

see objective realities.

Admittedly providential arrangements are the most baffling and ambiguous items in the classification. There often exists a force in our affairs that cannot be displayed openly and clearly to man (objective realities), nor is it sufficiently understood by man to the extent that he can form some meaningful opinion of this 'force' (subjective assessments). The moods, whims and actions of people, and the meshing of circumstances and natural events, are the means which God uses to bring about his divine purposes, they may not be predicted and analyzed. We call these "providential arrangements" since they are the singular contributions of a benevolent Providence bringing to pass his expectations and designs. They play an enormously important part of history, yet they cannot be pinpointed, placed in crucible of inquiry and reduced to a precise or predictable formula. Our plea is to see the general content of history in these three categories and work from that point.

Objective Realities

In some ways these are culprits of historical studies. Students have been flayed alive with the mass of names, recording of events, dated happenings, and an almost unending train of minutiae as to who has done what and when. The study of history is often turned into a search for details, a search devastating to the modern mind that prefers to account for the 'great issues'. Names, events, dates and a host of minutiae assail the student of church history; yet these details are not without interest, particularly if they play an important part in the ongoing program of God. I shall list a few objective realities.

(1) Persons

History is replete with the names of people who have made it what it is -- the grand record of man's earthly affairs (and, some would add, God's actions). The persons we meet in history often seem like those we know in everyday life and the human foibles are never more clearly seen than when they are witnessed in the lives of notable historical persons. In history we see people, not puppets or machines, but as men and women like ourselves albeit confined to a different age and setting. Knowing people is always an enriching experience; we relate to them in various ways. They must never be merely names on a page, or else we easily lose interest in them. People are the great components of history and we do well to meet and revel in their acquaintance. A biographical approach to history is not without merit albeit the huge number of persons available makes the selection a difficult matter.²

(2) Places

Places have a definite and enduring character: they are not likely to