LUTHER, HERDER, AND RANKE: THE REFORMATION'S IMPACT ON GERMAN IDEALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

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The influence of Martin Luther on the Idealist philosophy and historical writing of Johann Gottfried Herder and Leopold Ranke is part of a broader inquiry into the significant impact of the Protestant Reformation on the modern Western world. Herder and Ranke, whose work in historical research and writing spanned a period from the later eighteenth century to the close of the nineteenth century, represented an Idealist generation which sought a new meaning in human history to replace the view of the Enlightenment.

Coming from Lutheran backgrounds and identifying closely with Luther, Herder and Ranke moved away from traditional theological dogma and toward the dynamic of human history. They adapted the major outlines of Luther's theology to history. Luther's dualism of the temporal and spiritual kingdoms became the real and ideal realms of history, which reflect the hand of God in human affairs. Luther's view of the organic character of human circumstances became the dynamic of history which moves behind the appearance of historical events. Luther's view of faith provided a way of perceiving the spiritual reality of history which reason alone could not discover. Luther's vision in historical form provided a

spiritual power to Idealist history, enabling it to shape a new historical outlook of historicism. The Idealist stress on ideas in history, their general view of the whole human experience, and their contemplative approach to the past afford a perspective for contemporary historians who view history as a form of thought of universal significance to all people.

Primary sources include the English translation of the Weimar Edition of Luther's Works, the Suphan Edition of Herder's Works, and the Leipzig Edition of Ranke's Works. Secondary materials include works on the influence of Luther, and general works on the Idealist generation, the German intellectual tradition, and biographies of Luther, Herder, and Ranke.

An overview of Luther's theology is given in Chapter I. Chapters II and III show how Herder and Ranke drew on Luther to formulate a new mode of history. Chapter IV draws together the conclusions, and shows how the work of Luther, Herder, and Ranke influenced the historical philosophy of the foremost twentieth century Idealist, Friedrich Meinecke.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of history as Western man has known it in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries developed from the effort to discover the meaning of the past and present. Indeed, it drew on the assumption that the past was meaningful, and that in the understanding of its purpose lay enlightenment and self-knowledge.

With the exception of the Italian historical theorist, Giambattista Vico, the eighteenth century Enlightenment, with its prejudice against the past, lacked a fully developed historical sense. Only when the Enlightenment gave way to Idealism and Romanticism did the search for meaning in the human past come into its own with a new historical outlook. To a great extent, this was due to the work of Johann Gottfried Herder and Leopold Ranke.

The concept of Western man as a historical being became an integral and significant part of the Western intellectual heritage. This revolution in thought, sometimes referred to as historicism, went hand in hand with violent revolution and warfare, the emergence of a commercial-industrial-technological economy, and the move from an aristocratic to a democratic society. The loss of old moorings and the search for new certainties made the need for history all the more important for the Western mind.

In developing their historical faith, both Herder and Ranke drew upon their vision of Martin Luther and the revolutionary impact of his thought on the modern cultural world. As the architects of a new historical consciousness, their work paralleled the earlier reforming efforts of Luther, just as it fulfilled Luther's purposes by transferring his mode of thought to the philosophy and writing of history.

This study of the Reformation's impact on German Idealist historiography revolves around three themes. Two of these form the subject matter of the work, while a third provides an underlying philosophical assumption. First, for the most part the work is an essay in historiography, the historical faith of German Idealism. Contemporary historians owe a debt to these German masters who bequeathed to us the modern discipline of history. They posed those fundamental problems regarding the meaning of the human past which even now occupy our own thoughts. The Lutheran origins of Herder's and Ranke's philosophical-historical beliefs, and their expression in the writing of history are treated in chapters two and three.

Secondly, the problem of the Reformation's impact on later historical writing requires an identification of those aspects of Luther's theology which had political, social, intellectual, and cultural implications for the modern secular world. This approach must initially explore the

difficult issue of Luther's ideological impact on the modern mind. Relating the Luther problem to German Idealist historiography strengthens the conclusion that the religious origins of the modern world carry more significance than traditional accounts indicate. An introductory chapter explores this problem.

Thirdly, the treatment of this subject reflects the view that history serves best as human self-knowledge when approached through broad problems. The neo-idealist historian regards history as a contemplation of the meaning of the human past, and thus a form of thought of significant value in unfolding the sources of our own outlook. If this study shows how Luther has influenced our Western concept of history, it brings both Luther and the Idealist historians who stood in his shadow closer to us, and demonstrates that the modern discipline of history, widely regarded as a secular undertaking, actually possesses a religious origin. In a re-examination of these origins, contemporary historians may find new directions for a discipline regrettably eclipsed in its public and private importance.

Luther's influence on the work of Herder and Ranke is a problem in the history of thought. As such it shares a dilemma inherent in the study of intellectual history. Ideas live and develop in history. Ever moving, they advance or retreat in the minds of human beings to stir them to action. The historian must decide either to study ideas

in their pure original form, or to examine them as they are acted out in human events.

In this essay the ideas of Luther are studied at those various points in the writing of Herder and Ranke where they were taken out of their abstract theological form and re-stated in a cultural-historical mode. This approach reflects the judgment that the most important factor in any historical undertaking is what men believe to be true, and that the work of Herder and Ranke expressed their Lutheran faith as they adapted it to history.

It may be useful to clarify two concepts, Idealism and historicism, which are used throughout the essay. The Idealists sought to explore that spiritual reality existing in the ideal realm. A historicist believed history had a dynamic of its own apart from the persons involved in it.

The introductory chapter utilizes the English translation of the Weimar Edition of Luther's works, published in the United States. The chapter on Herder is based largely on the Bernhard Suphan German edition of the collected works of Herder, as well as the published remembrances of Herder's life by his wife and family. The treatment of Ranke is based on the Leipzig Edition of Ranke's collected works, various editions of his major works on England, France, Germany, and the Papacy, as well as his published letters, diary, autobiography, and notebooks.

CHAPTER I

LUTHER'S IMPACT ON THE MODERN WORLD

The impact of the Protestant Reformation on German Idealist historiography, as represented by Johann Gottfried Herder and Leopold Ranke, must begin with Martin Luther, the towering Wittenberg Doctor of the Sacred Scriptures who helped usher in the modern world. Contemporary students often venerate Luther as the liberator of modern religious thought from the chains of medieval dogma, and as the founder of Protestantism. Indeed, most English-speaking students look at Luther in theological terms, a consequence of the mistaken belief that the Reformation's leading result lies in the area of religion, the creation of the Protestant Confessions. Surveys of Luther literature during the last fifty years reveal an outpouring of research concentrated on the origin and interpretation of Luther's theological views.[1]

No corresponding emphasis on Luther's effect on the modern secular world exists, a startling omission considering the great number of works on Luther. Harold J.

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[1]Wilhelm Pauck, "The Historiography of the German Reformation During the Past Twenty Years," Church History 9 (1940):305-40; John Dillenberger, "Literature in Luther Studies 1950-55," Church History 25 (1956):160-77; Carter Lindberg, "Luther Research in America 1945-65," Lutheran World 13 (1966):291-302; Harold J. Grimm, "Luther Research Since 1920," Journal of Modern History 32 (1960):105-18.

Grimm, a historian of the Reformation, finds a need for further research into Luther's social, political, and economic views. Grimm calls for a biographical synthesis showing Luther's place as a world figure.[2]

One notable exception to the paucity of research into Luther's ideological prominence is the work of the American church historian, Wilhelm Pauck. Pauck has attempted a synthesis of the cultural influence of the Reformation on modern man. Incisive and analytical, Pauck's important work shows the alliance which developed between Protestantism and modern institutions. Pauck concludes, however, that modern society is basically secular in origin, and he minimizes the true imprint of the Reformation.[3]

Another exceptional contribution to the significance of Luther's thought is that of Carl G. Gustavson.[4] Gustavson claims Lutheranism bred in its adherents a collective process of subjective introspection which appeared in a secular sense in German Idealist philosophy, Romantic literature, and German nationalism. With keen insight, Gustavson concludes that Luther's ideas became social tools through an intellectual process which "transferred the mode [of

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[2]Grimm, "Luther Research Since 1920," p. 118.

[3]Wilhelm Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation (1950; reprint ed., Glencoe, New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p. 206.

[4]Carl G. Gustavson, "German Lutheranism: A Psychological Study," Journal of the History of Ideas 11 (1950):140-58.

thought] from the field natural to it [religion] to one where it was most completely alien [politics]."[5] Gustavson believes this occurred because incessant change in the modern world forces the application of abstractions to the material world.

Gustavson's approach to Luther is both novel and promising, particularly his identification of the process by which the religious mechanism of faith transfers itself into the secular world and applies itself to politics, society, and thought. The same technique forms the basis in this study for an analysis of Herder's and Ranke's relation to Martin Luther.

German theologians and historians have gone further than their English-speaking counterparts in assessing Luther's ideological importance for modern man. Intrigued by Luther's legacy in the German nation, the historian Ernst Troeltsch led the effort to discover Luther's world stature. While finding a fundamental antipathy between the Reformation's outlook and modern civilization, Troeltsch defined the spiritual view of modern man as protestant in nature. He drew back, however, from a definitive judgment, venturing a guarded opinion that the modern principle of freedom draws on a religious source.[6] Troeltsch's ambiguous

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[5]Gustavson, "German Lutheranism," p. 158.

[6]Ernst Troeltsch, Protestantism and Progress, trans. W. Montgomery (1950; reprint ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 58-59, 185, 205, 207.

view of the Reformation's heritage drew criticism from the German church historian, Karl Holl. Holl contended that the Reformation had yielded a rich cultural harvest of positive contributions in many fields.[7]

Following the work of Troeltsch and Holl, the eminent German theologian, Werner Elert contributed his monumental study of Lutheranism. Elert combined theological and historical viewpoints to erect a structure of Lutheranism. Significantly, he described German culture as secularized Lutheranism, and discussed how the mode of Luther's thought generated German nationalism in the nineteenth century.[8]

Despite the contributions of Pauck, Gustavson, Troeltsch, and Holl, there remains ample justification for a multi-faceted examination of Luther's impact on the modern secular world and, more specifically for this study, Luther's influence on an important phase of historical writing, the German Idealist historians.

Gerhard Ritter, the eminent German historian and Luther biographer, showed the need for dealing with this aspect of the Luther problem, as well as its complexity, when he commented that:

> if we should seek to calculate the significance of the spiritual heritage of Luther as an active agent in this

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[7]Karl Holl, The Cultural Significance of the Reformation, trans. Karl and Barbara Hertz (1948; reprint ed., New York: Meridan Books, 1959), pp. 106-8.

[8]Werner Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, 2 vols. (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1958), 2:145.

> process of development and ferment [of the modern world], or to discover the ways by which ideas and tendencies of Lutheran origin have continued to bear influence on the many ramifications of modern culture within Germany and far beyond its borders, and with what success, then we shall find ourselves dealing with highly controversial questions, toward whose serious solution only the very first tentative steps have been taken.[9]

The historian contemplating the meaning of the modern world must look to the ideological heritage of Luther, particularly to those aspects of Luther's thought which have political, social, and intellectual implications outside the realm of religion. These aspects may be defined as Luther's dualism of the temporal and spiritual realms, Luther's concept of faith, Luther's vision of the secular calling, Luther's idea of the individual, Luther's view of history, and Luther's outlook on his own work. This framework of Luther's thought provides the basis for an examination of his impact on the Idealist historians.

Luther's marked distinction between the spiritual and temporal realms emanated from his oft-repeated concept of the two kingdoms. The invisible kingdom of God holds sway over men's hearts through the Word of God, God's grace, and His forgiveness. The other visible temporal kingdom on earth, the state, rules by the sword. Ordained by God and

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[9]Gerhard Ritter, Luther: His Life and Work, trans. John Riches (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 214.

distinct in function, neither kingdom should interfere with the prerogatives of the other.[10]

The temporal kingdom, the state, came into existence after Adam's fall in order to restrain man's selfishness. Luther always regarded the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms as historical evidence of the providence of God who overrules in men's affairs. He rejected categorically the papal assertion that the Holy Roman Empire originated as the gift of Leo III to Charlemagne, who thus received his authority to rule from the Roman Church.[11]

While rejecting the claims of the Roman Church, Luther avoided the idea of popular sovereignty based on natural law, as advocated by the Ockhamist nominalists of the later Middle Ages. Since the state derives its origin from God and not from the people, it is essentially authoritarian. Luther often signified this in his writings, most explicitly when, in the midst of the Peasants' Revolt of 1525, he declared that the kingdom of this world "is nothing else than the servant of God's wrath upon the wicked and is a real precursor of hell and everlasting death."[12] Luther called earthly rulers God's ministers, comparing them to nets into

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[10]Martin Luther, Luther's Works, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Herbert T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (Philadelphia and Saint Louis: Fortress Press, Muhlenberg Press, and Concordia Publishing House, 1955-), 22:225; ibid., 34:164.

[11]Ibid., 1:104; ibid., 44:207-11.

[12]Ibid., 46:70.

which God drives wrongdoers as fish are driven by fishermen.[13]

Luther's most revealing statement on the origin of the state and the relation of spiritual and temporal authority came in his "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, 1520." Declaring that no difference of status exists between priest and ruler, but only a disparity of function, Luther defined Christendom as embracing laymen, priests, bishops, and rulers. Luther's remark called to mind the medieval concept of Corpus Christianum. Its true significance rested in his denial of the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal realm. Here Luther broke with the Middle Ages. Since temporal government constituted a spiritual estate, it should perform its God-given work of punishing the wicked and protecting the good without interference. No individual, not even the pope, should escape its authority.[14]

Luther could not have envisioned a world of nation-states, each claiming supreme authority within its territory. He remained a monarchist who valued the empire and advocated a just rule for it. Yet, Luther's ideas were seed-beds for the modern state. In distinguishing so sharply between the functions of priest and ruler, Luther created the modern problem of church and state. Simultaneously, by attributing

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[13]Ibid., 54:28.

[14]Ibid., 44:126-65.

its origin to God, Luther spiritualized the state and created the atmosphere of reverence and obedience which all nation-states claim from their citizens. Further, Luther envisioned a temporal government unhampered except in those matters of preaching and administering the sacraments which belong rightfully to the church.

Luther's concept of church and state bears striking semblance to the situation in nation-states since the French Revolution. Such states welcome the activities of the churches so long as these remain spiritual in nature, but will not tolerate a practice of the churches which threatens the unlimited sovereignty the state claims. In effect, Luther promised the ruler virtual pre-eminence over the church. In the period after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, ending an era of religious wars, states developed sovereignty over the weakened Roman Church and the divided national Protestant religious bodies.[15]

On this point, Wilhelm Pauck concludes that by separating church and state, the Protestant reformers committed cultural concerns wholly into the rulers' hands in the belief that they would conduct these affairs on a Christian basis. With the secularization of the political institutions, however, Luther's vision of cooperation between religious and political authorities proved unworkable.

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[15]Hajo Holborn, A History of Modern Germany: The Reformation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. 373-74.

Pauck contends that:

> the modern state grounded itself upon the principle of sovereignty, i.e., the principle that the state is the highest and ultimate authority on earth and the self-sufficient source of all political power. . . . The state no longer serves the glory of God [as Luther hoped] but its own. It becomes the all consuming Leviathan, as Hobbes called it. In connection with modern nationalism and militarism, it demands allegiance as the earthly god of men.[16]

That Luther could not have foreseen this outcome does not obscure the fact that it proceeded from his influence. Of this development, R. W. Murray asserts that "by breaking this [medieval] unity Luther made possible the era of modern nations."[17] The connection between the Reformation and modern nationalism appears in an incident in which Luther, who could not conceive of a state where political and religious functions fused under one control, advised Albert of Brandenburg, Grand Master of the Order of Teutonic Knights, to secularize the possessions of the order and divide its wealth among the knights.[18] In 1525, Albert dissolved the order and its possessions became the Duchy of East Prussia under the suzerainty of the throne of Poland. Whether Luther influenced Albert's decision directly or not, the

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[16]Pauck, Heritage of the Reformation, p. 180. For a fuller discussion of Luther's concept of the relation of prince and priest, see Lewis W. Spitz, "Luther's Ecclesiology and His Concept of the Prince as Notbishof," Church History 22 (1953):113-41.

[17]R. W. Murray, The Political Consequences of the Reformation (1926; reprint ed., New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), p. 55.

[18]Luther, Works, 45:142.

incident serves to illustrate the compatibility between the Protestant protest and the rise of territorial units.

Luther's distinction between secular and spiritual affairs showed also in his discussion of the place of the ruler. Rulers should not only punish the wicked but preserve order and the privileges of worship. Luther allowed Christians to hold public office, but he made a strict distinction between the office and the person occupying it. Luther called the officeholder a divine person because God had ordained the office. When calling on the German nobility to slay the rebellious peasants in 1525, he assured the princes that this would constitute the performance of God's will rather than personal revenge.[19] Luther contended that a public official may rightfully do things in office that he could not do individually. Luther argued, "The person may be anything he pleases; but the office is right and good nevertheless, since it does not belong to man but to God Himself."[20] Luther admitted the ruler might become a tyrant as history amply demonstrated. God will deal with tyrants in his own time. Meanwhile, preachers should warn rulers to rule wisely.[21]

Clearly, Luther spiritualized the functions of the ruler, just as he did those of the state. Frequently

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[19]Ibid., 21:23, 109; ibid., 40:284, 305-6; ibid., 46:54-55.

[20]Ibid., 21:277.

[21]Ibid., 13:50-51; ibid., 40:384.

admonishing the people to obey their rulers, Luther characteristically justified this by the divine origin of the office. Luther not only counseled strict obedience but also ruled out any act of rebellion. This would constitute insurrection against God and thus surpass even the tyranny of rulers in its harmful effects.[22] In the charged atmosphere of the Peasants' Revolt Luther declared that "if I served a Turk and saw my lord in danger, I would forget my spiritual office [as a minister] and stab and hew as long as my heart beat. If I were slain in so doing, I should go straight to heaven."[23]

Luther's admonitions seemed to leave the people no recourse but submission, but he added two qualifications. First, should the ruler enforce an act contrary to God's will, the Christian may disobey the law. To so act, even to defend oneself, constituted non-compliance with an unlawful act rather than rebellion.[24]

Second, in commanding obedience to government, Luther excepted the spirit and soul of man. Luther defined the individual as composed of body, soul, and spirit. Only the body is physically subject to the state. The soul consents to this bodily subjection. The spirit directs the body to obey the state. Otherwise, it remains free and above all

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[22]Ibid., 5:326; ibid., 22:72-73; ibid., 46:25.

