# *preface*

One of the characteristics of our time is the shift of social and cultural history from an emphasis on broad works of synthesis and manifestations of collective life to various forms of microhistory and the history of everyday life. Historians and history teachers, however, have always had the task of placing events within a large and meaningful framework. As a historical inquiry and synthesis, this essay is an innovative work in three main respects.

It is the first study to apply the ideal-type or model-building methodology of Otto Hintze (1861–1940) to Western historiography as a whole, or to what R. G. Collingwood called "The Idea of History," for it contains succinct and useful models for seeing, understanding, and teaching (1) the classical historiography of Greece and Rome, (2) Christian historiography from the time of St. Augustine to Voltaire, and (3) a distinctly modern type of Western historiography.

Second, it is the first work to suggest that in addition to his well-known paradoxical, *simul*, or his "at-the-same-time" way of thinking and viewing life, Martin Luther also had a deeply incarnational, dynamic, or "in-with-and-under" way. This dual vision strongly influenced Leibniz, Hamann, Herder, and Ranke and was therefore a matter of considerable significance for what Friedrich Meinecke (1862–1954) called "the rise of historicism."

Third, this essay suggests a new way of seeing, dating, and naming the formative stage of modern German thought, culture, and education. This period began in the early 1760s and culminated in 1810 with the founding of the University of Berlin, the first fully "modern" and "modernizing" university, and the Prussian and German *Gymnasium*.

Behind the title for this essay the reader will find four main questions: (1) Is the term "the Cultural Revolution" a useful designation for capturing and teaching the formative stage in the development of modern German education, thought, and culture? (2) Since a new historical

consciousness—commonly called "historicism"—and the rise of a new type of Western historiography were important aspects of this Cultural Revolution, and since they arose first in Protestant Germany, was the Lutheran religious tradition especially conducive for the rise of these aspects of this revolution and of modern life? (3) Did Martin Luther have a second basic way of thinking and viewing life in addition to his well-known paradoxical *simul*, or "at-the-same-time" way? (4) If so, how have these two ways shaped a distinctively Lutheran ethos and sense of calling?

To understand the nature and rise of *modern* historical thought in the West, one must have a mental picture of Western historical thought as a whole. This inquiry is based on the conviction that such a picture can be presented most simply, clearly, and distinctly through three historical ideal types, or models that are based on a perception of time. It is also based on the view that a distinctly modern type of Western historiography and kind of historical thought came to fruition most of all in the work of Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), the greatest and most influential of all modern professional historians. Although one of the main purposes of this essay is to suggest a new way—or at least another way—of looking at modern historiography as a whole, the main focus is, as the title indicates, the significance of religion for the rise of history.

Why, however, did the main characteristics of modern historical thought and modern professional historiography develop first in Germany and mainly by scholars who were raised and educated within the Lutheran tradition? Although many Christians since the time of St. Augustine have believed that only God knows *why* things happen, most historians can agree that it is the job of the historian to say *how* something happened and *how* something came to be. Thus one of the purposes of this inquiry is to suggest some connections between Luther's ways of thinking and viewing life and the rise of modern historical thought in Germany during the five decades from 1760 to the founding of the University of Berlin in the year 1810. There is no attempt here, however, to assert a cause-and-effect relationship between Martin Luther's ways of viewing life and either the rise of historicism or a distinctly modern type of Western historiography during that great humanistic revolution that can be called the Cultural Revolution in Germany.

The word *Historismus*, usually translated "historicism," became a word of central importance in Western historical thought primarily

through the work of three great scholars at the University of Berlin during and after World War I: Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), Friedrich Meinecke, and Otto Hintze. Since the present inquiry is a supplement to their pioneer work on this subject, the first debt of a general nature that I want to acknowledge is to them.

