history. For a false sense of certainty, they have ceded almost all of Earth's past to geologists and biologists, and most of mankind's past to anthropologists. Also, having lost the Christian moorings they enjoyed for centuries, "revisionism" has become rampant.

Historicism *should* matter to Christians because God chose to reveal Himself on the stage of history. Much of the Bible is historical narrative, and Christianity has learned to its detriment that the surrender of that part of revelation ultimately means the surrender of it all. The "blessed hope" of the space-time return and rule of Christ on a new Earth is a hope rooted in the reality of all the historical events leading to it, just as His incarnation was the culmination of millennia of historical events. One cannot divorce Christian theology from Christian history.

But this is a lesson not all Christians have learned. Positivism has crept into the church and even bled into creationism (Reed and Klevberg, 2014b). Many theologians have been beguiled by the

supposed certainty of science, thinking it can bolster revelation. They forget that science itself cannot be justified apart from revelation. Few seem to realize how deeply this error has penetrated. It is seen in every dismissal or diminution of biblical truth, particularly the acceptance of the geologic timescale and theistic evolution, which lead to rejection of God's continued providence. The common denominator is the substitution of human knowledge for revelation or its subordination to science. This has serious consequences. For unbelievers, a fetish for science leads to inevitable disappointment when meaning is lost. This has led to postmodern skepticism. The absolute science of Simpson (1970) today cannot even be defined (Hogan, 2010; Laudan, 1983; Rose, 2009).

In less than 200 years, Cuvier's vision was achieved. By the mid-twentieth century, a confident modernism reigned, with outspoken atheists enjoying the benefits of the Christian West while dismissing God. Typical of that age was George Gaylord Simpson (1902–1984), perhaps the most prominent exponent of secular natural history of his day. In his later life, he saw the beginnings of the collapse of his worldview and was forced to defend the neo-Darwinian/Lyellian consensus against scientific creationism, and against neocatastrophism and punctuationalism. In an extended essay (1970), he described six foundations of natural history in an attempt to stem the tide of opposition. They revealed the heart of secular natural history—positivist, materialist, evolutionist, and gradualist. Though his confidence is less acceptable today, his outline of natural history's foundations sheds light on how Christianity lost science and history, and that is worth untangling.

### Modern Historicism

Simpson (1970) thus is a useful milepost in our understanding of historicism. He reflected the stark materialist view that

matter and energy evolving through time were sufficient to explain reality. This reductionist metaphysic was accompanied by an equally reductionist view of knowledge; science was the measure of truth, and it could be applied to unobserved billions of years with confidence. Its adherents were equally confident that they could dismiss the millenia of theology and philosophy that had informed the Christian West during its development and rise to power. This bleak materialism existed in tension with an optimistic humanism. In the decades since Simpson, it is the former that has dominated.

Simpson's simple view is reflected in the points he addressed. He limited his discussion of historicism, excluding many weighty issues debated by philosophers for millennia. Instead, he focused on debates over the nature of uniformitarianism (cf. Reed, 2010). He simply assumed scientific materialism was true. He skipped over the nature of time and reality, and how they interact, to critiques of Reijer Hooykaas and Stephen J. Gould, the merits of a steady-state model for Earth's geological history, and the entropic (yet still evolutionary) progression of Earth and life.

A firm believer in naturalism, Simpson was thus a positivist—he believed in science (and historical speculation masquerading as science) in the way Martin Luther believed in the Bible. In this, he was doubly deceived—first in the materialistic content of his faith, and second, in his inability to see that his “rational science” was built on a faith-based belief system of naturalism. This latter blindness remains common; most secularists today refuse to admit their worldview. For them, as for Simpson, their opinions are simply “science” and thus true by definition.

### Since Simpson

For Simpson, history was a reductionist exercise in materialism directed by Lyell and Darwin. Unfortunately, many

scientists today, unfamiliar with recent advances in the philosophy of history, share his outmoded view. But developments since Simpson have reopened some of the questions he ignored.

Simpson did not discuss Kuhn's (1962) contribution to the nature of science and its knowledge, but many others have. Kuhn appears more and more to have been a milestone in the understanding of science, using secular sociology to undermine the pristine positivism carried forward from the Enlightenment. He reminded us that science is performed by people who are imperfect and driven by motives other than a rarefied desire for truth. In a sense, Kuhn (1962) pulled science off its twentieth-century pedestal.