[23]Ibid., 46:81.

[24]Ibid., 47:20.

the temporal realm. This dualism of body and spirit is basic to Luther's metaphysic. In relation to the state, it meant that the body submits to the temporal authority while the spirit remains free and above the state. This explains why Luther paid scant attention to the consequences of tyrannical government. A tyrant might harm the body but never the spirit. Better a tyrant who hurts the body than a rebel who destroys his own soul.[25]

Luther's concept implied a passivity on the part of the individual toward the government. Luther claimed the true Christian leaves the affairs of government to those who occupy public office. He explained:

> For we [Christians] have been transferred to another and higher existence, a divine and an external kingdom where the things that belong to the world are unnecessary and where in Christ everyone is a lord to himself over both the devil and the world.[26]

On the basis of this attitude, Erich Kahler called Luther the prototype of the modern German. The idea that utter freedom coexists with utter submission became a prevailing theme in German thought. By laying the basis for German middle class Lutheran morality, Luther helped inhibit any significant resistance to oppressive government.[27]

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[25]Ibid., 25:473; ibid., 44:92-93; ibid., 45:112; ibid., 46:112.

[26]Ibid., 21:108.

[27]Erich Kahler, The Germans, ed. Robert and Rita Kimber (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 182-83, 196, 210, 214, 229. For a different view of Luther's impact on the German political tradition, compare

Three ideas stand out in Luther's dualism of the spiritual and temporal realms which had great significance in the philosophy and writing of Idealist history. The most obvious one was Luther's contention that the affairs of state represent God's rule in human affairs. Secondly, Luther made the state and its political offices larger than life and a reflection of a spiritual struggle hidden behind their appearance. Thirdly, in distinguishing so clearly between the spiritual and temporal areas, Luther divorced politics and culture from the church. At the same time his thought made possible the transferring of spiritual concepts to the secular realm and their application in a human way. Herder and Ranke used this approach by applying Lutheran spiritual ideas to the philosophy and writing of human history.

Along with Luther's dualism of the temporal and spiritual realms, his concept of faith formed a central facet of his theology. Luther defined faith as the right knowledge of heart about God which allows one to think correctly about God.[28] He regarded faith as having nothing to

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Leonard Krieger, The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 5, 61. Krieger places slight emphasis on the significance of Luther's dualism of body and spirit. Yet, in Hajo Holborn, "Der deutsche Idealismus in socialgeschichtslichen Beleuchtung," Historische Zeitschrift 174 (1952):359-84., the German political tradition is analyzed in terms of the German middle class and the Protestant Churches.

[28]Luther, Works, 26:238.

do with what man does but rather with something done to man, an action of God to change the heart and mind of man. This kind of faith permits one to take hold of God's unseen promises as if they were actual events taking place. Luther frequently contrasted faith with human reason which cannot accept such promises or grasp the reality of man's depravity and God's mercy.[29]

The quantity of Luther's comments concerning faith is not great, but as Heinrich Bornkamm, the German Luther scholar, suggests, Luther's concept of faith undergirds his whole theology. Reality to Luther lay in the underlying truthfulness of man's hopelessness and God's mercy rather than in the appearance of material events. Thus, one understands the reality resting in the unseen by faith alone.[30] For Luther, faith also provided the only means of grasping the internal clarity of the Word of God. Without faith both human events and the Word of God would remain obscure in their meaning.[31]

Luther's treatment of faith was filled with implications for history. Faith was not a process of reason but an intuitive grasp of truth. Both Herder and Ranke modeled

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[29]Ibid., 2:267; ibid., 22:151-53.

[30]Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther's World of Thought, trans. Martin H. Bertran (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 80-81, 92.

[31]Luther, Works, 33:28.

their approach to history on this idea. Luther's contention that reality exists in spiritual rather than material truth, a truth unseen but understood by faith, anticipated both Herder's and Ranke's search for the answer to history's riddle. Further, in seeing faith as a way to grasp the internal meaning of the Word of God, Luther anticipated the Idealists' search for the spiritual truth behind the material appearance of history.

Closely related to Luther's concept of faith and to his idea of the two realms of the spiritual and temporal was his notion of the calling or vocation. Often referred to as Luther's social ethic, he defined it as the Christian's relationship to the world. To Luther, the individual Christian combined two identities in one person. Declared righteous in spirit, one lives above the world. Remaining sinful in the flesh, one is subject to the kingdom of this world. Luther took great care to define the ordinary tasks of the worldly existence, a process William H. Lazareth has aptly termed sacred secularity.[32]

Luther spoke with unique intent against the medieval ideal of retreating from the world to achieve closeness with God. His own experience as an Augustinian monk proved to him the futility of this practice. Instead, Luther wanted to impart spiritual meaning to the Christian's everyday life. He believed that any act, no matter how

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[32]Ibid., 21:110; ibid., 44:xiii.

inconsequential, serves God if done in faith.[33] Even eating, sleeping, and working become good works if done in an attitude of trusting God. One need not run off to a monastery to do good, for each day fills life with spiritual significance. Even the tools of the workman cry out to be used in doing good to one's neighbor.[34]

Luther carried his idea further to identify certain divinely ordained orders or social positions.[35] Emperor, king, prince, magistrate, consul, teacher, preacher, pupil, father, mother, child, master, servant, or one's own means of livelihood, each constituted a station in life. Luther regarded these tasks as God's masks behind which He is hidden. Although God works through these positions to grant his blessings, he conceals himself from sinful man. Only those with faith can peer through the veil to realize that God works in man's everyday tasks.[36] Such tasks are not only spiritually relevant, but they become a way to serve God. One should remain in the vocation God has granted him. Luther condemned the Anabaptists for leading people away from these stations in life.[37]

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[33]Ibid., 44:24-26.

[34]Ibid., 21:237; ibid., 44:26-27, 99.

[35]Luther sometimes used the term Beruf to signify vocation. At other times he called the various orders by the term Stand, indicating an estate.

[36]Luther, Works, 14:114; ibid., 26:94-96; ibid., 29:60-61; ibid., 44:7-10.

[37]Ibid., 21:258.

Luther's position on the secular calling has aroused much comment precisely because he made the secular occupation among men a part of one's religious habit before God. Heinrich Bornkamm contends that Luther broadened the concept of calling to include all productive vocations, while giving them a deep connotation of obligation and duty. He believes Luther took the implication of deprivation out of work, making it a joyful exercise done in the confidence that God is pleased.[38] Bornkamm concludes:

> Luther's influence on the social structure resulted in a secularization of the world. The state, the law, the community life received their own sovereignty and were no longer subject to ecclesiastical law. This however implied at the same time a hallowing of the world. For in the spirit of the Gospel it expressed the immediateness to God of every calling and all work.[39]

Luther's emphasis on the calling follows a pattern similar to his position on the state. He created a dualism, placing the tasks of everyday life in the secular realm. In the same breath he spiritualized these works by rooting their origin in God.

Luther's hallowing of the secular vocations influenced Herder and Ranke in two ways. First, in conceiving of their work as a priestly function in the service of God, both Herder and Ranke bore directly the imprint of Luther's mark on their personal lives and careers. Secondly, the identification of God with the everyday world gave an added

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[38]Bornkamm, Luther's World of Thought, p. 272.

[39]Ibid., pp. 271-72.

meaning to the flow of historical events, the presence of God in human affairs. Herder, and in particular Ranke, defined and carried out the meaning of this idea for the writing of human history.

Another basic concept of Luther which affected the Idealists was his outlook toward the place of the individual in the scheme of things. This came out of Luther's doctrine of original sin. With Adam's fall man's divine nature left him. Luther employed the strongest terms to describe man's dead, dull, and leprous condition. Man's wretchedness precludes any inherent natural law or reason in his heart. Luther admitted that in the temporal realm man can develop a secular goodness. Luther called this a righteousness of the flesh. Such power, however, can only prevent outward transgression, and it is often nullified by the devil's power to drive man to sin. In the end this righteousness of the flesh proves futile and man remains a weak and miserable creature.[40]

In his vile state man does not possess a will capable of choosing between good and evil.[41] In his famous exchange with Desiderius Erasmus on the question of free will, Luther contended that all man does happens necessarily and not because of his choice. In one of the most telling passages,

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[40]Luther, Works, 1:66; ibid., 13:161; ibid., 22:55; ibid., 25:135; Ibid., 40:302.

[41]Ibid., 1:84-85.

Luther declared that

> the human will is placed between the two [God and Satan] like a beast of burden. If God rides it, it wills and goes where God wills. . . . If Satan rides it, it wills and goes where Satan wills; nor can it choose to run to either of the two riders or to seek him out, but the riders themselves contend for the possession and control of it.[42]

No more dramatic words on man's utter helplessness outside of God came from Luther. He placed the individual in the midst of a great invisible contest between two spiritual forces. Man's actions are not his own but a reflection of the immediate direction of the match between the wrestlers. Thus, Luther argued that salvation is out of man's power. It is a matter of choice for the sovereign God who elects. Cut off from God, man possesses no good in himself. Only in faith can man realize his fate. Only the righteousness imputed to man apart from works can bring him before God, and man can do nothing at all to obtain this righteousness.[43] Luther declared that "he alone has righteousness whom God mercifully regards as righteous . . . and whom God wills to be considered righteous before him."[44] He added that "the highest art and wisdom of Christians is not to know the Law, [but] to ignore works and all active righteousness."[45]

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[42]Ibid., 33:65.

[43]Ibid., 25:274, 372; ibid., 26:4-5.

[44]Ibid., 25:6.

[45]Ibid., 26:274.

Two other ideas followed naturally. First, the old man must die. The new one finds identity only in God. Luther believed the true Christian must give up everything within himself and claim no glory of his own. He should no longer care for his own desires. Upon reaching this degree of selflessness, he no longer rules his own life and his works are no longer his but God's.[46] Luther concluded that

> a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, [and] in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor.[47]

Secondly, Luther admitted individual differences among Christians only in that outward behavior which has nothing to do with grace. Inwardly, where no individual merit or glory can exist, Christians are all alike, possessing identical consciences which must agree in matters of faith.[48]

Luther's view of the individual meant that outside of grace man has no identity capable of bringing him before God. Once in God, his identity comes from God rather than from himself. The result makes identical consciences, a concept which left slight room for individual expression. The claim that Luther liberated modern thought by shattering the universality of medieval dogma deserves comparison with

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[46]Ibid., 25:136-37.

[47]Ibid., 31:371.

[48]Ibid., 21:287.

Luther's own assumption that if one taught a doctrine different from what he, Luther, had learned in faith, that person had to be a heretic. Luther's doctrine of individual freedom meant utter submission to the faith. The individual's only identity comes in an immersion in the vastness of God's grace.

In the end, Luther immersed the individual in the vast scheme of spiritual reality and made his actions the reflection of a titanic spiritual struggle hidden behind the appearance of events. Luther's individual finds his identity only in faith in God. His view of the individual had a powerful impact on the Idealist thought of Herder and Ranke, both of whom immersed the individuals of history in the great movement of history's dynamic.

Closely tied in with Luther's theological viewpoint was his interpretation of history. As the most obvious parallel with the Idealist historians, Luther's philosophy of history plays a prominent role in this study. Luther conceived of history as a process, an unfolding, and a development from one point to another. Luther cultivated the medieval concept of history, dividing world history into four ages, with each representing a great empire. Based on the Book of Daniel, chapter four, of the Old Testament, the fall of the last empire, Rome, foretold the end of the world. Luther often expressed the belief that the appearance of the anti-Christ

in the person of the pope presaged the end of time.[49] Thus, the Reformation was occurring at the climactic point in history.

Luther also distinguished between the appearance of human events and their true significance. Behind everyday happenings a great spiritual warfare between Christ and Satan rages ceaselessly. If God builds a church, the devil erects a chapel nearby. The worldly person sees only the surface event and interprets it as an action of man. The Christian, seeing historical incidents in faith, looks beyond and construes events in terms of the great spiritual conflict.[50]

Luther never doubted Christ's ultimate victory in this struggle. The mystery of history lay in God's ability to snatch victory from apparent ruin. Luther noted that

> God leads and governs both the godly and ungodly. When all things already seem to be at the point of crashing into ruin, all hope and confidence is still not to be completely cast off. Wait, endure, and hold out! God is still living; the angels are ruling and defending.[51]

Luther spoke these statements in a theological context, but they constitute a philosophy of history because they advance an interpretation of the meaning of man's existence. Luther carried this idea further to make human events the mask of God. God has covered himself with a mask so that

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[49]Ibid., 44:207-8.

[50]Ibid., 13:159; ibid., 26:94-95.

[51]Ibid., 6:92.

men cannot discover him through reason, but must take hold of him by faith. With faith man can perceive God at work in these masks, or human events. God works in the smallest creature of nature as well as in the rise and fall of kingdoms.[52] He is everywhere and in everything. Thus, Luther entwined theology and history to make human affairs the epic of Christ's inevitable victory over Satan.

This Christian interpretation of history left room for great men. Luther believed extraordinary people, the Daniels and the Hannibals, created and directed by God, constitute the living law on earth. Rarely appearing in human affairs, they save men from a bestial life. Under their rule conditions improve, evidencing that God directs them and grants them success.[53] Luther asked, "What is the use of great and noble wisdom and of the sincerest and best advice or opinion if these are not the thoughts which God directs and to which He gives success?"[54] Answering, Luther affirmed that historical life advances only when God directs a leader in whose hand Christ's work progresses. Such miraclemen comprise a gift of God and their careers indicate the hand of God in historical life.

To Luther, then, the essence of history was God's work in men's affairs which, although veiled in mystery, can be

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[52]Ibid., 1:11, 15, 52; ibid., 26:94-95.

[53]Ibid., 13:161-64.

[54]Ibid., p. 165.

seen by faith's eye. Time becomes the footstool of God. History draws men to God. Naturally this became Luther's standard for the writing of history. He dismissed as unimportant secular histories portraying mere human action. Luther shunned the Roman historian, Livy, so prized by contemporary humanists of the sixteenth century, as a mere narrator. True histories must point to God's work and instruct the people to fear God and seek his counsel. Such writings merit great honor and should be believed as if they were scripture.[55] Luther concluded that

> histories are nothing else than a demonstration, recollection, and sign of divine action and judgment, how He upholds, rules, obstructs, prospers, punishes, and honors the world, and especially men, each according to his just desert, evil or good.[56]

While the German Idealist historians did not cultivate the purely Christian interpretation of history which Luther urged, the similarity between Luther's definition and concept of history and the historical faith of the Idealists is still striking. Luther's vision of history as an unfolding drama leading up to a climax presaged the Idealists' approach to history as a process of disclosing God's purpose for humanity. Luther's sharp distinction between the appearance of events and their spiritual significance anticipated Herder's and Ranke's attempt to see the hand of God in men's affairs. Finally, both Luther and the Idealist

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[55]Ibid., 2:236; ibid., 5:353.

[56]Ibid., 34:277-78.

historians approached history with faith in the ultimate victory of God's purposes.

Lastly, Luther's concept of his teaching office and of his ministry as a reformer of the church had a significant influence on the Idealist historians. On several occasions Luther testified that his criticism of the Roman Curia came from his responsibilities as a teacher of the Scriptures rather than from any personal desire for attention. He had to speak out, teach the Word of God, and cry out against wrongdoing, especially by those in high places. In Luther's mind this constituted a public duty for which God would hold him responsible.[57]

Luther never claimed that in teaching the Word of God he spoke merely as Martin Luther. Rather, he spoke as a Doctor of the Scriptures sworn to oppose false doctrine. To do this allowed the Word of God to work its effect. Luther felt God had placed him in the German nation to teach and promote the study of the Scriptures. He hoped that through the Gospel the Germans might rise above their reputations as brutes and that he might be an instrument for bringing this about. Luther rejoiced that Germany was hearing the Word of God in his day as never before.[58]

As in his teaching on government, individual freedom, or the secular calling, Luther couched his own mission in

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[57]Ibid., 21:44; ibid., 25:472; ibid., 27:386.

[58]Ibid., 11:77; ibid., 45:348.

the world in terms of a great movement of God. In this respect, his career had a profound effect on later generations. Both Herder and Ranke sought in their own time to capture the movement of God in history. Both historians relived in their own work the reforming efforts of Martin Luther.

Another aspect of Luther's experience influenced the Idealists. Despite his often repeated claim that his teaching was based entirely on the objective Word of God, Luther's internal personal struggle accounted for the direction of much of his theology and ultimately for the outcome of the Reformation. Luther's idea of going beyond human righteousness to take hold of Christ's righteousness implied an intuitive perception of the inner spirit.[59]

Luther and the Idealists shared this inner tension and personal struggle, along with the tendency to see the world in terms of their state of inner being. Luther believed that the battle which would rage over the earth would be fought first in his own spirit. Both Herder and Ranke experienced personal struggles during which they identified closely with Luther and drew inspiration from his example. They developed an intuitive approach to history which involved an internal grasp of historical developments. Luther's subjective grasp of God's righteousness became the

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[59]Ibid., 26:4-7; ibid., 28:329; ibid., 31:155-56; ibid., 51:77.

Idealists' method for understanding the spiritual reality of historical truth.[60]

This chapter has attempted to identify those aspects of Luther's thought which have implications for the modern cultural world. In considering the impact of Luther on the Idealist historians, certain major conclusions stand out. First, Luther gave human events a significance larger than life, making them reflect a hidden spiritual struggle which men understand only by faith. Secondly, Luther gave an organic quality to the movement of human affairs in general, independent of the desires and actions of individuals. Thirdly, Luther's approach to theology contributed to a type of intuitive perception which called for finding the answers to the questions of life and reality in faith rather than in reason. Fourthly, Luther's efforts as a reformer provided his followers a powerful example on which they could model their lives and work. It fell to Herder and Ranke, as Idealist philosophers and historians, to apply Luther's thought in the context of history.

The discussion of the work of Herder and Ranke in the next two chapters shows how Luther's theological concepts, so easily applicable in cultural situations, provide the key

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[60]Gustavson, "German Lutheranism," pp. 149, 152; Franz Lau, Luther, trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1959), p. 15; Heinrich Boehmer, Road to Reformation: Martin Luther to the Year 1521, trans. John W. Doberstein and Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), p. xiii.

to a fuller understanding of this important source of modern historiography. This search must begin with Johann Gottfried Herder, the fountain of German Idealist history.