This essay is also an attempt to apply the ideal-type methodology of Otto Hintze—the great pioneer historian of the twentieth century for the development of what he called "comparative constitutional history," and that others have called comparative, structural, institutional, or social history—to the study of Western historiography. Basically, however, this essay is a twentieth-century kind of historical inquiry that Meinecke called *Geistesgeschichte*, which the English-speaking world calls intellectual history or the history of ideas, and for which he was the great pioneer historian within the guild of professional historians in the twentieth century.

The fourth great early twentieth-century scholar to whom I am indebted in a general way is Max Weber. While Hintze was a great pioneer for the development of a comparative method and an ideal-type methodology for the discipline called history, Weber was the great pioneer social scientist for the development of a comparative method and an ideal-type methodology for the social sciences. In the present essay, readers will find not only a model for the study of modern Western historiography based on Hintze's ideal-type methodology, but also a further exploration of Weber's ideas of "rationalization" and "disenchantment of the world" in connection with his ideal type of a Lutheran sense of calling as contained in his brilliant, enormously stimulating, and controversial essay, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Before I acknowledge my other debts, however, I want to relate two personal experiences on which this inquiry is based and then to make a few general remarks about what one can expect or not expect to find in this essay.

The first personal experience took place when I was reading a passage from a young Leopold Ranke who was answering (in 1828) a critic of his first work, his epoch-making *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494 to 1514* (1824). "This passage," Ranke said, "is part of the attempt I have made to present the general directly through the particular without long digression. Here I have sought to approach no J. Müller or no ancient writer but the appearance itself, just as it emerges, only externally particularity, internally—and so I understand Leibnitz—a

generality, significance, spirit . . . In and with the event I have sought to portray its course and spirit, and I have strained to ascertain its characteristic traits."[1]

When I first read this passage in 1971, the reference to the general and the particular, generality and particularity, external and internal, appearance and spirit, and especially the way he used the prepositions *in* and *with* jumped out at me; for both the passage as a whole and especially the latter two prepositions sounded very Lutheran to me. Was it possible, I asked myself, that the connected prepositions (especially for Lutherans)—"in, with, and under"—could be a key to understanding not only Ranke's way of writing history but also the Lutheran tradition as a whole? Could Ranke's way of writing history be called not only an at -the-same-time way of viewing and writing history but also an in-with-and under way? Did not Ranke always try to present the general or the universal in, with, under, and through the particular? And was not this the best way to teach students how to write history? But why did Ranke refer to Leibniz in this passage?

The answer to the latter question soon came to me (1972) when a colleague was introducing Leibniz and the *Monadology* to a select group of first-year college students in a team-taught, interdisciplinary (history, literature, philosophy, and religion) honors course called "Humanities Tutorial." As he helped those young minds picture those unique soul-like substances called monads, each programmed by God to do its thing in and through the composite body that it directed and within an organic, dynamic, pluralistic, harmonious, and God-given universe that was the best of all possible worlds, the connection suddenly became clear!

At that moment I became quite excited, for now—for the first time—I could see the origins of the German idealist tradition and the main link between Luther and Melanchthon, on the one hand, and Herder, Ranke, and the German idealist tradition through Troeltsch and Meinecke on the other. Now I could see how, at least in some respects, the Lutheran religious tradition was conducive to the rise of German historicism and to a distinctly modern type of Western historiography. Thus this passage from the young Ranke and these two experiences were the starting points of this decades-long historical inquiry.

1. Ranke, "Erwiderung auf Heinrich Leo's Angriff," 664–65. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German sources are my own.

The first general remark that I want to make is that since this essay is a broad and interdisciplinary introduction to the rise of modern historical thought through the formative years of Leopold von Ranke, there is no attempt to include the vast amount of literature on each of the individuals discussed here. In my notes I have only sought to give credit to the sources that I actually used and not to all the ones that I read or that I could or should have read and used.