Without its historic Christian underpinnings, there was nothing to arrest that fall. Despite confident arguments in the creation trials of the 1980s, scientism was crumbling. In response to the McLean vs. Arkansas (1982) decision, Laudan (1983) noted that science could not be adequately defined, and by 2000 Meyer noted that such questions have largely ceased to be of interest.

Another recent trend in natural history has been the change from *scientists* like Simpson (1970) carrying the philosophical load to professional philosophers becoming more interested in the workings of that discipline. The recent Geological Society of America Special Paper's publication, *Rethinking the Fabric of Geology* (Baker, 2013), celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the 1963 symposium, *The Fabric of Geology*, in which Simpson and other scientists discussed emerging problems with uniformitarianism. In the new volume, the three lead articles are authored by professional philosophers, not geologists. Two, Carol Cleland and Derek Turner, have written extensively on the subject since the turn of the century. The third, Gadi Kravitz, noted:

It can therefore be said that the geologists' knowledge of the past is

based on pretheoretical assumptions, often of a metaphysical nature, not susceptible to logical or empirical proof. In a certain sense, *they are the products of the geologists' imagination*. (Kravitz, 2013, p. 21, emphasis added).

Simpson would likely have been quivering with rage had he read this.

### Critique of Simpson

Simpson's (1970) view of historicism was profoundly and unconsciously influenced by his worldview, yielding an arrogance that *knew* it was nothing more or less than pure scientific truth. His positivism blinded him to the issues outside of science involved in time and history, resting as it did on his prior foundations of naturalism and actualism. He gave no thought to the Christian basis for history and its meaning that had infused the West for centuries, and so he had no explanation for the linear, progressive view of time or of the purposeful significance that has always been present in Western views of the past. Thus, any analysis of Simpson (1970) must begin with his positivism.

### Problems with Postivism

*Positivism* is the elevation of science to being the basis for true knowledge, commonly at the expense of philosophy and theology. More technical definitions can be found, but the essence that exists as an underlying meme in our culture is not so much a technical theory as it is an unconscious presupposition. Positivism exercised profound influence in the past two centuries, carrying with it a scientific arrogance that has only begun to diminish in recent decades. People have begun to realize that science and engineering cannot answer the deepest questions of the human condition and that the human condition should make us cautious when scientists and engineers claim to have those answers.

As pointed out by Reed (2001) and Reed et al. (2004), positivism derives from the prior metaphysical assumption of materialism. If ultimate reality is matter and energy, then it only makes sense that disciplines that study matter and energy would be able to provide ultimate answers. This is in contrast to the Christian worldview, in which God is the ultimate reality, and ultimate truth rests on His revelation and the exploration into its content from the perspective of human experience, as creatures created in His image.

Both Lyell's uniformitarianism and Darwin's evolution are inherently materialistic, and so are inherently positivistic. That influence can be seen by reading the works of almost all of their apologists, and Simpson (1970) was no exception. Although Lyell and Darwin were more circumspect for societal reasons, their twentieth-century followers became bold, openly asserting the irrelevance of Christianity and the nonexistence of its God. In all cases, a pronounced positivism is present, usually assumed and not argued.

That is why Simpson (1970) addressed natural history as a branch of *science*. If reality is matter and energy, the path to truth must be found in human knowledge, the most certain of which is science. He displayed the confident positivism of the mid-twentieth century, not realizing that it would soon be eclipsed by a postmodern relativism. It was a time when advertisers could sell a product simply by noting that "four out of five scientists" liked it. Any branch of knowledge wanting to achieve truth transformed itself into a "science" of some sort. Adler (1965) discussed this fetish for science and how it affected disciplines traditionally considered distinct from science, particularly philosophy and history:

I know that there are enough varieties of positivism to permit the professors to retain their individuality, but I insist that behind the multiplicity

of technical jargons there is a single doctrine. The essential point of that doctrine is simply the affirmation of science, and the denial of philosophy and religion. (Adler, 1992, pp. 31–32)

### Foundation Damage

Reed and Williams (2011, 2012) demonstrated that Simpson's (1970) foundations of naturalism and actualism failed to stand rigorous inspection. Philosophical naturalism is self-refuting, because it must incorporate axioms that are justified only by the Christian theology that it opposes. Actualism (whether used as a synonym for uniformitarianism per Simpson, or used to define a *part* of uniformitarianism per Gould, 1965) fails because naturalism cannot justify the causal continuity on which it rests. Even recent attempts to do so (Kravitz, 2013), based on a link to the second law of thermodynamics, end up using circular reasoning (Reed and Klevberg, 2014a) and so fail.