CHAPTER II

THE SECOND LUTHER: JOHANN GOTTFRIED HERDER

"The power of his [Luther's] language and his spirit combine with science." Johann Gottfried Herder

The theology of Martin Luther held the prospect of a diverse and widespread impact on modern Western man. Luther's thought could be easily adapted to political, cultural, social, and intellectual situations. This chapter concerns a topic under the intellectual category, the influence of Martin Luther on the thought and historical writing of Johann Gottfried Herder.

Herder's career as a philosopher, poet, critic, and theologian fell within the movement of German Idealism, a philosophical trend which reacted against the empiricism and uniformity of the Enlightenment and emphasized the infinite variety expressed by the human mind and spirit. Herder, along with Gotthold Lessing and Johann Winckelmann, stressed those aspects of art, culture, and religion which were particular to nations but which expressed the humanity common to all mankind. Herder was an important literary figure of the Storm and Stress and Neo-classical periods of German literature. Along with Johann Goethe and Johann Schiller, Herder's work bridged the transition from Neo-classicism to

the Romanticism of Johann Fichte, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and August and Friedrich Schlegel.

Beyond this Herder advanced a philosophy of history which diverted him from the Enlightenment and made him a seminal figure in the development of historiography. Herder's work provided an intellectual backdrop for that of Leopold Ranke and a new generation of historians. For this reason Herder's writings provide an appropriate subject for inquiry into the adaptation of Luther's thought to the writing of history in the later eighteenth century.

Reared in a pietistic Lutheran home and educated in a Lutheran atmosphere, Herder chose the ministry as his calling. As Herder matured his interests shifted from pure theology to human experience. Beset by a sense of emotional isolation, Herder immersed himself in historical studies and embarked on a searching examination of Luther's life.

Herder came to identify closely with Luther and contemplated the idea of becoming a second Luther who would lead a cultural renewal of his times. Herder hoped to accomplish this by writing a great work on the philosophy of history, demonstrating that God's design for humanity is revealed in human history.

In his writing Herder adopted Luther's major theological ideas, applying these concepts to human culture and history. In this process Herder laid the foundation for a new historical outlook with renewed meaning to history for

Western man. Herder's work reveals the significance of Luther's modes of religious thought in the development of modern historiography.

The life [1744-1803] and work of Johann Gottfried Herder spanned an era of turbulence and far-reaching change in Europe. In the year of Herder's birth, the War of the Austrian Succession raged in central Europe. Prussia under Frederick the Great loomed as a great European power. Commerce flourished in the German states. The German Enlightenment had inspired a new urgency in education and learning.

Herder's birthplace was the village of Mohrungen in East Prussia. This region where serfdom held sway on the great estates and Lutheranism predominated in religion nourished Herder's early life. Devout Lutherans, Herder's parents provided the family with regular and personal religious experiences at home and in the church. Herder's father, a schoolmaster, sought a good education for his bright son, Johann. In school the boy demonstrated great intellectual promise and benefited from close ties with his instructor in religion, Johann Gottlieb Willamovius. The young Herder resolved to enter the Lutheran ministry.[1]

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[1]Maria Carolina von Herder, Erinnerungen aus dem Leben Johann Gottfrieds von Herder, ed. Johann Georg Müller (Stuttgart and Tübingen: J. G. Cotta'schem Buchhandlung, 1830), pp. 16-24; Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Gottfried von Herder's Yet Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Humanity, trans. Eva Herzfeld (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 63.

Herder undertook theological studies at the University of Königsberg. There he developed a close association with the theologian, Johann Georg Hamann. Hamann, termed the Magnus of the North, taught his students that faith should be personal and that every happening had an underlying spiritual meaning. Hamann's mystical approach to Christianity owed more to Luther than to the stilted Lutheran institutionalism of the eighteenth century. Hamann's teaching inspired the young Herder who already considered himself a spokesman for God.[2]

At Königsberg Herder studied briefly under Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher whose dualism affected profoundly the tone of German philosophy in the nineteenth century. There is no strong evidence that Kant's teaching made a deep impression on Herder. At the time Herder's attention was directed toward theology. Later, when Kant found Herder's publications unacceptable, the two men challenged each other publicly.

Herder finished his doctorate at Königsberg. Armed with powerful spiritual motives and his ministerial calling, he accepted an appointment as instructor in religion at the Cathedral School in Riga. There his keen intellectual

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[2]Emil Gottfried von Herder, ed., Johann Gottfried von Herders Lebensbild, 3 vols. (Erlangen: Verlag von Theodor Bläsing, 1846; reprint ed., Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977), 1:45-46; Carolina Herder, Erinnerungen, pp. 270-71; Robert T. Clark, Herder: His Life and Thought (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), pp. 48-50.

interests broadened. He studied history, philosophy, philology, poetry, criticism of art, and the natural sciences. His human interests enlivened the sermons he preached regularly in the cathedral. Going beyond the orthodox theology learned in his younger days, Herder delivered practical messages applicable to the experiences of living and designed to show the way to happiness on earth.[3]

Herder struggled to reconcile his spiritual training with his human concerns, concluding finally that faith and theology should join reason and science to achieve man's happiness. Herder henceforth regarded the Scriptures as a work written for man which should be read in a human way for man's own benefit.[4]

Herder experienced a thoroughgoing re-orientation of thought at Riga. Church leaders looked askance at his unconventional ideas, tagging him with the well-deserved title of a "free thinker." Actually his concerns remained spiritual in nature, the search for God and the meaning of human existence. From this point on, however, Herder sought answers to these spiritual questions in an examination of man's experiences, that is in his history.

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[3]Rudolf Haym, Herder nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken, 2 vols. (Berlin: R. Gärtners Verlag, 1880-85), 1:93-95.

[4]Johann Gottfried von Herder, Herders Sämmtliche Werke, ed. Bernhard Suphan, 18 vols. (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877-92), 10:7, 277, 284; Haym, Herder, 2:548-49.

Herder's tenure at Riga proved beneficial for his future work. Science and learning shone before him as the morning sun. Yet, Herder longed to go beyond the narrow regimen of teaching to allow himself more time for research and to broaden his influence in Germany. Herder's discontent spread to his studies. He lamented that history had relatively little to say about the original ancient civilizations of mankind. He loathed the general histories of mankind which buried whole peoples in obscurity while exalting modern times.[5]

Disillusioned, Herder saw history as a cursed castle full of gods and giants, a story which concludes itself in ruin and covers itself with a wide expanse of night. He longed to fulfill a higher purpose for his life than the Riga experience had yielded. Herder yearned to produce a great work showing all that humanity had encompassed and achieved and thereby to reveal God's order in human society and His true purpose for mankind.[6]

Herder mused that such a work of history would become theology and that only a priest of God could and should write it, and through it educate humanity. Then, baring his own heart's desire, Herder wondered who would dare to contribute to this work his own historical outlook and thus become a preacher edifying the people. He asked, almost

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[5]Carolina Herder, Erinnerungen, p. 113.

[6]Johann Herder, Werke, 2:112-13; ibid., 4:345; ibid., 7:300-1.

self-effacingly, "Do I know him? Was his way to education that of my own?"[7]

In these comments Herder showed both his educative desire to illuminate mankind's pathway and his frustration with life at Riga. Growing more sensitive and discouraged, he resigned his instructorship. Temporarily at loose ends, he chose an interlude of travel, embarking in 1767 on an extended tour of France and Italy.[8]

On this journey Herder made entries in a journal which he published later as his Reisejournal, 1769. His comments, sometimes rambling and disorganized, nevertheless indicated his developing philosophy of history and anticipated the major ideas in his two later works, Yet Another Philosophy of History, and Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man.[9]

This journey gave Herder time and a new perspective with which to reflect on the past and on his future plans. Looking back on his term at Riga, he commented that life's events often result from the direction of accident beyond the control of man. That he had acquired a spiritual office, come to Riga, and traveled to France and Italy were all

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[7]Ibid., 7:301.

[8]Ibid., 4:345; ibid., 7:300-1.

[9]Johann Gottfried Herder, Journal of My Travels in the Year 1769, trans. John Francis Harrison (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 126-29.

considered by Herder as largely happenstance.[10] Herder adopted this theme of fate's role in human life largely from Luther, whose spirit he frequently called to mind in those days. Like Luther, Herder displayed an inclination to see the larger issues of man's earthly journey in terms of his inner feelings. Herder shared this quality with many of the later Romantics.[11]

Herder's emotional depression soon lifted on the trip and his spirits soared. He dreamed of becoming a second Luther and of using his clerical office to spread education and freedom. Herder drew often on the inspiration of Luther's spirit, resolving within his capabilities to discover all that pertained to the human soul and its happiness and to collect information on human customs and practices in all ages of time. He expressed again his intention of organizing this knowledge in a grand work of universal history and world culture encompassing peoples from the ancient Middle Eastern civilizations to his own age, an era he deemed the age of science.[12]

This all-encompassing work might include a man from Judea, a philosopher of Egypt, a Roman hero, and a medieval priest, each revealing the spirit of his age and his concept of virtue and happiness. The work would show the intrinsic

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[10]Johann Herder, Werke, 4:345.

[11]Gustavson, "German Lutheranism," pp. 149-52.

[12]Johann Herder, Werke, 4:353, 362-64.

good of each age, while preaching the virtue of the present. It must show the grand prospect of the human race ready to be educated. It should therefore include a book on the function of every member of the human body and soul, a catechism of duties of parents, children, rulers, citizens, husbands, and wives, a work on the honorable exercise of each profession, and a section on music, art, and social life.[13]

Herder insisted an optimistic theme must underlie this multi-volume work, that the genius of enlightenment permeates the whole earth, and that in human history all things possible will come to pass. The work must teach the moral obligation that men need only be reasonable, cultured, and virtuous as God requires. Herder anticipated that this magnum opus would usher in a new age.[14] In his excitement he exclaimed, "What a work for the entire world!"[15]

Although never fully carried out, Herder's plans were pregnant with the educative ideal of Luther himself. Herder pointed, however, toward a cultural desire to know all that pertained to man's existence and toward the education of all humanity.[16] Herder even recommended a new system of education, with courses of study to consist of nature, history,

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[13]Ibid., pp. 353, 364-70.

[14]Ibid., pp. 353, 364-65.

[15]Ibid., p. 365.

[16]Clark, Herder, p. 100.

and philosophy, the latter course to include religion. He advised the teacher of history to do away with lists of kings and battles and to organize lessons around great peoples, changes, and revolutions which transmit the spirit of culture. The instructor must show the whole condition of humanity and the movement of nations as they swim the stream of history.[17] The pupil must see "how the stream of time has always rolled on until it has reached our own age, the point at which we now stand."[18]

Herder conceived of the human experience as a great current, inexoribly cascading its course in the riverbed of time. He utilized this concept effectively in his writing, but the ambitious scheme to reorganize education remained out of his reach. The idea soon yielded to pressing reality. When he returned from France and Italy, he faced a decision on his future position. He served for a time as Court Preacher to Wilhelm zur Lippe, moving in 1771 to a similar position in the small German principality of Bückeburg.

In Bückeburg Herder served as Senior Pastor for the church of the Count von Bückeburg, later adding administrative and teaching duties in the university there. A thirty-one year old bachelor, Herder suffered the same lonely isolation he had known at Riga. What he lacked in the social world, he sought in the world of ideas and in a

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[17]Johann Herder, Werke, 4:378-87.

[18]Ibid., p. 379.

longing to renew the inner life of his generation in God. Like Luther before him, Herder hungered for an understanding which would ground his life in a new certainty. In these spiritual struggles Herder found solace in reading and gathering materials for his work on the philosophy of history and in an exhaustive study of Luther's works.[19]

During this period Herder came to terms fully with the new intellectual world which René Descartes, Johannes Kepler, and Isaac Newton had created. Herder now resolved to make God's revelation harmonize with the findings of modern science and philosophy. He found the answer in viewing the great work of God in nature and in the realization that all beings walk daily in the presence of God's revelation. Enlightened men had but the duty to hear and reverence God's work and to recognize God's image and creative power in themselves and the world around them.[20]

Herder's prolific study at Bückeburg indicated his intense desire, almost a compulsion, to obtain direct insight into the past. He read as a seeker after God, exploring every possible meaning from history.[21] Herder virtually recreated in his own soul Luther's search for righteousness

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[19]Eugen Kühnemann, Herder (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912), p. 166; Carolina Herder, Erinnerungen, p. 187; Haym, Herder, 2:708.

[20]Johann Herder, Werke, 6:197-98, 258, 275.

[21]Friedrich Meinecke, Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook, trans. J. E. Anderson (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 304.

before God, directing his immense intellectual energies, however, to lighting a new pathway for humanity on earth.

Herder had always prized Luther's literary and linguistic qualities, but in his emotional crisis at Bückeburg he identified with Luther the man. Herder proposed marriage to Maria Carolina, whom he had been courting for months. Noting the difference in their ages, Herder cited the example of Luther who had married in the middle of his life in a time of great difficulty. Herder noted to his future wife that he had been reading of Luther's personal situation with great emotional intensity.[22] Revealing his longing to be like Luther, Herder wrote, "I have done nothing in the world to untie the shoe laces of this great man, but I hope to do so."[23] Maria Carolina sensed Herder's desire to recapture Luther's spirit and power in his life. She wrote:

> You are Luther; that I have always said, and it makes me happy that you are aware of it . . . even though you do not want to acknowledge it. Always remain in your noble virtuous way; you will do well and produce fruit a hundred-fold.[24]

Herder treasured the smallest details of Luther's life, and after a time boasted a knowledge of Luther and a love for the man unsurpassed by any orthodox theologian. He

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[22]Carolina Herder, Erinnerungen, p. 233.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Johann Gottfried Herder, Aus Herders Nachlass, ed. Heinrich Duntzer and Ferdinand Gottfried von Herder, 3 vols. (Frankfurt a. Main: Meidinger Sohn u. Comp., 1857; reprint ed. Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1976), 3:407.

hoped to measure up to the originality, strong will, and directness possessed by Luther, and to become in fact a second Luther whose passion would implement a cultural regeneration.[25] Herder's subsequent work in the philosophy of history not only utilized many aspects of Luther's thought, but it also drew impetus and inspiration from Herder's thorough search into Luther's life and work. This attachment to Luther, coupled with his passion to leave his mark on the eighteenth century, as Luther had on the sixteenth century, drove Herder on toward his work on the philosophy of history.

In effusive comments on Luther during the Bückeburg years, Herder painted two descriptive portraits of Luther, one private and the other official. Luther the man began as a simple unlearned monk who burned with eagerness for God's Word and love for the people. Honest, clearheaded, the gentlest and sincerest of men, Luther resolved his inner spiritual struggles to find perfect peace. Herder's heart beat quickened as he recalled how Luther, when pursued by the Reichstag, hid at Koburg, and viewing from his window birds flying in the air, found his own inner freedom in trusting in God.[26]

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[25]Johann Herder, Werke, 18:543; Johann Herder, Aus Herders Nachlass, 2:152; Haym, Herder, 2:494.

[26]Haym, Herder, 2:207.

In the official portrait, Herder pictured Doctor Martin Luther, with a powerful, spirit-filled face, a deep calm look in the eyes, action and power in the nose, and pride and attentiveness in the mouth. These features revealed a man who stood against a demon-filled world. As prophet and preacher, God's gift to the people, Luther pressed his convictions, destroyed the papal hold on Europe, and with pure unselfishness and sacrificial character, laid the foundation for freedom of conscience.[27]

Herder, along with other adherents of the German Enlightenment, viewed the Reformation as a time of liberation from spiritual and intellectual tyranny. Herder went beyond this generous assessment, however, viewing Luther's movement with unaffected acclaim. He lavished Luther with such overflowing praise that he appeared to promote Luther as the overpowering figure of the modern age. In other passages, however, Herder placed Luther's work in the transcendent stream of historical change and revolution. This apparent incongruity of Herder's simultaneous admiration for Luther's greatness and his deterministic interpretation of the Reformation masked a philosophical tension in Herder's thought between human effort and historical necessity. Herder never fully resolved this discrepancy. Herder could call Luther the brave man struggling in the storms of fate. Yet, he portrayed the Reformation as an inevitable

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[27]Johann Herder, Werke, 7:190, 214; ibid., 8:230; ibid., 10:9, 253; ibid., 11:211.

necessity of history. He thought of the direction of human affairs in the sixteenth century as the soil without which the tree of Reformation could never have grown. He expressed this in a general law of historical necessity, that what happens at a certain time must happen at that time.[28] Thus, the Reformation occurred in 1517 because of forces inherent in the dynamic of the times.

According to Herder, Luther never envisioned a far-reaching movement and did little to inspire it except to stand up and speak those convictions which most men had long known to be true. Luther's passion served to implement rather than to formulate those ideas present in the Reformation. Herder compared the Reformation to the springtime when, as in the natural sphere, thousands of new plants of liberty sprang up. The time for freedom's resurrection had come.[29] Herder noted that in this seedtime of Reformation, Luther was "never more than a small blind instrument in the hands of Providence, almost acting against . . . [his] own will."[30]

Herder almost certainly recognized that such sentiments appeared to restrict human freedom in history. He tried to negate this ambivalence in his historical outlook by utilizing the classic Lutheran idea of attaining freedom in

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[28]Ibid., 7:257, 276-77.

[29]Ibid., 5:531.

[30]Ibid.

complete submission. In articles entitled, "Influence of Two Powers in Ourselves," and "On the Character and Genius of Humanity," he recalled the Luther-Erasmus debate on the bondage of the will. Herder contended the deeper one goes in knowledge and freedom, the more one feels himself bound as a slave. He cited the example of the bird which thinks itself free to fly. The fowler, however, does not doubt for one moment that he will have his prey. So men are slaves to a higher order, God's far-reaching universe, within which the soul can move ever closer toward God. The nearer one gets to God, the freer one becomes.[31]

Herder admired Luther as one who knew true freedom in submission to God. He asked, "When do you come, man without selfishness and with breast of rock, second Luther, to be able to use all means of the time and previous times, and to be God's offer to the world?"[32]

The glorious prospect of resurrecting Luther's work in human culture both inspired and humbled Herder and aroused in him again the hope that he might realize his own destiny. He wrote to Johann Lavater:

> I feel that so much is still before me and I still have to do so much if I, in my life should be deserving of my destiny. To do but first to become! . . . And what is it that I have lacked up to now in my life? Religion, great work on God's Household through centuries

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[31]Ibid., 8:202, 307-8.

