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### 3. Kenneth Scott Latourette and the Christian Understanding of History

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### 3. Kenneth Scott Latourette and the Christian Understanding of History

#### Abstract

The third and final selection in this chapter is an attempt by a contemporary historian to present a Christian interpretation of history. Written more than 1500 years after Augustine, it perhaps gains in profundity what it lacks of the saint's assurance that one can readily identify the will of God in history. The selection is indicative of a larger and more serious interest among intellectuals than at any time since the Enlightenment in the possible insights of Christian thought into the meaning of history. The author, Kenneth Scott Latourette (1884), taught in China, Oregon, and Ohio before going in 1921 to Yale University, where he was Sterling Professor of Missions and Oriental History at the time of his retirement (1953). He is also a Baptist clergyman. In *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (1937-1945), published in seven volumes, he undertook the more comprehensive recent study of that subject, covering the entire 2000 years of Christian history. The selection which follows, entitled "The Christian Understanding of History," was Latourette's presidential address before the American Historical Association (1948). [*excerpt*]

#### Keywords

Contemporary Civilization, Latourette, History, Christianity

#### Disciplines

History | History of Religion | Intellectual History

#### Comments

This is a part of [Section XXIV: Historical Meaning](#). The [Contemporary Civilization](#) page lists all additional sections of *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, as well as the [Table of Contents](#) for both volumes.

#### More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called *An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems*. A second edition, retitled *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker '66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

#### Authors

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