The failures of both naturalism and actualism are contrasted to points where Christian theology provides answers that its opponent cannot (Lisle, 2009; Reed, 2001; Reed and Williams, 2011, 2012). Christians cannot accept either naturalism or actualism, even with theological window dressing. For example, *methodological naturalism*, vigorously advocated by many Christian thinkers (e.g., Poe and Mytryk, 2007) is not, as they believe, a prerequisite to science; it is rather an attempt to devalue the original *Christian* scientific method with an *a priori* and circular definition of science. Likewise, *actualism* rests on uniformity, which in turn rests on an unbroken chain of cause and effect, which in its turn can be justified only by an infinite, eternal God.

### Sins of Omission

Simpson (1970) failed to address a philosophy of history: a reason for its importance, the basis for the structure of

time, or a justification for understanding the past. He should have taken to heart the truth expressed by Clark (1994) that history presupposes a *philosophical* context. These failings are most likely tied to his materialist view of reality, a positivist view of knowledge, and the corresponding uniformitarianism that saw history as an extension of science. That point of view cannot be supported without a series of Christian presuppositions (Reed, 2001; Reed et al., 2004) that invalidate it as an opponent of Christian history. Furthermore, his reductionist views are an aberration in thinking about history for millennia, from Moses to Aristotle to Kant.

For example, Sproul et al. (1984) followed a richer tradition, recognizing origins as a *metaphysical* question. They noted that the basic question of origins—“why is there something instead of nothing?”—was clearly outside of science. There are only four possible answers, all also outside of science. The first—phenomena are illusory—destroys science. The second—the universe created itself—violates the principle of noncontradiction and thus destroys the logic that underlies science. The third—matter and/or energy are eternally self-existent—is invalidated by the observed existence of anything that is not eternally self-existent by any beginning, such as the big bang. This leaves only one possible answer: phenomena were created by something else that is itself eternally self-existent. That option saves science but, by inserting God, invalidates its autonomy.

Simpson (1970) merely assumed the absence of God and revelation without addressing that metaphysical question or the logic of its possible answers. In doing so, he simply smuggled biblical elements, such as the intelligibility of nature and time, in through the back door (Glover, 1984). Geologically, Simpson could not justify linear time, a beginning and end of the universe, or the idea of progress in history. He

could not even justify uniformity as the basis for uniformitarianism, though his faith in that view of history never wavered. He distinguished “geohistory” from “biohistory” in an attempt to save the former from his own evolutionary nonuniformity, even though materialism provides no real basis for distinguishing between living matter and nonliving matter in this manner:

The question of directionalism in biohistory will be discussed as an aspect of evolutionism. Directionalism in geohistory in either of its extreme forms is not now tenable. It is now clear that such processes as orogeny, vulcanism, and glaciation have varied greatly from time to time and place to place. At particular places and times in the past they have been both more and less active than at present. There is no evident regular progression either of decrease or increase in their force. To that extent, Lyell’s contention of configurational uniformity is confirmed. (Simpson, 1970, p. 67)

Of course, directionalism in time is not a separate empirical issue for either biology or geology. It is an *assumption* that underlies both. This is demonstrated on Simpson’s playing field simply by the empirical data collected since 1970 that contradict his assertions about past rates. To get around that problem, today’s uniformitarians admit that geologic processes, such as volcanism (Reed, 2012), occurred at far greater intensities in the past. It is ironic that it is this empirical evidence that struggles so hard against the straitjacket of the philosophical overlay of uniformitarianism. Today’s uniformitarians try to mask these discontinuities with an assumed “regularity” at a deeper level; manifested in plate tectonics, which has become the new static-earth model. Catastrophic eruptions, earthquakes, floods, etc. are all simply details of the overarching regularity of plates soaring out of, across, and into the mantle over time.

### Sins of Commission

Despite an inability to admit a belief system, Simpson’s (1970) ideas were permeated by his materialist metaphysic. A vocal denial of metaphysics by materialists cannot undo their practice of the same, even if they want to call it all science. Simpson was no exception:

The term historicism is here used, with some stretching, as a tag for various principles and problems that arise from consideration of the configurations of the earth and the observable universe in relationship to time. (Simpson, 1970, p. 66)

To fully understand the quote, one must understand Simpson’s special use of the term “configurations.” He drew a dichotomy between *immanence* and *configuration*. By the former, he meant the laws of nature that he assumed (philosophically) were intrinsic properties of matter. By the latter, he meant the historical outworking of natural law over time via geological phenomena. Attributing these two terms to science, however, did not really allow him to escape Clark’s dictum: “History requires philosophy” (Clark, 1994, p. 21).