[32]Ibid., 7:190.

> and nations . . . that I . . . perhaps may teach my brethren, as perhaps is my duty on the earth.[33]

Herder's sense of his mission, his aching desire to make up the deficiency in his life, and his vision of a magnum opus on God's work in human history, all flowed out of his Lutheran spiritual experiences and his great attraction to Luther. Herder never intended another purely religious reformation on the model of Luther's sixteenth century movement. He desired instead to overcome the gulf between Christianity and human culture and to make religion the touchstone in the cultural world. Herder meant to accomplish this by taking the mode of old Lutheran thought out of the realm of abstract theological principle and applying it in the course of human culture and history.[34]

Herder's understanding, then, sprang from religious origins. Indeed, a generation of German literary figures, Gotthold Lessing, Christoph Wieland, August and Karl Schlegel, and Friedrich Klopstock, and their German national literature rose from the foundation of German Lutheranism. Werner Elert commented:

> The development of a German national literature in the move from the German Enlightenment to German Idealism is a phase in German Lutheranism. It is the history of its secularization. It is ruled by a dynamic which sprang from the Reformation, . . . from faith in the

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[33]Herder to Lavater, 1775, cited in Haym, Herder, 2:582.

[34]Martin Doerne, Die Religion in Herders Geschichtsphilosophie (Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1927), pp. 3-4, 10, 36, 158.

> universal God to faith in all men. This faith conquered eighteenth century Germanism. This Germanism is secularized Lutheranism. In German Idealism, however, the climax lies in an even deeper sense. It discloses itself where Luther disclosed himself: before the hidden God.[35]

This application of the old Lutheranism in a new and worldly way, in Herder's case, resulted in a philosophy of history which sought God's will in the events of human history and not in the abstractions of theology. It was this theme of the human past which Herder addressed in an essay entitled, Yet Another Philosophy of History, 1774.

The essay grew out of those ideas which had whirled about in Herder's mind on his journey to France and Italy. It also sprang from his growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing philosophy of history of the Enlightenment. Herder had come to maturity during the full flower of the German Enlightenment, and he admired the greatness, beauty, and uniqueness of the eighteenth century.[36] He never intended to break radically with his century but only to perfect it. Nor did he presume in Yet Another Philosophy of History to put forth a definitive statement of historical philosophy. He wanted instead merely to make a series of observations on the paths that men often take.[37] Herder's work, however, went beyond the limits of his intent. The

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[35]Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums, 2:158.

[36]Johann Herder, Werke, 5:545.

[37]Ibid., 13:3.

essay became Herder's most concise and ordered statement of historical philosophy.

Herder sounded a polemical tone in his essay, contending that historians of the Enlightenment period had made history merely a flat plain, a series of reoccurrences reflecting the uniform workings of natural law. He argued that in judging the past by the standards of the eighteenth century, and by regarding ancient and medieval civilizations as primitive and barbaric, the Enlightenment had overlooked the infinite variety and cultural richness of past historical epochs. Herder believed the historians of the eighteenth century had failed to recognize the design of God in history, and this had contributed to the growing degeneracy of the time.[38]

In Yet Another Philosophy of History, Herder proposed a universal approach to history in which the historian should consider the unique characteristics of each epoch in its time and geographic location.[39] This novel idea of historical relativity meant that the historian might look with beneficence on any age, exploring in colorful detail manners

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[38]Robert R. Ergang, Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 228; Alexander Gillies, "Herder's Approach to the Philosophy of History," Modern Language Review 35 (1940):193-204; Johann Herder, Werke, 5:486, 506, 513; Johann Herder, Herder's Another Philosophy of History, p. 11; Meinecke, Historism, pp. xliv, 300.

[39]Johann Herder, Werke, 5:486, 506.

and customs which then constituted virtue and rightness. It also obligated the historian to avoid judging the past by the supposedly objective standards of natural law as it was understood in the eighteenth century. In this way Herder moved beyond the uniformity of natural law as the focus of historical reality and toward the events of history themselves, or more precisely, the unfolding of history itself.

Herder's break with the prevailing intellectual trends of his time carried with it the vision of a new historical outlook. Giambattista Vico, the Italian historical theorist, and Gottfried Leibnitz, the German philosopher, had previously suggested that the significance of history lay in the events themselves and the direction to which they pointed. It was Herder, however, who synthesized this view for future historians. From his writings a diverse intellectual underpinning took shape. It drew the broad outline of history as it would be written in the nineteenth century.[40]

Herder went on to say that while each age and nation had its own center and purpose, no epoch or people, not even an event or individual, could stand alone in history. Rather, each epoch formed a link in the chain of man's progress toward education. History had not realized its fullest purpose in individuals. Scenes and events unique to

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[40]Georg G. Iggers, The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), p. 30; Meinecke, Historism, pp. 3, 19, 21, 42-43, 300.

time and place happened so as to implement the plan of Providence for the education of mankind. The virtuous deeds of men were God's creations, tiny seeds which grew into the noble tree of man's cultural development.[41] God always carried out His purpose in the world in natural and human events. Herder concluded, "Let human passions be acted out on a human stage! let them act in accordance with their age in every period! and, so be it with every nation and every continent!"[42]

In these strokes with which Herder painted his historical-philosophical portrait, he looked back to the vision of Wittenberg. Herder's longing to grasp with his inner being the whole of history paralleled Luther's inner spiritual struggle with his individual standing before God.[43] As Herder blended the events of history into the fulfillment of God's plan, he, like Luther, placed history's true meaning in the spiritual reality lying behind the material events. Herder infused into the historical epic a mystical quality and gave a divine meaning to the unfolding of the human drama. In proclaiming that history moves under the leadership of Providence, Herder made a belief in revelation the heart of his historical philosophy.[44]

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[41]Johann Herder, Werke, 5:486, 557-59.

[42]Ibid., p. 520.

[43]Gustavson, "German Lutheranism," pp. 149, 152.

[44]Haym, Herder, 1:541; Meinecke, Historism, p. 313.

With this grand theme of God's design in human affairs, Herder sought to view from the heights the entire picture of man's development, realizing all the while that God alone sees in one glance the complete unity of one or all nations, while understanding the uniqueness of each. From God's lofty vantage point, history became to Herder the palace of Providence. From man's tableland, it remained a labyrinth, an abyss in which man loses his way, unable to see and hear it all. God's great purpose in history remains inscrutable to man.[45]

In this idea of an inscrutable God in history, Herder adopted and secularized Luther's concept of the hidden God who masks himself behind everyday affairs. Herder's belief that historical events concealed an inscrutable higher purpose gave a new meaning to history and a new individuality to historical epochs. Each epoch carried in it the whole of history, the purpose of God, and at the same time, the whole encompassed each individuality. The observer of history must see events and ages as part of the whole, whose greatness lies in its appearance in every individual sequence. The individual person in history plays a significant part only when expressing the whole. Luther, Gustavus Adolphus, and Peter the Great, while great men, were small instruments of God's purposes. Men constitute mere letters, nations and

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[45]Johann Herder, Werke, 5:505, 560-61.

centuries were only syllables as the finger of God wrote His universal history.[46]

Herder placed the individual historically in the same position Luther had put him spiritually, that is as helpless apart from the greater forces which swirled about him relentlessly. For Herder, the true actors on history's stage were not persons, but the great collective forces through which the design of Providence worked its ultimate will.

Herder felt a sense of awe and humility as he contemplated these sublime thoughts. He asked:

> Who am I, that I should pass judgment, just because I have passed through the great hall and have caught a faint, shimmering glimpse of a small corner of the great covered painting? . . . What can I say about the great book of God which passes across world and time, in which I am merely one letter of the alphabet, barely able to discern three other letters around me. . . . Man is nothing more than an individual instrument in the Plan of an inscrutable Providence.[47]

In the end, as Herder viewed the historical labyrinth, he fell back on faith. Drawing again on the old Lutheran outlook, Herder surrendered to history, accepting it in the belief that in all its devastation and misery, grandeur and victory, its ultimate purpose would prove beneficial to the human race. He quoted from the Scriptures a revealing passage: "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I

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[46]Ibid., pp. 531, 581, 584.

[47]Ibid., p. 584.

am known."[48] Herder's search in history led him to the same point where Luther's journey had ended, to a God hidden in His revelation, whom man must grasp in faith and submission.

Herder's historical faith kept him from a morbid fatalism. He boldly anticipated the future, whose final purpose man cannot understand, as a time when God would show Himself. Herder exclaimed, "What a sight! What a noble use for human history! How encouraging it is to hope, to act, to believe, even where one sees nothing, or not everything."[49]

Herder cherished this truth as a spiritual spring which could water the cultural desert as men learned to appreciate past civilizations in their proper time and place, to develop a feeling for common humanity, and to discern God's divine plan and purpose above human existence. A work which could lead men to do so would be history of humanity in its loftiest form.[50]

Herder wondered how anyone could wander among the virtuous deeds of men "without being seized by a trembling anticipation of a better future or without blessing his Maker in the stillness of morning, noon, and night."[51] With

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[48]1 Cor. 13:12.

[49]Johann Herder, Werke, 5:513.

[50]Ibid., p. 567.

[51]Ibid., p. 580.

characteristic yearning, he exclaimed, "What a picture, if I could only paint it, as it had really been."[52]

As Herder searched for a renewal of Luther's spirit in his own generation, he unwittingly augured a new idealistic historical outlook. Herder's blending of historical elements into God's plan for humanity, his identification of the organic character of history, and his emphasis on the individuality of historical phenomena anticipated the German historicists who drew on his inspiration. They, too, would seek the spiritual meaning of history beyond the visible events. Specifically, when Herder sought to paint the historical portrait as it had really been, he presaged Leopold Ranke's famous and similar saying.[53]

Yet Another Philosophy of History began as a pamphlet against the eighteenth century and ended as an historical and philosophical confession of faith containing the crux of Herder's thought and the essence of historicism. It raised history from being an object of knowledge, as the Enlightenment saw it, to the level of religious faith in the divine plan in action.[54]

Despite the sweeping implications of the ideas in Yet Another Philosophy of History, Herder confined the

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[52]Ibid., p. 486.

[53]Ibid.; Johann Herder, Herder's Another Philosophy of History, p. 135.

[54]Haym, Herder, 1:541.

application of his thoughts to the historical experience of the European nations, intending a more universal generalization in a broader work which he ambitiously viewed as the definitive philosophy of the history of man.[55]

For years Herder had collected materials for this great work. Before he brought them together for publication, he moved to Weimar in 1776 as Superintendent and Consistory Councillor. Herder obtained this position largely through the influence of Johann Goethe, whom he had met first in 1770. Herder's brillance had influenced Goethe profoundly. Herder's association with Goethe at Weimar after 1776 in turn stimulated him to draw together his observations on the philosophy of history in a work which he published during the years 1784-1791.

This work grew out of Herder's lifelong search for a philosophy or science of the history of man to explain man's destiny. Through years of prolific reading in philosophy, morals, physics, natural history, and above all, religion, Herder's search had intensified.[56] Yet, Herder found in his studies merely a sordid, disjointed historical record, revealing a labyrinth of human fancies, a maze through which men apparently wandered endlessly without purpose. The simple chronicles of the past showed only calamity upon calamity, scarring a desolate earth. Vice, cruelty, folly,

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[55]Johann Herder, Werke, 13:3.

[56]Ibid., pp. 6-7.

and wars seemed to dominate man's paradoxical existence, spinning a spider's web of contradictions, and leaving man to a melancholy fate.[57]

Herder's idealism would not permit him to be satisfied with such a record of mankind's existence. Instead, Herder advocated the development of a philosophy of history which would discern patterns common to the whole of human history and which might be used to anticipate the future direction of man's journey. Such a philosophy of history, Herder contended, would reveal the focus of man's search and wandering and the central point in the labyrinth of human action. In so doing, it would reveal what the human species is in the whole, what man's destiny is on earth, and for what purpose his life exists on the earth.[58] Herder aimed at a solution to the crucial question of human life.

To accomplish this task, Herder addressed the universal history of man, which he termed the philosophy of man's history. Far from being a descriptive narrative, Herder's work resembled modern cultural anthropology. It encompassed information commonly separated in modern research into specialized fields such as history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, geography, politics, theology, languages, the arts, and the natural sciences. Such was the breadth of Herder's inquiry. Within these areas of inquiry, Herder

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[57]Ibid., pp. 309, 351-53; ibid., 14:205-9.

[58]Ibid., 13:309, 727; ibid., 14:205.

considered a plethora of peoples from the ancient Mesopotamians to the Greeks, the Romans, and Medieval civilizations. This ambitious undertaking paralleled Herder's insatiable curiosity about human culture in various ages. Yet, he modestly entitled his work, Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man, feeling that he had not yet achieved his full aim of a philosophy of history to explain the past and predict the future. Too, Herder never actually finished his work to his own satisfaction. In the end, the title matched the character of the work.

In Outlines, Herder studied each age and nation of people, looking for circumstances peculiar to that period, for limitations of time and geography, and for the inherent character of the peoples. The book devoted to each nation a section within which Herder arranged topics and sub-topics. Herder described the virtues and failures of each of the world's peoples. He defined basic history as human action modified by time and place. To Herder, the accomplishments of Greece or Rome were possible only within their particular historical period. Neither civilization would have achieved greatness under different circumstances.[59]

Herder recognized that this historical relativity, which he had introduced in Yet Another Philosophy of History, seemed to pre-determine the course of events in a particular period. Herder partially compensated for this by dismissing

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[59]Ibid., 13:37-38, 273; ibid., 14:144-45, 199-200, 209.

the suggestion that God intervened directly to determine the direction of human affairs. Such a view would detract from God's wisdom and man's courage. Herder insisted that history is the science of what actually happens and that the observer of history always explains any event by what actually happened.[60]

In defining history as human action, modified by time and place, Herder was refining and synthesizing his previous writings on the nature of history. Herder not only hoped to avoid a purely theological approach to historical writing, in which events resulted from God's direct intervention in human affairs, but also to keep away from a basic chronological type of historical writing. Herder called this kind of history a flower that blooms quickly and soon withers. He had always believed that chronology was merely a beginning phase in research.[61]

Herder hoped also to realize in Outlines what he had previously urged, that the historian base history on events, seeing those facets of the whole which his outlook allows. Thus, the historian would write history as it appears to him and as he knows it. In this way Herder identified clearly the subjective participation of the historian's mind in the simple arrangement of the facts of history. The historian must go further, Herder contended, beyond the events

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[60]Ibid., 14:145-46.

[61]Ibid., 8:465.

themselves, to observe the whole and to discern cause and effect. One who does this moves from historian to philosopher, statesman, or prophet.[62] Herder had hoped to accomplish this transition in his own work and to "pull this thread over epochs and nations, so I am no more man but a higher creator who discerns from the nations the course of events."[63]

In identifying the significance of cause and effect, Herder admired the work of the Scottish philosopher and historian, David Hume. Herder thought Hume demonstrated a spiritual connection between cause and effect, one hidden behind the events and therefore not fully historical. The historian cannot see empirically this spiritual reality but can only presume it. Recognized philosophically, it brings to history a philosophical romance.[64]

In commending Hume, Herder recalled the dualism of the temporal and spiritual realms which undergirded Luther's theology. Herder applied this idea to corresponding levels of temporal and spiritual history. Temporal history meant the individual events of the past. Spiritual history referred to the meaning and direction of events as a whole. Hidden behind the action, and masking a divine presence, this spiritual message cannot be understood by reason but

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

only by the intuitive perception of the historian. In this idea, Herder utilized in a historical sense Luther's rejection of reason as a way to understand God and his concept of faith as a means of grasping God's presence in everyday affairs.

Herder also identified a philosophical method which distinguished the thinking and approach of the Idealists. This involved a subjective perception, an intuitive divining of spiritual truth present in a historical development. The Idealists owed a large debt to Luther for this way of determining perceived reality. Indeed, this may have been Luther's most prolific contribution to the German Idealists.

Herder had long played with this approach in his mind, contemplating the repetitious character of the accidents and ruins of history. Herder aimed to bring to this chaos his wit, sharp sense, and spirit of reflection. He confessed to experiencing something akin to a magic spell, viewing developments through a window of his soul, combining and following the true direction of affairs.[65]

For the use of this same historical style, Herder had long admired the German historian, Justus Möser. He credited Möser with painting the significance of the German spirit in all its fulness, depth, richness, and truth. Comparing Möser to Moses, who led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt and toward the promised land, Herder deplored only

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[65]Ibid., pp. 466-67.

the realization that this Moses had no Aaron to speak for him. Likewise, Herder commended the historian Tacitus for his contemplations of the spirit of events, comparing his style to a still brook which murmurs its way along, always keeping a suitable depth.[66]

What Herder had long sought in history was a characterization of the whole, something he called science or system [Lehrgebäude]. To Herder, the truth and reality of history lay in this realm. Beginning with history, the actual events, and bringing to it an understanding of the whole development constituted, in Herder's mind, the best history. As he developed his ideas in Outlines, these concepts pressed in on him. In this work Herder had the opportunity to realize his vision of history.[67]

Herder quickly observed that history would not yield up its secrets easily. He knew that men had often discerned no cause or pattern in human events. When men with intelligence and memory reflect on the purpose and pattern of human existence, they must rely on philosophy to explain man's destiny. In this way man discovers God because, in Herder's opinion, the essence of philosophy was religion. Religion had become the highest expression of man's humanity by combining all his hopes into faith. In Outlines, Herder proposed to seek a philosophy of history where it could be

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[66]Ibid., 1:185, 220.

[67]Ibid., 4:201-3.

found, that is in his own observations, reflections, and religious speculation concerning the history of man.[68]

Herder made religion central to his philosophical journey, as his comments on God in human history clearly showed. He deemed as superficial the observer of history who overlooks God. Herder's God was the Lutheran God, active in men's affairs, using men and nations to accomplish His purposes.[69] Herder showed the true purpose of his philosophy when he wrote, "The God whom I seek in history must be the same as in nature; for man is only a small part of the whole and his history, as that of the worm, is closely interwoven with the web he inhabits."[70] Herder sought God as Luther had, in His revelation. For Herder, this meant the realm of physical and human nature. It signified also that Herder's attraction to history was rooted in his religious impulse to know God.[71]

Herder began his search in Outlines with nature, where he observed a divine order, a rhythm of the universe reflecting God's power, goodness, and wisdom. He saw God's presence hidden everywhere in nature, a Providence inscrutable in its workings. God forms, sustains, and

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[68]Ibid., 13:8, 161-64.

