

## Sunday School Lesson

(Continued from Page 2)

### History as Propaganda

In a very real sense, the Chronicler complemented the work of the great prophets in his emphasis upon the fact that the Jews needed to learn from the failures of their ancestors. Thus the Chronicler "propagandized" historical facts in order to accent the accomplishments of the kings he deemed to have been good and to detract from the accomplishments of those he regarded as having been bad kings. We must inquire into the

reasons that prompted the Chronicler to write "history" in this way. We must also ask whether or not the Chronicler was justified in writing such "propaganda history."

We need to remember that the Chronicler is more a preacher exhorting his readers to a particular way of life than he is a historian recording historical fact for academic reasons. In this he is really not much different from any other ancient historian, for all ancient historians were primarily concerned to convey the meaning and message they believed to be en-

shrined in certain historical events. They were less concerned with simply reporting the facts.

The Old Testament historians wrote "religious propaganda history." But we must distinguish between two kinds of propaganda history. Bad propaganda history is evil and malicious, begetting wickedness in men; good propaganda history enshrines noble virtues and eternal truth, begetting goodness in men.

The real question to ask is not, Is this the true history, actual fact? Recognizing that it

is propaganda history, we ought to ask, Does it teach noble and enduring truth? If the answer to this question is Yes, then the propaganda history ought to be heeded and its great lessons and truths appropriated by all generations.

Hugh Anderson expressed this view aptly when he wrote: "The historians of Israel viewed history as the sphere of God's activity. Their purpose in telling the story of Israel was to confront men with the sovereign authority of a high and holy God, calling upon them to surrender their lives to Him in

love for Him and their fellow-men. We acknowledge that if there is a bias here, it is a bias in the right direction. This is good propaganda history."

### Values in the Work Of the Chronicler

What we have said above brings us to the consideration of those qualities that were of supreme value for the Chronicler, as indicated in his writings, including Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Chronicler (1) affirmed that God is Lord of history, (2) affirmed not only the beauty of

(Continued on Page 5)



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