Simpson simply represented a loss of awareness of the importance of philosophical thinking, brought on by decades of positivism. That is why when we look at similar geological explanations from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (when the public was more attuned to philosophical thinking), we see that Simpson’s carelessness was not tolerated. Instead, Enlightenment geotheorists danced around origins. Hutton, for example, appeared to flirt with eternalism in his famous quote about the beginning and end of Earth, but a careful reading of his larger work shows that he tied it to a definite *deistic* theology, which implies creation (Reed, 2008). Lyell and his peers simply ignored the issue, and Simpson (1970) seems to have thought it was no longer relevant. He treated the topic as nothing more than the relatively trivial issue of heat

loss over time, making sure to include the *de rigueur* celebration of radioactivity's "victory" over Kelvin.

Simpson then reveals uniformitarianism as the faux-philosophy-of-history of naturalism. Thus the great philosophical problems of the past were now reduced to geological controversies of his day:

The great virtue of the Hooykaas-Visotskii-Gould dichotomy of uniformitarianism is that it removes actualism from the arena of those foolish attacks. ... It has also ... clarified the usual but false alternatives of uniformitarianism *versus* catastrophism. (Simpson, 1970, p. 66)

He mentioned various uniformitarian alternatives: cyclic steady-state, statistical steady-state, and irreversible sequence changing in a constant direction. Unable to even arrive at an answer within his own truncated view of history, he found a mushy middle ground and affirmed that "the present consensus includes features of all three" (Simpson, 1970, p. 67).

But even the debates between Kelvin and the geologists run deeper than some heroic tale of geologists. The real issue is adroitly avoided—that thermodynamics demonstrates conclusively that either Earth had a beginning or that uniformity is invalid. Given the dependence of uniformitarianism on uniformity, and the dependence of the geologic timescale on uniformitarianism, it is not surprising that secularists largely continue to avoid the real issues. "Agnosticism" allowed them to successfully avoid the issue for many years. But it hangs over their head to this day, held up by the thread of public ignorance of philosophy. But if history is a continuum—if it is to make sense—then the link between the beginning and subsequent time cannot be avoided.

Simpson is firmly caught on the horns of Hume's dilemma. His only justification for "historical" history is evolution, and the evidence he adduced to

support it is empirical. But that evidence fails to be conclusive because (1) actual human observation is severely limited relative to deep time, and (2) empirical evidence in the rock and fossil records is amenable to other interpretations.

### **How to Make History Work**

The philosophy of history is larger than uniformitarianism, even if our understanding of uniformitarianism had not changed significantly since 1970 (cf. Reed, 2010, 2011). Simpson's view is an interesting historical snapshot, but it is outworn. Gould's (1987) discussion of natural history revealed more of its complexity, recognizing that the nature of time is not Simpson's simple progression. Unfortunately, Gould was not able to take the next step that acceptance of "historical science" was a belief too, although Kravitz (2013) has finally made that point. Secularists like to trumpet empirical investigation as the hallmark of science, forgetting that empiricism is common to science, philosophy, the social sciences, and history. The issue is not empirical vs. nonempirical but the difference between science and history.

If history is difficult for secular thinkers, origins is impossible. That is why it is so often avoided. Science can say nothing about origins (Reed and Klevberg, 2014b). This presents a problem: if uniformity is true, it must apply everywhere, all the time, or scientific certainty is lost. Uniformity rests on causal continuity (Kravitz, 2013; Reed and Williams, 2012), which is contradicted by the big bang, invalidating a *materialist* uniformity. This is one more reason that Christianity routinely wins metaphysical arguments.

Secular faith and its flaws may elude the secularists, but they are evident to everyone else (Lisle, 2009, 2010; Mangalwadi, 2011; Reed, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 1999). Their worldview of naturalism is self-refuting because it relies on Christian axioms. Despite assertions

that science originated in Greece or in medieval Islam, its true origins lie in the Christian West (Glover, 1984; Stark, 2003, 2005) in spite of intellectual and societal advantages in other cultures:

The Chinese monks and Hindu sages did not lack ability. They lacked the philosophical motivation. They looked for a psychological paradise, for bliss within their consciousness. Until the sixteenth century, the Western Christian mind also looked for psychological or spiritual salvation. *It was only when a major portion of Christendom could read the Bible and take it at face value that it began to understand the loss of Eden as a loss of earthly paradise.* (Mangalwadi, 2011, p. 221, emphasis in original)