[69]Ibid., p. 309; ibid., 14:146, 244.

[70]Ibid., 14:244.

[71]Gillies, "Herder's Approach to the Philosophy of History," p. 204.

preserves order and equilibrium through prevailing natural laws by which he reveals himself. An omnipresent eye assigns a time, place, and function to all things and holds them together.[72]

Herder believed in a corresponding divine order in human affairs, which, when understood, held the key to the labyrinth of man's existence. This divine order became the focus of Herder's search in history. In history, he sought to identify a series of God-ordained universal laws working in every age. Through these comprehensive laws, God's revelation would become clearer.[73]

Within the various ages and nations, Herder observed a law which provided that "whatever can happen among mankind within the sphere of given circumstances of time, place, and nation, actually happens."[74] Herder added another law: "what is, is; what can be will be; what is dissolvable dissolves."[75] Thus, each age and each nation and people carried within itself an inherent dynamic expressed in the whole and in each individual part. Each civilization could be appreciated within its historical context.

Herder believed that a national soul in each of the world's peoples had spawned human culture. He made each

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[72]Johann Herder, Werke, 13:7, 9-10, 32; ibid., 14:244, 249.

[73]Ibid., 14:249.

[74]Ibid., p. 144.

[75]Ibid., p. 206.

epoch an individual entity, but at the same time, Herder believed each formed a stage in a larger development. As each pursued its cycle of growth, maturity, and decay, it passed from the scene. Another soon took its place. History moves by a repetitive, cyclical process, and from one age to the next according to the general laws of nature.[76]

Basic to Herder's thought was an idea closely akin to Luther's view, of an all-encompassing plan, larger than life and significant beyond the happenings of everyday human existence. Herder applied this concept in his comments on the nations of history and also when he spoke of the universal history of humanity.

In the case of the latter, Herder viewed the entire spectrum of past ages. He moved on the assumption that mankind forms one species. Stamped with the divine mind, mankind possesses great diversity within a marvelous uniformity. Herder saw a great chain of being, beginning with God, coming down through man and ending with the smallest particle of nature. The human part of this chain binds the individual to all others and to the whole which, in turn, lives in each individual. This chain possesses the stream of history which ties the individual to family, ancestors, and ultimately to the father of the human race. Herder

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[76]Ibid., 13:273; ibid., 14:204; Meinecke, Historism, p. 346.

believed the philosophy of history lay in knowing how individuals cooperate to preserve their culture and traditions.[77]

As Herder contemplated the ultimate end of human existence, he assured himself that those qualities which elevate man toward God would prevail in human history. The chain led to improvement and education. All human life exists to pursue reason, art, beauty, and freedom. Humanity and happiness form the aim of the human species.[78]

Thus, in man's history, a law of self-enlightening reason works. History moves like a rolling snowball, and humanity progresses through degrees of civilization. The divine order shows again the clue to the riddle of history. Reason and justice survive in human affairs. Herder commented that only a philosophy of history which follows the chain of improvement brings meaning to human affairs and qualifies as a true history of man.[79] Herder exclaimed:

> Golden chain of improvement, you that surround the earth and extend through all individuals to the throne of Providence, since I perceived you and traced you in your finest links, the feelings of father and mother, friends, and teacher, history no longer appears to me what it once did, a series of desolations on a scarred earth.[80]

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[77]Johann Herder, Werke, 13:46-47, 255, 345-47; ibid., 14:39.

[78]Ibid., 13:189, 350.

[79]Ibid., p. 352; ibid., 14:217, 237, 249.

[80]Ibid., 13:353.

Herder made this idea of the advance of humanity in human society the basis of his whole work and the fulfillment of his mission as a teacher and philosopher in the footsteps of Luther.[81] Herder added that men and nations forge ahead as they use their willpower and God's opportunities to pursue their own good. Herder believed that contemplating history from this viewpoint allowed men to commune with the intelligent and just people of the ages and to act according to God's eternal laws. Thus, men can play their part in the great historical drama in which reason and justice contend with irrationality and, becoming victorious, bring order in human society.[82]

In this way, Herder adapted Luther's concept of the spiritual struggle of Christ and Satan to human history, making the outcome of history dependent upon the dramatic conflict between humanity and inhumanity. History reveals its greatest lesson as men and nations express an objective general law constant in human affairs, the law of humanity. This law assures men that out of the conflicting maze of revolution, shameful deeds, and human storms, the genius of humanity blooms anew in families, generations, and nations.[83]

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[81]Haym, Herder, 2:222-23.

[82]Johann Herder, Werke, 14:211-13, 233, 251-52.

[83]Ibid., 13:353.

As with Luther, Herder expressed his belief that God is able to bring victory out of apparent defeat. Furthermore, Herder's inclination to see historical events in terms of a spiritual struggle of cosmic forces approximated the Lutheran world-view. Behind his philosophical outlook lay his theological convictions. No boundaries of thought separated Herder the theologian from Herder the historical philosopher.[84]

Through the working of God's laws, history becomes a direct realization of the absolute, and a revelation of God's aim and plan for man. To Herder, history was revelation. He believed God had revealed His designs for man in the history of individual nations and that the Deity instructs in human society and leads toward truths which bless the human soul. History for Herder had a basis outside of human reason. He insisted that man abstracts from action, forms truth, and experiences beauty and harmony. Men should listen to history as a revelation.[85]

Herder's faith in God's revelation came from his belief that man can know nothing unless he observes action and effect in creation and that historical events find their fulfillment in God rather than in men.[86] Emphasizing the

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[84]Haym, Herder, 2:194.

[85]Johann Herder, Werke, 10:289-90; Doerne, Die Religion in Herders Geschichtsphilosophie, p. 10.

[86]Johann Herder, Werke, 14:45-46, 209.

importance of what actually happens in history, he contended, "Fate reveals its purposes through that which happens and how it happens, therefore the observer of history develops these purposes from what is before him and what shows itself in its complete extent."[87] Here again, Herder's thought touched Luther's spiritualization of human events and his faith in God's transcendence in human affairs. Herder also looked forward to a new historical outlook, that of historicism, with its emphasis on knowing history as it really happened. Herder, like the later historicists, never advocated a mere factual, chronological narration of the past. Herder desired, rather, to show that the events of history reflect a spiritual meaning, the aim of Providence for the human race.[88]

These concepts had tremendous implications for the development of historical thought. If God revealed Himself in the collective actions of men, then attention to the details of human history became more important, even imperative. Herder defined this idea in philosophical terms, but he was never able to carry it out in his historical narrative. This was left to Leopold Ranke, whose work reflected careful attention to fact and detail, but in the conviction that such detail would reveal God's great purposes in human affairs.

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[87]Ibid., p. 145.

[88]Ibid.

Herder's thought held the embryo of Idealist historiography in all its appreciation for the color and variety of human experience. He laid the basis for their belief that the nation and tradition, as well as the individual within these collective forces, show forth God's divine purpose and character. Herder said that God

> lives and feels in each of his children with paternal affection, as if it were the only creature in the world. All his means are ends; all his ends are means to greater ends, in which the Infinite God, while filling everything, reveals himself.[89]

Herder's concept of historical philosophy meant also that history fulfilled an important didactic purpose. Since man's happiness and improvement constitute links in the chain of improvement, each individual should strive to keep the chain intact.[90] Herder prayed, "Great Father of Mankind, what an easy yet difficult lesson have you given your family on earth for their whole task! They should learn only reason and justice."[91]

Herder expressed a quiet assurance that men could rise to that task. He contended that men can become what they will to become by using God's opportunities. God had, in effect, told man to achieve nobility and excellence by taking advantage of the laws of nature. In this way man could determine his own fate. Herder claimed that within

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[89]Ibid., 13:350.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Ibid., 14:233.

the bounds of time, place, and intrinsic power, man is capable of freely choosing either the path of reason or that of destruction.[92] At other times, however, Herder compared the actions of men to the rhythm of the seasons.[93] Taken together, Herder's philosophy leaves the individual in an ambivalent position. The relation of the individual to the whole society remained an underlying problem in Herder's thought. The same question pervaded the writings of the whole Romantic generation.[94]

In the end, Herder fell back on faith and found again the general solution in his religious experience. He thought of himself as part of a universal system of powers, a being in the inconceivable harmony of God's world, and a part of a great whole which expressed itself in each individual.[95] Herder and the Idealists, like Luther before them, longed to be immersed in something vast and eternal. This they found in the world of ideas.

When Herder completed his work on Outlines, he dedicated it to the Great Being whose steps he had ventured to trace in history. He offered the work in the conviction that if its leaves withered, God's purpose would remain constant and gradually unfold itself to earth's creatures. He

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[92]Ibid., p. 210.

[93]Ibid., 13:29.

[94]Meinecke, Historism, p. 346.

[95]Johann Herder, Werke, 13:16.

found his work inadequate, concluding, however, that he had demonstrated a definitive philosophy of history could be expected before the end of the age.[96]

Largely because of Luther's inspiration, Herder brought the religious power of Idealism to bear in history, opening up a consciousness of unity with an infinite power. Herder helped to create a charged atmosphere in which history took on a new spiritual meaning. A whole generation of German literary figures drew their inspiration from Herder's writings.[97]

For this reason, Herder's assessment of the impact of his ideas in Outlines proved too limited. He did not realize in what ways his wide-ranging views would influence a whole generation of Idealists. Herder's work was not limited to a specialized concentration on history as it is known today. His contribution remained part of the broad philosophical movement of German Idealism. They anticipated

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[96]Ibid., pp. 9-11.

[97]Eduard Feuter, Geschichte der neueren Historiographie (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1936; reprint ed., New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), p. 408; Johann Gottfried Herder, God, Some Conversations, trans. Frederick H. Burkhardt (New York: Veritas Press, 1940), pp. 58-64; Alexander Gillies, "The Heritage of Johann Gottfried Herder," University of Toronto Quarterly 16 (1947):399-410; Johann Herder, Journal of My Travels in the Year 1769, p. 11; Doerne, Die Religion in Herders Geschichtsphilosophie, pp. 1-3; Ergang, Herder and German Nationalism, pp. 102-3, 139, 234, 238. An opposing, minority view on Herder's importance is given in G. A. Wells, Herder and After: A Study in the Development of Sociology (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1959), pp. 137-58; and Wilhelm Dobbek, Johann Gottfried Herder (Weimar: Thuringer Volksverlag, 1950), p. 11.

the major outlines of the literary Romanticists who followed him. Herder left his mark on the aspiring nationalities of Germany and Central Europe. Within this broad intellectual context, Herder advanced a philosophy of history, and it was his influence in the ever-rippling circles of philosophy, artistic criticism, philology, poetry, and prose which insured the impact of his historical philosophy.

In large part, Herder laid the foundation for German historical philosophy by his style of characterizing whole epochs and nations and by suggesting the historian combine actual events with his own philosophy of their inner meaning. Herder did more than any other individual to give the German people their historical consciousness, and his work formed the artistic outlines which future generations admired in their historians.[98]

Standing above those historians was Leopold Ranke, Germany's greatest historian of the nineteenth century. A particular ideological relationship existed between the work of Herder and that of Ranke, just as a spiritual and intellectual association with Luther occupied the minds of both historians. Herder's major ideas culminated in the work of Ranke, who applied the concepts more closely to the nation-state in his historical narratives. Ranke paralleled Herder in his belief that the historian must go beneath the visible facts of history to penetrate the inner spiritual meaning of

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[98]Clark, Herder, p. 383; Haym, Herder, 2:261-62.

a development. Ranke went further than Herder to use this in his histories of the European nations.[99] In a statement strikingly similar to Ranke's own view, Herder advocated "a history of thought, the practical bases of nations, as they here and there rule, a history with moral sense, written in certain proof of events and witnesses: this would be the key to actual history."[100]

Rudolf Haym, Herder's biographer and a contemporary of Ranke's, commented that Ranke's work could be measured on Herder's historical-philosophical scale and that when Ranke produced his great works, Germans found themselves remembering the work of Herder.[101]

Herder had begun his intellectual development in an orthodox Lutheran religious environment from which he absorbed the major tenets of Martin Luther. As he matured, however, his intellectual interests shifted from abstract theology to humanistic studies. This occurred partly because Herder was naturally intellectually curious, and partly because of a lingering emotional crisis which caused him to seek answers in human affairs. In this re-orientation of thought, Herder identified with Luther's personal situation. More importantly, he adapted Luther's theology to human or secular history.

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[99]Johann Herder, Herder's Another Philosophy of History, pp. 11, 135-36.

[100]Johann Herder, Werke, 17:321.

[101]Haym, Herder, 2:262.

As Herder developed his philosophy of history in his works, his Lutheran convictions swayed his intellectual outlook. Herder's affinity for Luther's life and work stimulated his desire to become a second Luther. It inspired his mission to make Christianity the touchstone in the cultural world and to bring renewal to his generation, just as Luther had done in the sixteenth century. In Herder's historical and philosophical works, by which he hoped to teach mankind to seek God, Herder secularized the major ideas in Luther's theology, applying these concepts to a historical mode. Those ideas included the notion that human events have a significance beyond their appearance, that they mask a hidden God whose purposes are being worked out in the world, and that man must grasp God by faith and utter submission.

As Herder applied these thoughts in the historical context, he made the stream of history the mask of an inscrutable God who is working out His designs in human history. To Herder, history became a growing, developing process which one must grasp by faith in and submission to its inevitable benevolent end, the education of mankind. In Herder, the Lutheran world-view became an historical-philosophical confession of faith.

Herder realized in his own work his long held belief that Luther's ideas constituted a revolutionary force in the modern world. He had demonstrated how Luther's theology and spirit could be adapted to modern thought and life. He

urged the Germans, "Let us use his way of thinking, his clear view, his strong, even naive truth."[102] To the end, Herder cultivated Gotthold Lessing's idea that the true Lutheran wants to apply Luther's spirit to every human situation.[103]

Largely because of their dynamic character, Herder's philosophical assumptions provided the major impetus toward a new historical outlook, that of historicism. In an era of expanding, aggressive nation-states, this outlook sought to understand God's design in the historical world by pointing to those things in human history which are related to God and to comprehend the individual's relation to the whole.[104] The work of Ranke followed logically that of Herder, for Ranke incorporated these ideas into the writing of history itself.

Finally, in view of Herder's work, his use of Luther's spirit in a philosophy of history and his influence on the development of a new historical consciousness, modern historians should recognize anew the influence that Lutheran forms of thought have had on the origins of the discipline of history. This treatment of Herder's work supports the underlying assumption of this essay, that the modern world of thought and action, its claim to sophisticated secularity notwithstanding, owes more to the dynamic religious concepts of the Protestant Reformation than our history generally recognizes. In moving to a consideration of the

work of Leopold Ranke, we see how this aspect of modern historiography unfolded in historical narrative.

CHAPTER III

UNVEILING THE HOLY HIEROGLYPHIC: LEOPOLD RANKE

"What was and is more powerful in Germany than religious thought?" Leopold Ranke

The powerful ideological influence of Martin Luther upon the life and thought of modern Western man was demonstrated in the period 1750-1800, when Luther's thought was reborn in a cultural-historical sense in a generation of German Idealists, and particularly in the philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder formulated a view of history based on God's immediacy to the historical world, and through this idea, he influenced a new historical outlook.

If Luther's theology influenced profoundly the actual writing of history in the era of the German Idealists, it must be demonstrated in the work of Leopold Ranke. Ranke was the foremost German historian of the nineteenth century and probably the single most influential historian of the modern era. The focus of this chapter concerns the ideological impact of Luther's thought on Leopold Ranke and his interpretation of the history of the western nations.

Ranke is sometimes called the father of modern historiography by students who suppose that he developed a critical method in historical research based on a scientific examination of original documents. Others have credited

Ranke with developing a philosophical ideal in the study of history. Whether maligned by English historians for his romantic view of history, criticized by American historians for his neglect of social and economic factors in history, or venerated for his innovative approach to historical research, Ranke's work possessed a pioneering quality. With admirer and critic, his approach was often a starting point for many German, English, and American historians.[1]

The connection of Ranke's historical writing and his Lutheran faith, which is the topic of this chapter, is not a new theme. It has always been obvious to his readers that Ranke's history had a religious content. Yet, it has never been clearly shown just how Luther's thought found expression in Ranke's handling of history, nor is it universally held that Ranke's faith led him to historical studies. Of the two most recent biographies of Ranke, written by Theodore von Laue and Leonard Krieger, both identify the spiritual tone of Ranke's history. Neither author, however, connects Ranke closely with Martin Luther, nor do their works give much attention to the way that the

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[1]Lord Acton, "German Schools of History," English Historical Review 1 (1886):7-13; Charles A. Beard, "That Noble Dream," American Historical Review 41 (1935):7. For a German work critical of Ranke, compare Hans F. Helmolt, Leopold Rankes Leben und Wirken (Leipzig: Historia-Verlag Paul Schraepler, 1920), pp. 20-24. Helmolt claims Ranke never developed a systematic philosophy, but remained essentially an empiricist.

Lutheran outlook grew into a cultural-historical body of German Idealist thought.

Krieger expresses doubt that Ranke's faith is the key to understanding his history. Oddly enough, Krieger gives more weight to a process of psychological sublimation in which Ranke supposedly transferred his sexual desire for women to the original historical documents![2] The work of von Laue and Krieger belongs to a theme in Ranke research since World War II which has attempted to rescue Ranke from the charge that his work was merely dry factual narration, lacking in any consistent conceptual framework.[3]

Such a re-evaluation of Ranke's place in historiography is badly needed. Yet, it does not go far enough. Despite these recent contributions, the comment of Peter Gay still rings true, when he wrote, "The relevance of Ranke's religion to Ranke's history is not a new discovery; his

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[2]Theodore von Laue, Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 11; Leonard Krieger, Ranke: The Meaning of History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 45-49, 57, 61, 67.