Second, this essay is written primarily for a general audience: students, teachers, professors, pastors, priests, or anyone interested in learning more about Martin Luther and "a Lutheran ethos" in relation to "the idea of history" and to the rise of a distinctly modern kind of historical consciousness. To aid the reader I have made extensive use of quotations from primary works, as well as from helpful secondary studies, so that he or she can be directly engaged with the thought of each of the major figures included in this essay and with the views of specialists whose research and knowledge are especially helpful.

Third, each chapter begins with a statement of the problem behind that particular part of the inquiry. Here the reader will find not only the basic questions that I am trying to answer but also some background material so that he or she does not have to be an expert in any of these subjects or to refer to other sources. At the same time this rather unusual device should help the reader decide whether my attempts to deal with these large questions are helpful, convincing, and "true" because they are based on the evidence.

Fourth, since this work as a whole is a supplement to the ways that Troeltsch, Hintze, and Meinecke defined, used, and viewed the term *Historismus*, some readers might want to start with part 3 of chapter 5, "Otto Hintze and the Demystifying of the Rankean View of History" (221–52), for it includes a sketch of their great debate over the nature of modern historical thought and the significance of this debate for the idea of history.

Since this essay is based on my entire educational experience, the list of persons I have known who contributed either directly or indirectly to this study is quite long. First, I want to express thanks and gratitude to my father, the Rev. A. Leonard Smith (1894–1960). I am indebted to him not only for the traditional kind of religious education that I received and that is portrayed in chapter 2, but also because he—more than anyone I have known—personified the Lutheran idea of "a calling."

Second, I am grateful to professors Allan Pfnister, James I. Dowie, and Fritiof Ander for awakening in me a love of intellectual and cultural history and for teaching me to see, feel, and appreciate the connection of individuals, ideas, and events in history.

Third, I am deeply indebted to Dietrich Gerhard, a student of Friedrich Meinecke at the University of Berlin, the Assistant Director of the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen, Germany, in the 1960s, and the director of my PhD dissertation (1967) at Washington University (in St. Louis, Missouri). Professor Gerhard was the best trained, most knowledgeable, and wisest professional historian I have known, and he was also my connecting link with the great historiographical traditions at Göttingen and Berlin.

Fourth, I want to honor and give thanks for another great teacher at Washington University in the early 1960s, Professor Jack Hexter. For Dr. Hexter, "doing history" was an art and a craft, and no one I have known was better at teaching history as a craft and how to write history than he. Both for my training as a graduate student and as a professor/student in his National Endowment of the Humanities Summer Seminar on "Writing History" at Yale University in 1978, I am indebted to him.

Fifth, I want to express my gratitude to Hermann Heimpel, Rudolf Vierhaus, and all the kind and helpful individuals at the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen for their gracious hospitality and assistance since the year 1962.

Sixth, I want to acknowledge my debt to those teacher/scholars and colleagues in the interdisciplinary "Core Program" (1964–1969) at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and "The Humanities Tutorial" (1971–1984) at California Lutheran University. Especially I am grateful to Dr. John Kuethe for his Socratic way of tutoring our students and me in the whole course of Western philosophy and for introducing me to the writings of St. Augustine, Leibniz, and Kant.

Seventh, I want to acknowledge my debt and gratitude to those kind souls who read parts or all of the manuscript for this book and who have offered helpful corrections, improvements, and suggestions: Luther S. Luedtke, Walter K. Stewart, Nathan L. Tierney, Carlyle A. Smith, Richard Cole, Dale Johnson, Peter Hanns Reill, Eric W. Gritsch, Heiko A. Oberman, Richard W. Solberg, Wolfgang Neugebauer, Robert Guy Erwin, James J. Sheehan, and Thomas A. Brady, Jr. Their kindness, how-

ever, should not be construed to mean agreement either in general or in many particulars.

Finally, and most of all, I want to thank my wife Sharon Faye Ronning Smith not only for reading the various versions of this manuscript but also for all the advice, helpful criticisms, and unflagging support that she has provided for all my academic endeavors.