From this thoroughly biblical structure comes a method. Biblical history is revelatory, comprised primarily of recorded eyewitness accounts. Other records mimic this template. Historical assertions also can be tested by forensic evidence. Although empirical, history lacks the reproducibility of experimental science. For that reason, it lacks the inherent certainty of science, the weakness that secularists have tried so hard to disguise with "scientific history." Inherent uncertainties in extrabiblical accounts are constrained by the infallible biblical framework of time and space. Man, created in God's image, possesses attributes that make history possible. He can apprehend truth. He lives in time and sees the importance of divine and human actions on that stage.

History is important because God expresses Himself in His works of creation and providence. A theological tension between transcendence and immanence facilitates the existence of a meaningful history. By transcendence we mean that God is a volitional being, free from time and nature. His existence depends on nothing but Himself, and He is governed by His own will. Despite this, He chose to create a world in time and space to bear witness to His charac-

ter. For that reason, He is continuously at work in time and space, and the past is a memorial to His glory. Made in His image, people experience God and His world in a limited, finite, but still true, personal, and volitional way. His transcendence gives history its broad sweep and purpose; His immanence means that He plays a significant role in each event. Thus there is meaning behind everything. The same God who oversees the rise and fall of empires cares for widows and orphans. Not a sparrow falls apart from God’s involvement (Matthew 10:29). Therefore, history is a way for people to see and to glorify God (e.g., Deuteronomy 7:18). For these reasons, theology, not science, is the key to history.

The biblical view is that history had a beginning and will have an end, and that both the beginning and the end are in God’s hands. Therefore, what comes between them is invested with meaning and purpose; the creator is not the prime mover of ancient philosophy, and the terminator is not the bleak exhaustion of resources or the running down of the sun. Will

and personality dominate everything and make of history a moral arena. (Schlossberg, 1983, pp. 27–28)

Scientific conclusions, because they are statements of largely invariable general principles of nature, depend on uniformity, but actually documenting what happened in the past is not the domain of science. It belongs to history. History, in turn, depends on philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology) for the existence, comprehensibility, and significance of a past that can be truly, if partially, known and can cast light on the present and the future. But a coherent and correspondent philosophy of history is entirely dependent on a theology that provides an adequate metaphysical and epistemological basis.

### The Bible Is the Answer

Naturalism sees history as a branch of science. But the Bible, in addition to providing a basis for history (and science), also upholds history in a way that no other religion or philosophy can (Figure 2). History has always been a part of civilization, but man’s historical

self-awareness is unique to the Christian West, because of Christian foundations. The first foundation stone is that the Bible supplies a *reason* for history, as discussed above. History reflects God’s glory, showing His will acting over the stage of time. Nothing is more important (Edwards, 1754). It also provides a *touchstone* for faith. Israel was reminded over and over of the Exodus as a reason to believe God for the present and future.

Second, Christianity provides a *structure* for history that points us toward a proper method. That structure is the linear, progressive time whereby God, man, and nature interact.

An analysis of the Western sense of history reveals three aspects of it that are especially pertinent to this study: a linear, unidirectional sense of time... (Glover, 1984, p. 192)

Men on Earth have a beginning and an end. But God does not, and He promises an unending existence for men after death. That future existence brings significance to our present. A beginning (Creation) and end (Judgment Day) provide a coherent timeline. Even in the context of eternity, time has meaning and structure.

That linear, progressive structure is assumed by secularists like Simpson, but having rejected God, they cannot justify it. Simpson never tried. Kravitz (2013) attempted it but fell short (Reed and Klevberg, 2014a). Like Lyell and Darwin, Simpson was more Christian than he realized in his view of history.

Finally, Christianity provides the initial content of history. It includes an infallible framework of past events and sufficient detail to show God’s interest in everything from humble genealogies to the sweep of empires. Jones (2005) demonstrates the superiority of the biblical accounts to Sumerian, Assyrian, or Egyptian histories. It is unfortunate that many scholars (including Christians who should know better) have needlessly increased uncertainty by rejecting that revealed framework.