[3]Carl Hinrichs, Ranke und die Geschichtstheologie der Goethezeit, Göttinger Bausteine zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol. 19 (Göttingen: Musterschmidt Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1954), pp. 100-4; Rudolf Vierhaus, Ranke und die Soziale Welt, ed. Kurt von Raumer, Neue Münstersche Beiträge zur Geschichtsforschung, vol. 1 (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1957), pp. 17-18, 221; Everhard Kessel, "Rankes Idee der Universalhistorie," Historische Zeitschrift 178, no. 1 (1954):269-308; Fritz Wagner, "Rankes Geschichtsbild und die moderne Universalhistorie," Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 44, no. 1 (1962):1-26; Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, eds., Leopold von Ranke: The Theory and Practice of History (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1973), p. xx.

readers have observed it for a century. Yet its workings deserve still closer definition."[4] Identifying the intellectual mechanism by which Ranke utilized Luther's theology is the purpose of this chapter. As such it forms a part of the inquiry into the theological and philosophical bases of Ranke's work, a question which Klemens von Klemperer has termed one of the truly fruitful problems of modern historiography.[5]

Leopold Ranke [1795-1886] was born and reared in the town of Wiehe, in Thuringia, Saxon Germany, the great German middleland of Lutheran Protestantism. Luther himself came from this area. Its people had remained staunchly Evangelical, so much so that the region was called the "God-seeking Lutherland." The two great movements of the Lutheranism of Ranke's day, Rationalism and Pietism, sprang from fertile minds in Saxony. Here in this atmosphere, Leopold absorbed his earliest impressions of life.[6]

Leopold's paternal grandfather and great grandfather were Lutheran ministers. His father, Gottlob Israel Ranke, a jurist, broke this pattern. Yet, Leopold was never far away from spiritual influences. The aura of Lutheran

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[4]Peter Gay, Style in History (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 79.

[5]Klemens von Klemperer, review of Ranke und die Geschichtstheologie der Goethezeit, by Carl Hinrichs, American Historical Review 60 (1955):855-56.

[6]Siegfried Berger, Leopold von Ranke und seine Heimat (Merseburg: Verlag Friedrich Stellberg, 1936), pp. 17-18.

religion pervaded the Ranke household. Pastors frequently visited the Ranke home. Leopold's parents saw to it that their children attended regular religious instruction and choral singing in the church. Leopold's mother, thoughtful, spiritual, a lover of poetry, took a special interest in him. His grandfather lived in the household during his failing years. Before the old man died, he gave Leopold his special blessing. All the family hoped Leopold would follow his grandfathers, study theology, and become a pastor.[7]

At the age of eleven, Leopold began attending a cloister school for further religious instruction. Here he was exposed to the ancient classics of history and poetry, to which he soon became attracted. His experiences also included a thorough reading of the German Classical and Idealist philosophers and literary figures, including Friedrich Klopstock, Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Goethe, Immanuel Kant, Johann Fichte, Wilhelm Humboldt, and Georg Wilhelm Hegel. On occasion, a young assistant to the Rector of the school would take the boys on long walks in the woods. This young man possessed a sense of history. On their walks he would tell the excited boys interesting stories of Saxon

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[7]Leopold von Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, ed. Alfred Dove (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1890), pp. 4-8; Ermentrude von Ranke, "Leopold von Rankes Elternhaus," Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 47, no. 1 (1966): 128-32.

and Thuringian history. To Leopold, these experiences formed a highlight of his early schooling.[8]

In time, Leopold went on to the University of Leipzig where he intended to study theology. Initially, he sought out Johann Wieland's lectures in history, but found that Wieland gave little understanding of things in general. Wieland talked mostly of the eighteenth century, and, according to Leopold, had little concept of the ancient world. If he was disappointed in Wieland, Leopold found Karl Tischner's lectures on church history more to his liking. Tischner took a comprehensive viewpoint of history, and this made Leopold feel that a whole field of knowledge had opened up to him.[9]

Most of Leopold's first year at Leipzig was taken up with theological studies, largely in outlining the books of the Bible. While dogma was not stressed during the year, Leopold found himself experiencing uncertainty about his youthful beliefs. He sought understanding through reading the Scriptures, particularly the letters of Paul. He moved to the Psalms of David. He visualized a whole world of antiquity waiting to be grasped. Leopold meditated on David's

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[8]Leopold von Ranke, Neue Briefe, ed. Hans Herzfeld (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe, 1949), p. xxix; Leopold von Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, ed. Walther Peter Fuchs, 4 vols. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1964-75), 3:226; Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, pp. 13-15.

[9]Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, pp. 27-29.

struggle against opposing elements, and he marvelled at how the Psalms spoke for all those who found themselves in extraordinary circumstances.[10]

The more Leopold thought about these matters, the further he moved away from traditional theological studies. Searching, seeking, and discovering, Leopold shifted away from institutional Lutheranism toward a more mystical, subjective, and introspective approach to God. He wandered to ancient poetry and history, especially to the writings of Thucidides, ultimately the subject of his doctoral dissertation. Leopold discovered Barthold Niebuhr's Roman History. He occupied himself with the writings of Johann Fichte and was profoundly affected by Fichte's Address to the German Nation. Leopold's interest in the origins of the German language led him to Martin Luther's writings. Leopold's attraction to the Reformer grew to profound preoccupation over the years.[11]

Leopold had been familiar with stories of the Reformation since his childhood. He had experienced a child's admiration for Luther since discovering Luther's name in the title to the Holy Scriptures. At Leipzig, however, deeply occupied in his soul with spiritual questions,

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[10]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[11]Leopold von Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 52 vols. (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1867-88), 52:589; Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 3:126; Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, pp. 29-31, 59.

Leopold discovered Luther in his historical appearance on the stage of history. He developed an intense fascination with the way Luther had communicated his internal vision of God's message to the people of his day.[12]

In 1817, during the tercentenary celebration of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, Leopold intended to publish a biography of Luther's life in commemoration of the event.[13] Actually, Leopold lacked the means to publish such a work, and instead turned his attention to finishing his doctorate at the university. Leopold did preserve the notes written in preparation for the book. Later termed the "Luther fragment" by students of Ranke's career, these notes provide a searching look at the influence Luther came to possess over Leopold, the introspective mental and emotional stress he went through at Leipzig, and the connection of both of these elements to Ranke's developing approach to history.

In his comments on the Reformation period in Germany, Leopold maintained that Luther had cared nothing for making a place in history for himself or for founding another religious communion to represent his dogma. In view of this self-effacing quality in Luther's personality, Leopold wondered how the life and teaching of a rural monk like Luther

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[12]Leopold von Ranke, Das Briefwerk, ed. Walther Peter Fuchs (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe Verlag, 1949), p. 583; Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, pp. 12, 59.

[13]Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, p. 31.

had remolded all of Europe. He pondered how Luther could be more influential than men like the Dutch philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, or the powerful Frederick the Great of Prussia.[14]

Leopold found the answer in Luther's striving for the free life of the spirit. In an act of his inner mind, out of his burning love for the truth, and with faith always in sight, Luther fought through the mist until he arrived in the light. Driven by the unending need of his own spirit, with his moral passion gushing forth, Luther drove through the desert of speculation, through holy concepts guarded by armies, and through the maze of his own spirit, until he came into harmony with himself and reached a clear resolution of the struggle for God in his own spirit. To Leopold, the Reformation began in Luther's mind, but he could not hold it there. Luther had to speak, and as he did, the spirit of the Scriptures spoke through him.[15]

Leopold observed that Luther's words traveled directly to the hearts of the people because they partook of the divine part of man's nature. As few others, Luther grasped fully the mysterious, spiritual nature of life, that is, as an appearance within which is hidden an element to educate man. Within words and actions, the inner hidden life of the

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[14]Leopold von Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, ed. Paul Joachimsen, 6 vols. (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1925), 6:318, 360.

[15]Leopold von Ranke, Tagebücher, ed. Walther Peter Fuchs (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1964), p. 112; Leopold Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, 6:337-39.

spirit moved forward to shake all of Europe with the message of the Gospel.[16]

Significantly, Leopold identified Luther's struggle as an inward, subjective one. Once Luther had resolved it, events flowed out from his victorious spirit. This view of reality and this tendency to interpret outward events in terms of one's own soul is common not only to Luther but to Johann Gottfried Herder and many other Idealist and Romantic literary figures. In Leopold's case, it indicated a deeply emotional and intellectual wrenching of the soul, a time of letting go of the assumptions of youth, and the forming of new concepts of truth. When Leopold expressed this experience in writing, he began to couch spiritual concepts in historical terms. In this major juncture in his life, the example of Luther provided an important impetus for this metamorphosis of mind. By this time, Luther had become the middle point in Ranke's spiritual life, and his inspiration was leading Ranke into the path of history.[17]

Ranke concluded that all men play a double role in the world, one real and the other ideal. Men discover the real world all too quickly, but the ideal world remains hidden. Truth is to be found in this ideal realm. In this way,

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[16]Leopold Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, 6:360-62.

[17]Heinrich Hauser, Leopold von Rankes protestantisches Geschichtsbild, ed. Leonhard von Muralt, Züricher Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol. 6 (Zurich: J. Weiss Druck und Verlag, 1950), p. 15.

Ranke echoed Luther's dichotomy between the temporal and spiritual realms. In defining historical life as existing in two realms, one real and the other ideal, Ranke secularized Luther's concept of the hidden God by identifying a reality hidden in the ideal realm.[18]

Ranke restated the problem of man's grasp of the ideal world in another way. The riddle of existence is to be simultaneously one and everything, that is, to develop the certainty of individual existence while grasping the forms of being common to all humanity. Here Leopold posed the existential dilemma which animated the whole Idealist school of thought, that is, the philosophical question of the individual's relation to the social whole.[19]

As an answer to this problem, Ranke proposed that all human knowledge depends upon subjective recognition. One cannot look at something and merely say that a certain thing is absolutely so. Here God helps his people through faith. Faith is, however, subjective. Man must have something objective on which to hold. This is furnished in the certainty and consciousness that one exists. In one's own soul, subjective faith and objective certainty come together. Ranke stated this another way. He contended that the highest object of philosophical understanding is the "I" [Ich], for in

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[18]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 138.

[19]Ibid.

the understanding of one's own nature is formed the possibility of all other knowledge.[20]

Ranke believed that through this self-understanding, things outside of man become one with him. Each new recognition constitutes a discovery of self. The "All" common to everyone travels in each individual. In turn, the whole world mirrors that which exists in each person. The highest aim of human effort is to remain in the thundering movement of life. Through aspiring exertion in the wide expanse of life, self-recognition and self-rule prosper in man.[21]

This reaffirmation of the classic Idealist concept of the unity of the individual with the whole owed its inspiration to Luther's contention that through faith, all Christians receive an identical spiritual nature from God. It also held great meaning for the writing of history. The molding of a historian's world view was in the process of forming. Ranke found a new sense of purpose as he worked this out in his own mind. He spoke of an indescribable calmness as thoughts, words, and feelings came from the deepest part of his soul. Such knowledge in the heart spoke to him of God's love. Thought, the only certain end of

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[20]Leopold Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, 6:323; Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 142.

[21]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, pp. 137-38.

being, lived within him. He saw and felt God inside, and he was satisfied to stand and live in this.[22]

These thoughts from Ranke's university years, part of the notes he collected in preparation for the biography of Luther, suggested a mind coming to grips with the world, and a spirit seeking a place in the divine scheme of things. Moreover, they formed the outlines of a philosophy of history in the making. As a student scholar at Leipzig, Ranke made some preliminary applications of his views to man's history. He heard the many-sided voice of God's grace speaking in his inward spirit. This voice, he noted, united the spirit of former times with that of the present. He saw in all nations a spiritual movement of the hidden past, expressed through the language and culture of the whole. In this lay an enormous treasure. Ranke believed the aim of philosophy was to convey this knowledge, and the purpose of religion to carry the presence of God in knowledge.[23]

This mingling of history, philosophy, and religion in Ranke's mind early in his career anticipated the part each conception would play in his later historical writings. It signified that Ranke's approach to the past would be at once historical, philosophical, and spiritual. In this vein,

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[22]Leopold Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, 6:321.

[23]Ibid., pp. 317, 340; Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 135.

Ranke commented that real greatness in history had been shown in the examples of extraordinary individuals and in the conflict of ideas. Ranke saw already how examples indicated the divine idea at work in history. The divine idea overpowers humanity, proving the aphorism, widely accepted in Ranke's day, that man plans but God decides. Ranke believed that divinity had announced itself in many ways in human history but had carried out its purpose in individuals. He admonished the writer of history who wished to portray a great epoch to make the individual a type of the era in which he lived. Presumably, Ranke would have done just this in his biography of Luther. He employed it consistently in his later writings.[24]

Ranke's youthful ideal of history partook of both philosophy and poetry. It planned to search out the presence of the infinite in the finite. It sought to understand how the appearances of human affairs reflected the idea of the whole of human existence. It would break this great perception before the eyes and mind of all men by marrying empirical detail with an idea at work in history. Such history would embody an empirical science and identify the true spirit of an age.[25]

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[24]Leopold Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, 6:330-31; Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 232.

[25]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 233.

Ranke disclosed in these powerful expressions a striving to be immersed in the vastness of being, and an urge to recognize in his own soul the general nature of all things. As his student years at Leipzig came to an end, Ranke found himself growing toward the inward certainty which he saw in his mentor, Martin Luther. Ranke surrendered in faith. He described his feelings:

> Today, I undertake to put away all self-seeking and live as a member of the ethical future spiritual world order, so that I may be extricated from this pool of sin and evil. I want to educate myself to a pure and full love of things, to love the realm of nature, beauty, and virtue.[26]

These were profound observations for a young man, but their concrete realization remained unclear to Ranke. He had not yet chosen the life and career of a historian. The Leipzig experience for Ranke was a seedtime when ideas found form in his mind. It was a time of transition, bridging youth and maturity, during which Ranke refocused his search for God away from institutional Lutheran religion and dogma and toward philosophy and human history.

Ranke had come to see education and learning as a process of faith and redemption. He now believed that the cleansing and release of understanding one's own soul came from perceiving the life of the whole human race. He yearned for Luther's spirit and for as clear a revelation of the development of life as Luther had experienced. In this

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[26]Ibid., p. 24.

way, the ideal, true character of man's path would rise from the level plain of man's history, bringing a flowering of truth from that which is apparently hidden. Ranke valued such a gift as more priceless than gold.[27]

This hopeful prospect lay before Ranke as he finished his doctorate in 1817. Fortunately, there came an invitation to teach Latin and Greek in the gymnasium in Frankfurt an dem Oder in Prussia. Ranke promptly accepted.

If Ranke's experience at Leipzig had brought an adaptation of Lutheran spiritual ideals to his concept of the historical world and a new awareness of spiritual reality, his tenure at Frankfurt afforded the opportunity for more systematic historical studies. He surveyed the methods of the ancient historians, emphasizing the importance of language as the key to a knowledge of the past. He moved to the Middle Ages, discovering finally an intense interest in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a period which ultimately formed the basis of his first book, History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations.[28]

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[27]Leopold Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, 6:320. Ranke's statements of his attachment to Luther are challenged in Ilse Mayer-Kulenkampff, "Rankes Lutherverhältnis: dargestellt von dem Lutherfragment von 1817," Historische Zeitschrift 172, no. 1 (1951):65-99. Mayer-Kulenkampff claims Ranke's view of the world was too fundamentally different from that of Luther. She overlooks, however, the meaning of faith in the vision of both Luther and Ranke, and how, in giving Luther's thought cultural forms, the Idealists impressed it on the minds of the people in a way that even Luther could not.

[28]Eugen Guglia, Leopold von Rankes Leben und Werke

During his first summer vacation, Ranke visited the Westermann Library near Frankfurt. He was overwhelmed by this great collection of historical, philosophical, and scientific works. Surrounded by this reservoir of human knowledge, Ranke suddenly began to visualize the office of the historian as his life's work. This experience in the library constituted an emotional moment of inspiration. In this revelation of new life, Ranke experienced a feeling of spiritual confirmation in his soul.[29]

Luther had his decisive moments of inspiration in the Koburg tower, and Herder had enjoyed a similar experience while traveling in France and Italy. Ranke's experience in the library provided a corresponding time of decision which seemed to him a new beginning. In retrospect, however, it appears as a catalyst, bringing together the elements of thought which had coursed through his mind for several years. Out of the spiritual struggles of Ranke's earlier years, and his search for God's appearance in human affairs, came his determination to pursue history as a calling in life. Ranke had found his niche. His spiritual passion for understanding would henceforth find expression in historical studies.

(Leipzig: Verlag von Friedrich Wilhelm Grunow, 1898), p. 26; Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, p. 31.

[29]Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, pp. 33-34.

The most immediate consequence of Ranke's decision to follow history was a shift in his emphasis from language as the key to understanding man's past to the great moments of history themselves [das eigentlich historische]. Ranke's passion for past life quickened. He strengthened his belief that an acquaintance with the idea, inner force, and depth of history leads one to God. He wrote to his brother, Heinrich, in 1820, "In all history God lives and is to be recognized. Every act testifies of Him, each moment preaches his name. . . . He stands there as a holy hieroglyphic, in his outward appearance comprehended and preserved."[30] Ranke wondered for what purpose God had appeared in this manner. He concluded that God's hidden presence in history afforded man the opportunity to unveil the human side of a history filled with divine symbols. Ranke contended that the one who discloses this great message serves God as a priest and teacher.[31]

Unknowingly, Ranke posed the central question of a new historical outlook, that of the task of searching out those factors in the human experience which are related to God. In this way, Ranke envisioned a history whose scope embraced the spiritual relationship of God and man. At the same time,

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[30]Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, p. 28.

[31]Ibid.; Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, pp. 103, 122.

he exalted the office of the historian who pursues the spiritual reality of history.

Along with this yearning to find God in history, Ranke dreamed of writing a great work to show man's indivisible, pressing quest for life, and to demonstrate that men, simultaneously in God and in the world, are called in every moment to lead. Anticipating the response that the Scriptures embodied such truth, Ranke chose to seek the divine seed in nature, everyday life, the development of centuries, and in the poetic witness of past life. Ranke wrote to Heinrich in 1824 that had he a few years, adequate sources, and a close friend with whom he could reflect on the nature of things, he would write a true and actual history, an account of the true God and true men. Ranke hoped such a work might serve as a spiritual witness for all times.[32]

Ranke's cherished hope of enlightening the path of his fellowmen and of producing a readable work defining the spiritual life of history continued over the years to animate his work. It became the focus of his whole effort in historical research and writing to grasp the origin and substance of God's creation in history. In the end, Ranke's philosophical and religious interests posed questions which he could answer only in the realm of historical events.[33]

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[32]Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, pp. 103, 122.

[33]Ibid., p. 239; Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, p. 107; Leopold Ranke, Neue Briefe, pp. 89-90.

Fortunately, Ranke received an appointment in 1826 to the faculty in history at the University of Berlin. This position offered Ranke the opportunity to fulfill the lofty purposes which he had developed while at Frankfurt. Ranke's career as a major historian of his times opened before him.

Once Ranke settled into his work at the university in Berlin, his purpose intensified. He resolved to seek the truth with all his powers and to fulfill his whole life in the fear of God and history. He saw God's hand in the invitation to work at Berlin. He had not sought the appointment. This high calling had come to him and sought him out. He felt the door to his future suddenly opened to him. Ranke could now spend his life in researching the "monuments" of recent history and someday enjoy the true presence of God's heaven where, he mused, there must be stored the archives of God.[34]

There was in Ranke's mind during those early years at Berlin a feeling of festering discomfort. It arose from his simultaneous desire to find God in His historical appearance and his realization of the magnitude of this task. Deep in archival research in 1827, Ranke discovered a certain despair which accompanied his calling. Yet, his soul impelled him onward. He lived on, comforted by the realization that he was seeking the lofty goal of universal history.[35]

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[34]Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, pp. 73, 76; Leopold Ranke, Neue Briefe, p. 170.

[35]Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, p. 51; Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, pp. 127, 130.

By 1835, when he was writing his History of the Popes, Ranke had become accustomed to wandering around in the wide field of world history. He thanked God each day that he had been led to the calling of history. Ranke recognized the impossibility of fulfilling his duty completely. Yet, he felt a certain confirmation in a voice of truth which he heard inwardly. He termed this experience a scientific conscience. Ranke sought a type of history which proceeded naturally from his way of perceiving reality. There hovered in his mind constantly the ideal of grasping the inner transformation of the spiritual world tendencies as they appeared from epoch to epoch. Ranke remained a humble observer of the fullness and grandeur of this development. He exercised in his calling the effort to recognize the eternal soul of man and to present it in its appearance on earth.[36]

By 1835, with the writing of the History of the Popes, Ranke had developed a method which characterized his research and writing over the next fifty years. Ranke was highly critical of earlier historians whom, he believed, had based their works on inadequate use of original sources. Determined to represent graphically the historical truth of the world, he based his research on a critical examination of the primary sources. Once he was granted access to the Venetian archives, he plunged with tremendous energy into the scientific task of finding, collecting, arranging, and

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[36]Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:295; Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, p. 271.

analyzing sources vast enough to occupy a lifetime of study. Ranke's first step was to develop an exact knowledge of the individual moment in history. Yet, this groundwork was merely the initial phase in Ranke's method. Having accomplished the basics, Ranke faced the admittedly difficult task of associating the particulars of his subject together into a meaningful literary form.[37]

Exact knowledge of the individual moment in history was never the final end of Ranke's search. He wanted to understand the purposes of a particularly significant happening, to perceive the outlines of its impression in time, and to achieve an awareness of its connection with the whole direction of human affairs in an epoch. Here Ranke drew upon philosophy to determine the origins and core of existence of an epoch and upon poetry to convey the meaning and message of history.[38]

In the context of this intuitive effort to characterize a whole period of history, Ranke had penned in the preface to his first work, History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations, his famous dictum that he wanted merely to show the past as it actually was [wie es eigentlich gewesen]. This saying, eventually taken by Ranke's followers to represent his critical method of analyzing sources, represented an attempt

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[37]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 32:150; ibid., 37:vi; Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:72; Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 240.

[38]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 240; Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:72, 269.

to grasp the history of the Latin and Teutonic peoples in its unity. It reflected Ranke's determination to arrange historical writing so as to enlighten future generations about the character of the past.[39]

With reference to Ranke's wish to show history as it actually was, Georg E. Iggers has shown how many historians, particularly American historians, incorrectly separated Ranke's critical method from its Idealist philosophical content and made Ranke a scientific historian concerned primarily with the establishment of facts. German historians, conversely, understood how Ranke sought through contemplation to grasp intuitively the general tendencies and living reality of history.[40]

Fortunately, the image of Ranke as a fact-oriented historical scientist is undergoing revision among American historians such as Theodore von Laue and Leonard Krieger (see above page 82). Von Laue concludes that the critical method never formed the essence of Ranke's art of molding the past. Krieger maintains that Ranke's idea of history as it actually happened must be understood to mean the reconstruction of past life existing behind the documents.[41]

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[39]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 33:vii.

[40]Georg E. Iggers, "The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought," History and Theory 1 (1961):17-19.

[41]von Laue, Leopold Ranke, p. 138; Krieger, Ranke, p. 20.

Clearly, Ranke considered the search for the actual reality in history a mental, subjective, and intuitive process far beyond the basic examination and analysis of sources and the mere arranging of the truth found in them. In his preface to his French History, he credited the many primary sources he had consulted but added that he had used them to get a view of the great events of world historical importance, rather than to produce a model narrative of detail. In this case, the nature of the task and the intent of the author had determined the inner character of the work.[42]

Similarly, in introducing his English History, Ranke doubted that anyone could apply the critical method ideally to the vast collection of sources he had searched out. He admitted that he had looked at the actions and thoughts of men in the epoch of English history which, in his viewpoint, had the greatest impact on the development of man. He acknowledged his attraction to those elemental forces in history which cooperate together or confront each other and which give states, kingdoms, and epochs their essential character. He found an inner impulse within the epoch of English history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which, in turn, touched all humanity.[43] Ranke summarized

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[42]Leopold Ranke, Französische Geschichte, Vornehmlich im Sechzehnten und Siebzehnten Jahrhundert, 6 vols. (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1924), 1:viii.

[43]Leopold von Ranke, Englische Geschichte, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler Verlag, 1955), 1:3-6.

his approach, "A German historian will investigate the original documents and then labor to comprehend [zu ergriefen] each event as a political-religious whole, and at the same time in relation to universal history."[44]

To collect and analyze was one thing, but to understand the living reality of history was another. The latter required contemplation, a subjective, introspective, intellectual process. For Ranke, history took its form within the mind of the historian. Ranke described this process as an intensely personal experience and as an internalizing of outer reality. He wrote of an overwhelming desire to be free from the vanity of life, to find himself in the realm of truth, lost in God's grace, and relieved of his sense of alienation and estrangement from the world.[45]

Ranke felt a mission, pressing, weighty, and difficult, of recognizing the inner track of humanity's development and spirit. Such a task would constitute divine science, not possible by purely human effort. Only from the depths of a searching recognition would it be possible to discover its hidden "footprint." Ranke's definite intention was to go beyond an outer grasp of the when, where, and how of history. He sought an inner grasp, a recognition of the existence of a higher substance in events and personalities. Only through the deepest spiritual perception might one

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[44]Ibid., p. 8.

[45]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 121.

comprehend the reality of historical events in their spiritual unity.[46]

Ranke believed the historian should never be satisfied with the mere appearance of a moment or event in history. One must see in them a becoming, a passing of time, as certain as the outer character of each moment. Only in the whole development of a people or epoch could the historian speak of an idea in history. This ideal history is known fully only to God. The historian can only perceive the idea from afar off, seeing the outlines of its unity and its forward movement.[47] Ranke concluded that "we arrive at the way of history by the assignment of philosophy. With a philosophical spirit, historical science comes into its element."[48]

In these statements, Ranke unquestionably defined the writing of history as a spiritual, inward experience of the deepest sort. In so doing, he rejected pure reason as a means of finding the truth, just as Herder and Luther had done before him. Ranke took Luther's concept of faith and made out of it an approach to the understanding of human

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[46]Ibid., p. 237; Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:77. Only verbs understood in the German of Ranke's day convey fully the shades of meaning in Ranke's comments. To understand [zu verstehen], to comprehend [zu ergriefen], and to divine or perceive [zu ahnen] indicate Ranke's contemplative approach to history.

[47]Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:82-83.

[48]Ibid., p. 83.

history. Because this approach was so deeply embedded in Ranke's own spiritual experience, it became the height of his historical method.[49] Ranke's historical faith rested on the assertion that in history there existed ideas which determined the development of man's path. All that Ranke did in history was dedicated to understanding this ideal, spiritual reality behind the appearance of events.

Over a long period of time, Ranke searched consistently for ideas in history. Early in his career, in his student days, Ranke had urged historians to study the ancient languages because language constituted an expression of the whole character of a people. He further advised historians to seek an understanding of the religion of a nation, not as it was taught by the priest, but as it lived in an idea within the people. All the particularities of the collective mind of a people, Ranke contended, are formed and practiced in religion.[50]

Ranke continued to emphasize the importance of relating the individual historical event or personality to the general realm of ideas at work in history. He called history the science of past life of human society. At the same time, he distinguished between individual life and general life. Individual life reflected sensual happenings. Above this there existed a general life which moved according to

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[49]Hauser, Rankes protestantisches Geschichtsbild, p. 9.

[50]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 105.

aims known only to God.[51] It was Ranke's identification of this spiritual substance of history which placed him alongside the Idealists.

Ranke believed in a world of truth which stood opposite a world of appearance. This spiritual content, the spiritual substance and inner truth of world history, belonged in the realm of the immortal or the ideal. Only in understanding the ideal world and in deducing the spiritual content of historical acts could one understand fully the individual moments in history. Ranke believed that this approach to history made it the fulfillment of the aims of philosophy. Since he considered ideas as God's presence in history, Ranke developed an intense enchantment with the grandeur, greatness, and inner consequences of historical development. He believed the sciences of theology and philosophy came together in history, resulting in an inner outlook of the true content of history.[52]

Ranke alluded to this enchantment with history when he wrote to his brother:

> How often I revel, how I hope with a thirst once again to reach behind the appearance [of things] to the actual source of life, to understanding, love, soul. There, from where the appearance and the hidden things arise, the Creator gives life, essence, character,

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[51]Ibid., p. 242; Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:264.

[52]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 120; Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:85; Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, p. 268.

> subjectivity, where no [human] accomplishment or failure [exists], where the general concept [of history] disappears before the idealism of an original and eternal, divinely-related existence.[53]

Realizing the difficulty one might have in understanding such abstract language, Ranke asked his brother to

> feel with me how this human history is a fermenting, sometimes wild, sometimes peaceful and still current, where all live inwardly, seeking drop by drop the sea of the world in a thousand dissonances of elevated tones: heaven and earth![54]

Ranke's almost incomprehensible wording in this letter underscored the intensity with which he sought in his soul the riddle of history. His yearning desire to illuminate the enigma of history merged with his unremitting pursuit of God in that history. Ranke's God in history was Luther's hidden God, masked behind the appearances of human and natural life, and grasped only in faith. Ranke sought Him in history with an energy equal to that of Luther, whose spiritual struggles he so admired.

As a mature historian, the struggles, questioning, and searching of earlier years had yielded a field for Ranke's lifelong search for truth. History had become an extremely personal experience for Ranke, as personal as religion. Yet, Ranke's concept of history went far beyond theory or the mere desire to write. Ranke held many ideas and concepts in common with Johann Gottfried Herder, as well as other

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[53]Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, p. 168.

[54]Ibid., p. 169.

figures of the Idealist philosophical movement. Ranke appreciated Herder's ability to trace the path of humanity in man's history. Yet, he was disappointed that Herder had not stressed more emphatically the events of history themselves.[55] Ranke determined to do this by formulating a comprehensive view of the way ideas make their appearance in human affairs. He developed a political viewpoint concerning the nature of states and their place in the scheme of things. In particular, he attempted to demonstrate how ideas work themselves out in the history of existing states.

Ranke believed that the observer of history must recognize all moments in the life of nations as independent developments and not as mere parts of a progression toward an ultimate destiny. He also recognized the part played in history by those who rule the nations. Ranke believed both the individual moment in national life and the actions of national rulers belong to the orbit of divine existence. He urged historians to hold to this ideal in history.[56]

This theme of God in history, of a divine being effecting His will through ideas which work in the affairs of nations, dominated Ranke's essay entitled, "Concerning the Epochs of Recent History." In this work, Ranke provided a

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[55]Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:209; Rudolf Städelmann, "Grundformen der Mittelalterauffassung von Herder bis Ranke," Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturschaft und Geistesgeschichte 9 (1931):86.

[56]Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:35.

cogent statement of his general historical views. He rejected the Enlightenment concept of a general historical progression enveloping all nations and resulting in their steady progress. Instead, he chose to sketch an uneven historical landscape of valleys and mountains, of advances and retrogression, and of the interplay of cooperating and conflicting tendencies. He found a particular direction which had caused some tendencies to dominate and others to decline, as in the sixteenth century when the religious tendency overpowered the literary impulse.[57]

Ranke saw a great tendency at work in each epoch, giving each age an inherent cultural significance. Every epoch stood in an immediate relationship to God.[58] In one of Ranke's most famous statements, he maintained that "each Epoch is immediate to God, and its worth rests not at all on what is derived from it, but in its own Existence, in its own Self."[59] Thus, Ranke echoed the idea of historical relativity which Herder, in his break with the Enlightenment, had prepared. Like Herder, Ranke saw that the contemplation of history acquired an added meaning if each epoch was considered valid in itself. The historical value of each epoch intensified as together they all formed an inner necessity

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[57]Leopold von Ranke, Über Die Epochen der neueren Geschichte (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1954), pp. 5-7.

[58]Ibid., p. 7.

[59]Ibid.

of succession, a current finding its own course in the riverbed of time. As Ranke surveyed the totality of man's history, every epoch appeared of worth because each one pointed to a certain direction in man's universal destiny.[60]

Ranke urged historians to give heed to how people thought and lived in each epoch because, in the infinite multiplicity of developments, one may observe a particular tendency. Too, the observer of history must compare the epochs to discern the inner necessity of the succession of ages. He can thus distinguish the great tendencies of the centuries and unroll the scroll hidden in man's history. Ranke cautioned historians to guard against making anything a principle which is not borne out in historical events. At the same time he urged them to hold to the object in history of showing how the great tendencies manifest themselves in human history.[61]

Ranke's concept of a scroll hidden in the human past called to mind Luther's view of a God hidden in human events. Just as Luther searched by faith for the spiritual presence of God in everyday tasks, Ranke sought God's presence in historical events, particularly in the affairs of state of the various nations.

In urging historians to identify the great tendencies of the centuries, Ranke did not expect any modern historian

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[60]Ibid., pp. 7-9.

[61]Ibid., pp. 7-10.

to surpass the literary achievement of Thucidides. He did propose that they seek more from history than did the Greeks. Ranke sought a fullness, a divine power in history, beyond the purview of the ancients. He desired a grasp of the oneness of the whole human past.[62]

Having discussed his philosophy of leading tendencies in each age, Ranke then divided history into epochs, noting a general tendency in the character of each. These included the Roman Empire to 400 A.D., Decline of the Roman Empire and the transition of Romano-Germanic Civilization, the Carolingian Period and the Holy Roman Empire to 1000 A.D., the Rise of Papal Power, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and the breakup of the unity of Church and State, the Reformation Era and the Protestant Tendency, the Birth and Development of the Great Powers in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, and the Period of Revolutions in America, France, the Netherlands, and England.[63]

In considering the leading tendencies of the nineteenth century, Ranke saw the antithesis of two great principles, monarchy and popular sovereignty, as the basis for all other conflicts of the century. As in other epochs, the human spirit had been caught up in a tremendous forward thrust, only to be met by an opposing movement. To Ranke, this indicated how ideas work. Beneath the appearance of the

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[62]Ibid., p. 12.

[63]Ibid., pp. 13-144.

multitude of events, a great conflict of the spirit was being waged. In this struggle in his century, Ranke believed the spirit of Western civilization, which he called the German spirit, had overwhelmed all other elements in the world. Significantly, Ranke found that this leaven of the Western Christian spirit was no longer confined to church forms but had gone beyond, expanding itself into cultural modes throughout the world.[64]

In these views on his own century, Ranke took Luther's idea of a spiritual struggle underlying events and applied it to the politics of nations. Moreover, he identified the transfer of a religious ideal into the cultural realm. In this contention, Ranke shared with the generation of the Idealists the strong conviction that Protestant Christianity had proven to be a revolutionary force in the modern world because the tenets of it adapted so easily to cultural situations. Ranke's use of Luther's concepts in his own philosophy demonstrated how closely the Idealists followed Luther. Ranke believed that the consequence of this cultural reformation had been beneficial to mankind, resulting in the expansion of knowledge and the participation of a larger part of the people in the spiritual life of the nation. To Ranke, the lesson for all men was to understand the world, to seek what is best in it, and to distinguish

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[64]Ibid., pp. 164-66.

one's assignment in the power of the times. The place of history in public life was to assist in this.[65]

These statements, which formed a part of Ranke's discussion concerning politics in the nineteenth century with King Maximillian II of Bavaria, revealed again the true source of Ranke's historical outlook, the Lutheran viewpoint which he applied to the historical world. More than any other historian, Ranke put this into the actual writing of history, in particular, the history of states.

In his conversations with Maximillian, Ranke had advanced the belief that a state was a living thing, possessing its own unique self. Each state possessed inherent spiritual tendencies which molded all its citizens. These tendencies, or ideas, originated with God and thus, in Ranke's view, states derived their origin and essence from God.[66] Ranke maintained, States are spiritual substances, original creations of the human mind, one may say--thoughts of God."[67] This exalted view of the state, its divine origins, its immediacy to God, and its animation by living spiritual tendencies owed its inspiration to Luther, whose concept of the state was strikingly similar. With such a view, it followed naturally that Ranke would devote his energies to tracing the development of the major western

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[65]Ibid., pp. 164-66.

[66]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 49:323, 328.

[67]Ibid., p. 328.

nations. As he wrote these works, his spiritual concept of the state appeared as a golden thread woven carefully into the fabric of his historical narratives.