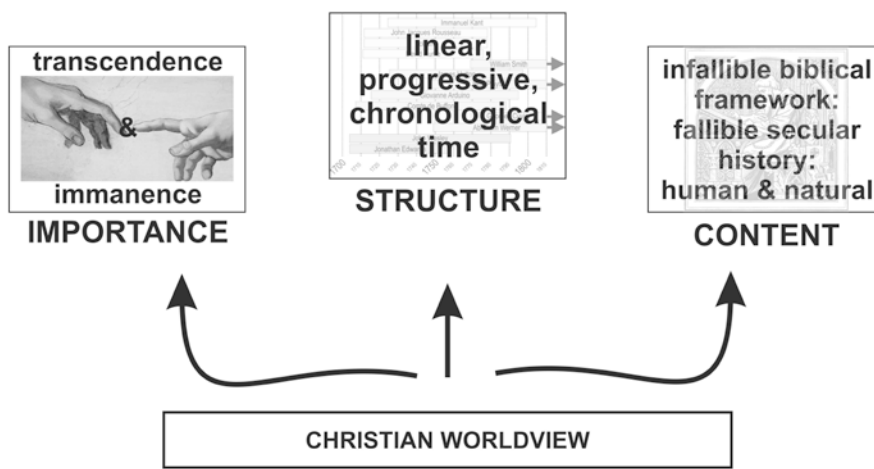


Figure 2. Only Christianity can support Western history in its purpose, structure, method, and content. Naturalism cannot justify history; it is random, assumes the nature of time, confuses the methods of science and history, and rejects the most reliable sourcebook in the world, the Bible.

### Summary and Conclusions

When considering the scope of the topics of time and history, Simpson’s treatment is stunningly anemic. His reductionist approach was guided by an absolute faith in naturalism; he was *sure* that the whole issue could be reduced to a few technical discussions about geological theory. But even his vaunted insights are largely outmoded among his academic children, in part from an explosion of knowledge about the Earth, and in part from the evolution of scientific modernism toward a postmodern nihilism. But many scientists still share the modernist belief system of Simpson (1970). Thus, it is worth grasping his view of uniformitarian geohistory as the zenith of history. Its logical and empirical shortcomings also can help guide critiques of more recent ideas.

Simpson (1970) asserted that “historicism” was nothing more than the materialistic understandings of various geological and biological configurations over deep time. In this, he ignores the necessary role of philosophy and theology in a view of ultimate origins that sets the initial conditions under which history is seen. Like his secular forefathers, Simpson unthinkingly assumed a biblical view of the foundation, structure, and importance of history.

The Bible addresses origins and history in a manner superior to Simpson and his academic children. It describes how an eternal, self-existent God created the universe from nothing and continues to govern it. These doctrines of creation and providence form the foundations of both science and history. History is meaningful because God values it. It

proceeds along a linear, progressive timeline, just as described in the Bible, following the ultimate purposes of God. Great events, such as Creation, the Flood, and the Incarnation are described because they all show God working both through and beyond the uniformity-based natural order. Simpson’s view of history leads nowhere. But his admission that the way we see history is important is true—it is straight out of the Bible.

Like his views of naturalism and actualism, Simpson’s understanding of historicism was truncated and a path to further error. His subconscious idea of its importance and the ability of man to understand truth in history were remnants of the West’s Christian heritage. Biblical theology justifies the aspects of history that Simpson could not (Figure 3). Like the previous two topics,

BATTLEGROUND	SIMPSON’S DEFINITION	ERRORS	BIBLICAL “FIX”
<b>naturalism</b>	Basic postulate of science; supernatural excluded from scientific explanation by definition.	1. equivocal 2. positivist 3. self-contradictory	Biblical theism; emphasis on Divine Providence in nature
<b>actualism</b>	Synonym of “uniformitarianism” in Lyellian sense. Present processes only options for past explanation.	1. equivocal 2. circular 3. arbitrary	Biblical foundation of natural history; emphasize Providence
<b>historicism</b>	Problems and procedures coming from consideration of state of Earth and cosmos over time.	1. positivist 2. origins problems 3. no axioms of history	Bible justifies history; natural history is a mixed question
<b>evolutionism</b>	“historical model or theory of life as changing directionally and irreversibly in the course of descent.”		
<b>mode of history</b>	Fuzzy gradualism; catastrophes occur, but not sudden, great, and worldwide.		
<b>methods of scientific history</b>	Historical inferences are scientific as long as they are based on actualism, naturalism, and evolutionism.		

Figure 3. Biblical solutions to Simpson’s (1970) problems. History is not science. It rests on Christian theology. Natural history is a mixed question that requires revelation and theology. The problem of origins illustrates the bankruptcy of naturalism.



Christians must look to the doctrines of creation and providence to find the antidotes to secular error.

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