In his first major work on the history of the Latin and Teutonic peoples, Ranke centered his attention on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He pondered what factors had resulted in the ascent and decline of nations. Using the example of the defeat of Venice by the French in 1509, Ranke mused that a cycle of natural growth, development, and decline might be responsible. He suggested that the ebb and flow of national fortunes might possibly be otherwise attributed to a divinely ordained destiny. Characteristically, Ranke avoided a dogmatic answer, concluding only that a state is prevented from growing too powerful by living forces in history. In this way, Ranke's historical narrative bore witness to his faith in God's presence in human political affairs.[68]

Ranke carried out this theme of underlying tendencies in the history of nations in his treatment of the Protestant Reformation in Germany. His basic theme was the confrontation and cooperation of political and ecclesiastical tendencies in Germany. Ranke believed that in human affairs, religious and political impulses often fuse and that every significant event stems from man's consciousness of God. These spiritual impulses drive civilization forward, retard

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[68]Ibid., 33:244.

despotism, and remind the state of the true end of all human existence, the consciousness of God. The state must cultivate these moral ideas and give an expression to them which can be understood by all. At the same time, the state should remind the church of the intellectual needs of man. To Ranke, the state became a field of activity where the conflict and cooperation of spiritual ideas resolved itself. He characterized the whole of European history in general, and German history in particular, as the interaction of church and state. This, Ranke contended, made the Reformation the paramount period of modern history. Ranke believed a full understanding of the Reformation's history would show it to be the source of all modern history.[69]

In his account, Ranke aimed at identifying those living moments of German history during the Reformation when spiritual ideals had surfaced most observedly. He intended to combine in them an understanding of modern Germany's beginning and its probable future. The result of this was a treatment of the Reformation arranged around dynamic spiritual ideas which, lying under the surface, moved along and arose periodically to direct man's history toward its true end. Ranke saw a tendency to exalt temporal interests in Europe in the rise of ruling houses and principalities by the end of the fifteenth century. The resulting conflicts

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[69]Leopold Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, 1:1-4; ibid., 3:276.

would have extinguished the life of the German nation, had not the nation taken steps to restore order.[70]

Ranke described the resulting efforts to reform the German constitution by noting that in history, strong forces arise to impose order out of chaos. These ideas, which form the basis of all human society, and which contain the character of their divine source, bring life for a time by establishing new, vital institutions. In time, however, they, too, totter and fall, only to be replaced by new ones. To Ranke, this was God's way in the world. German history around the turn of the sixteenth century reflected ideas pregnant with God's own dynamic power.[71]

When Ranke identified the causes of the Reformation, he placed it in the general context of a period of movement, change, and outward expansion in Europe. He noted that similar incidents of disunion and flux occurred in the Islamic and Hindu religions of the time. When he addressed the German origins of the Reformation, he traced carefully Luther's desire to attack only the claims of infallibility of the papacy and not to destroy the faith of the Latin Church. Thus, the Reformation lay squarely in the movement of the times. It arose out of the needs of the empire for a greater measure of internal unity. This inevitably brought a discussion of spiritual affairs in Germany, particularly

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[70]Ibid., 1:43-44, 54; ibid., 5:399.

[71]Ibid., 1:57.

the question of Rome's position in the German states. In its striving, the German nation seized upon these spiritual questions to advance its claims to independence. The papacy's response brought even more opposition.[72]

In describing the origins of the religious movement in Germany, Ranke utilized a phrase, the nature of things [natur der Dingen]. To him, the Reformation grew out of the direction and pattern of events. This idea of a dynamic of history underlying the appearance of human effort, and the distinction between the ideal and real realms of history, not only characterized Ranke's general philosophy but also indicated the powerful way that the Lutheran outlook influenced his writing of history. The Reformation was a spirit, an entire orbit of spiritual, political, intellectual, and even artistic aspirations, which encircled all Germany and held within it a new social order.[73]

Ranke made the Reformation take on its own unique, sweeping, and overwhelming personality, whose effect on the passions of men was unrestrained after a few years. Ranke spoke of a particular dynamic [Getriebe] of the epoch. In discussing the possibility of an alliance of emperor and pope in the face of the challenge of Henry VIII of England to the papacy, Ranke concluded that the old enmity between pope and emperor precluded this and that it belonged to the

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[72]Ibid., pp. 157-65, 327; ibid., 2:348.

[73]Ibid., 2:69, 74, 77.

particular dynamic of the Reformation epoch that this did not happen.[74]

Ranke found England's break with the papacy a significant moment in history because it gave German Protestantism new opportunities to advance. He rejoiced that in retrospect, the historian could detect such combinations which lay in the scheme of things. The example of actual reality [eigentliche Tätigkeit] in the past would remain an untraceable mystery if sought by purely intellectual effort. The recognition of such a reality comes to the historian only from understanding the incommunicable things lying before him, from his concern for that which is true, and from his possession of moral power. Even with the insight of the historian, the moments which determine the direction of world history remain something of a divine mystery. What understanding of this mystery men might possess comes out of their own conscience. As always, this track of thinking led Ranke back to faith.[75]

Ranke believed that history encompassed an alternating flow of specific and general movements. In the general movement, new spirits cross old boundaries. Racing with human and divine power, a new mind unfolds. In this way, a

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[74]Ibid., 3:394; ibid., 4:48.

[75]Ibid., 4:50.

divine, inbreathed spiritual life enlightens the centuries. The Reformation was such a time.[76]

Within this philosophical context, Ranke traced the major details of the Reformation, always being careful to note the point at which ideas entered the world and interacted with existing conditions. In describing a Synod concerning the exercise of religion in his dominions, which Philip of Hesse held at Homberg in 1526, Ranke concluded that out of this meeting came the idea of the church as a fellowship of believers, each individual a priest. A self-governing church could constitute itself, elect its bishops, and arrange its own synods. This revolutionary concept, which was taken up by French, American, and Scottish Protestants, did not catch on in Germany. This was due primarily to Luther's belief that it was an unworkable pattern of church government in a land of backward peasants and to a situation in which the Protestant cause was established in Germany under the protection of certain German rulers, rather than in opposition to them. Yet, the Synod of 1526 provided the historical moment when this powerful idea entered into history.[77]

Ranke was not content, however, to leave the fate of so important an idea to human circumstances alone. He drew upon the axiom that ideas which enter the world are modified

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[76]Ibid., pp. 3-5.

[77]Ibid., 2:340-41.

permanently by circumstances prevailing at the time of their birth. In the end, Philip's Synod of 1526 was significant largely because it showed how an idea from the mind of God came to affect man's history.

As Ranke assessed the overall significance of the Reformation in modern history, he recognized the movement as the seedbed of modern Europe in two ways. First, in breaking up cosmopolitan Christianity, the Reformation had set the state free to claim complete sovereignty on earth. Ranke believed this idea to be the most influential in creating the Europe of modern history. Secondly, Ranke drew a parallel, a living analogy, between the Reformation and his own times in the nineteenth century. In each period, those spiritual developments which rule the world powerfully were evidenced. Ranke believed that the power of Luther's Reformation had been felt in culture as well as in dogma. Ranke's approach to history was a powerful testimony to the effect of Luther's thought in human affairs.[78]

As Ranke turned in his History of the Popes to an examination of the papacy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, his approach was similar. He wanted to search out God's plan for the government of the world, for those forces which provide for the education of humanity. Tracing the decline of papal power and the emergence of independent states, he was forced to conclude that man's efforts are

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[78]Ibid., 4:7, 29.

modified by the silent direction of spiritual forces at work in the world. As he had done with the Reformation, Ranke placed the papal history of this period in the context of the overpowering dynamic of history which lay behind the appearance of human affairs.[79]

As Ranke discussed the direction of the Roman Church under Pope Alexander VI, he deplored its corruption. This mild rebuke was characteristic of Ranke's treatment of controversial topics. He often seemed deliberately to withhold a strong judgment. He suffered a great deal of criticism for this aspect of his writing, particularly from the English historian, Lord Acton, who said of Ranke, "The cup is not drained; part of the story is left untold; and the world is much better and very much worse than he chooses to say."[80]

Actually, Ranke had good reason in his own eyes for his approach. He explained it in the section on Alexander VI, saying that if one could only open history's book as it had happened, one could see in destructive corruption the presence of a germ from which new life grows.[81] The Lutheran Ranke might have been expected to roundly condemn a corrupt Roman Church. Yet, it was precisely Ranke's Lutheran outlook which allowed him to withhold a strong judgment. As a Lutheran historian, Ranke could look beyond

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[79]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 37:22-23.

[80]Acton, "German Schools of History," p. 13.

[81]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 37:40.

the appearance of decadence to a hidden thread promising a new beginning. A Lutheran historian could be satisfied in faith to let history stand in the unknown, drawing as near to it as possible in order to perceive it.[82]

When Ranke viewed the progress of the Counter-Reformation in the period 1590-1630, he saw it as an example of the forces of the living mind which move the world profoundly. These forces, prepared in past times, are called forth from the depths of the human spirit by their own might and vigor.[83] In the end, the long-range significance of the Roman Church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries lay in how it revealed the spiritual content of the human past.

As Ranke moved to a study of English history, he followed essentially the same approach, placing England's history within the broader unity of a Western commonwealth of nations. In writing of the Norman conquest of England, he refused to second-guess what he termed the will of destiny. England's connection with France made it what it became. Ranke saw a great commonwealth of Western nations whose influence had pervaded and determined the history of each individual nation within it. Ranke hoped that Western man might develop a free, subjective recognition of the spiritual forces of his history, which at times can modify

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[82]Kessel, "Rankes Idee der Universalhistorie," p. 290.

[83]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 38:239.

and even oppose these forces. In this way, man can be in harmony with his historical development.[84]

Ranke defined his concept of the commonwealth of Western nations as the Latin and Teutonic peoples under the influence of the Western Church. Two things characterized this great community: a close association and conflict between church and state and a harmony and discord of monarchy and representative institutions. The interaction of church and state, as well as of monarchy and representative government, had determined the life of the West. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the English spirit had taken its place among the rival nationalities of the West. The progress of the human race depended upon the outcome of these rivalries.[85]

The climax of Ranke's treatment of English history came in his discussion of the constitutional dispute between the English crown and Parliament under the Stuarts. This conflict did not develop slowly over the years but appeared suddenly as a historical necessity after the accession of Charles I to the throne. Ranke believed that the idealistic forces inherent in Western European history had shown themselves in the English constitutional question. He was sure that nations as a whole fail to grasp the comprehensive situation in which they are involved and are impelled by

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[84]Leopold Ranke, Englische Geschichte, 1:45.

[85]Ibid., p. 448.

powerful feelings of the moment. Charles II understood the longing for relief from Puritan rule of the English people, and he used this sentiment to make his restoration to the throne a new era in English history.[86]

Ranke attributed to the British constitutional struggle a world historical importance of concern to all civilized peoples still occupied with similar spiritual and political issues. It remained the charm and the difficulty of history for Ranke to trace new independent movements as they followed old lines of historical development, as they came to the surface in English life, and as they fought for life or disappeared in death.[87] In the end, the English political question became an example of a larger struggle of world-wide proportions. Its ultimate importance was the way it showed the larger design of man's destiny.

Whether in dealing with England or any other country, Ranke saw not only a national character, but also a world historical character as well. In this latter respect, national histories formed a part of the development of humanity. Because Ranke could see this quality so clearly in European history, he retained a general preoccupation with the history of the West. When Ranke turned to French history, he did so with a particular fascination. In French history, Ranke saw much attention to the problem of church

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[86]Ibid., pp. 448-49.

[87]Ibid., pp. 251, 859.

and state relations. He thought the French particularly apt at giving practical application to theory. Ranke felt comfortable with French history because he saw in it so many demonstrations of the distinguishing characteristics of the Western commonwealth of nations.[88]

Ranke revelled in the great personalities of French history, figures such as Catherine d'Medici, Francis I, Marie d'Medici, Henry IV, Cardinal Richelieu, Cardinal Mazarin, and Louis XIV, who possessed world historical importance. Their significance came not so much from their power, but from their relationship to the basic conception of their times, the French political-religious struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Ranke's view, these political-religious struggles gained their particular character from the dispute between opposing religious dogmas. Great personalities were generally related to factions or to the state. Out of all this emerged a royal power stronger than ever.[89] Thus, Ranke constructed a conceptual framework for his French history, based on the hidden dynamic which proceeded behind the appearance of French affairs.

An inner tendency of history loomed behind Ranke's discussion. He called the siege of Aquitaine by the English in 1439 a fortunate thing for both the besieged and the besiegers because nations must separate from each other when

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[88]Leopold Ranke, Französische Geschichte, 1:v-vi.

[89]Ibid., pp. vi-vii.

history requires that they develop their own inner impulse. Similarly, Ranke saw in the persecution of the French Huguenots the appearance of a new life element in the French nation. In accord with general spiritual tendencies at work among the Germanic peoples, which exert an unending influence on their destiny, the French religious question held within it a new political situation. It anticipated the breakup of religious and political unity, the outbreak of religious civil war, and the ultimate increase of royal power.[90]

When Ranke came to the reign of Henry IV, and to the Edict of Nantes, 1598, he refused to explain this merely in terms of a legal process of the state. Ranke based it more on living forces in history which carry within themselves the character of the moment in which they stand and which become the sense of the nation and the spirit of the times. Ranke called this a moment when all European and French interests were at stake. Beyond that comment, Ranke would not transgress the improbable. He was content to call Henry IV a prince of great thoughts who meant to see his star rise, but who, in the midst of hope, soon found his wishes affected by opposing notions.[91]

As Ranke moved to a consideration of the seventeenth century in France, he followed the movement of events moment by moment, believing that in the various forms of life and

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[90]Ibid., pp. 54, 192.

[91]Ibid., pp. 54, 192, 201.

action lay the history. He saw three great political tendencies condensed from various sources of thought in the French world: first, the desire of the monarchy to increase its authority, secondly, the effort of the aristocracy to preserve its traditional autonomy, and thirdly, the growth of the idea of popular sovereignty. The events of later times grew out in varied forms from this French epoch.[92]

Ranke left his discussion of French history with France on the eve of revolution at the end of the reign of Louis XV. He hinted of sultry clouds and a gathering storm before which all elements of French life readied themselves for a general catastrophe. He was reluctant to say whether reform was possible or if it could have staved off revolution. Ranke had come directly to the boundary delimiting two epochs in the history of human society. As Ranke left off his narrative, he concluded that the tendency toward revolution had neither been removed, nor had it become victorious. The historical development of the Old Regime had not yet been crushed but neither were its ideas completely fulfilled. Through action and reaction, a new world age lay on the threshold.[93]

One major theme runs through Ranke's works on Germany, France, and England--that this commonwealth of Western nations formed a historical unit, carrying within itself

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[92]Ibid., 3:291; ibid., 4:263.

[93]Ibid., 5:391-92.

historical tendencies of the conflict and cooperation of church and state, and the action and reaction of monarchy and representative government. These tendencies, hidden within the appearance of history, formed a dynamic which expressed itself in actual events. In these works, Ranke adopted Luther's idea of the spiritual meaning of life, broadening it to include the whole of human history. Ranke's volumes on the Western nations formed the heart of his work, and set the tone for Idealist history in his century. The search for God became the pursuit of great ideas which originated with God and which undergirded the events of national history.

Ranke's idea of historical tendencies seemed to render his history deterministic. It posed the problem of what place freedom and individual choice play in history. Ranke, as with other Idealist literary figures, felt more comfortable with the social whole than with the individual personality. They preferred to write of the flow of events rather than to isolate a unique personage. Reflecting this tendency, Ranke produced only one biography in his career, his History of Wallenstein.

In the introduction to this biography of the noted general of the Thirty Years' War, Ranke remembered Plutarch's distinction between history and biography and posed the question of how personalities should be represented in history. Ranke's answer was to include both history and biography in historical presentations. Great personalities

give impulse to the great movement of world historical events and should be depicted historically. Individuals in history belong to a moral order. They possess an independent life of original strength allowing them to represent their times and take hold of their epoch with inner compulsion.[94]

Ranke believed, however, that the general life far surpassed the individual in power, depth, and enormity. The individual is permitted only a narrow time and place, while the general life is fulfilled over centuries of unbroken current. Man is limited by the possibilities offered in the general situation and can hope to achieve great results only when participating in homogenous world elements. Next to these, the individual appeared as a mere expression of the general tendency of the times.[95]

In Ranke's Historical-Biographical Studies, he summed up his position on the individual in history with the phrase, man in the times, the times in man. Thus, he combined biography and history. Yet, for Ranke, freedom and necessity continued to struggle for supremacy in history. Freedom appeared to prevail in individual life with necessity the apparent victor in general life. Ranke would chose neither one nor the other as his exclusive path in history, but the fact that his historical narratives dealt largely with

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[94]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 23:v.

[95]Ibid., pp. v-vi.

sweeping epochs showed where his sentiment lay.[96] Ranke's preference for the broad movements of history fitted closely with the Lutheran outlook which pictured man as a finite creature caught between opposing spiritual forces.

This attitude toward the individual in history was perhaps best expressed in Ranke's comments on Luther's life. In his notes on the biography of Luther which he intended to write, Ranke expressed his desire to make great individuals a type of their epoch. An author could represent individuality in history to the fullest extent because the epoch brings him his character. The color of the times will weave its thread into the story automatically. The historian must recognize it and give it the fullest representation.[97]

Ranke encouraged historians not to explain events as extensions of the mind of great individuals but to attribute these movements to something larger than life which rules over the individual. The texture of individual mind and action expresses the spirit of the times and in this expression forms the psychological character of history. A new, powerful idea in history urges the mind from the old circle of thought to unknown regions. A swing of energy upsets usual life. Difficult conflict inevitably occurs. The genius of great figures appears in historical life to express each powerful historical idea, and true to the

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[96]Ibid., 40:v-vi.

[97]Leopold Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, 6:315.

tendency of the times, wins an unending influence on the present and the future. The historian must pay attention to such individuals.[98]

In his thoughts on Luther, Ranke was greatly influenced by Johann Fichte's work, The Essence of Learning, written in 1806. Ranke included written comments on the essay in his notes on Luther. He contended that all life is grounded in the divine idea which lives in man. This philosophical knowledge is not recognized factually but is witnessed inwardly. Natural talent is the tendency of the ideal expressed in human behavior. One who aspires to lead an epoch must know the idea and conduct himself accordingly, aiming to observe the hidden will of God.[99]

When Ranke moved to a general treatment of the Reformation in his German History in the Epoch of the Reformation, he continued to portray Luther as an expression of the dynamic of the times. In the work, Ranke pictured Luther as a stranger to ambition, as one who initially hesitated even to seek converts actively. Luther confidently expected that events would flow from his inner conviction.[100]

Ranke stressed that in the midst of internal disorder in the German nation around 1500, Luther made his appearance. With the hidden aspect of Christianity gripping his soul,

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[98]Ibid., pp. 349-50.

[99]Ibid., pp. 363-66.

[100]Ibid., 2:383-84.

and possessed of an experience so profound that nothing in life or death could wrest it from him, the elements of change gravitated toward Luther and opened the way for a new direction in religious thought.[101]

Ranke emphasized that even in Luther's daring defiance of the Roman Church, he proceeded cautiously, hoping to avoid an open confrontation. Reluctant to challenge the papal champion, Johannes Eck, and deferring in theological matters to Philip Melancthon, Luther never sought initially to found a new communion or to overthrow the Roman Church. Never denying the origins of the Roman Church, Luther sought only to eliminate those traditions expressly forbidden in Scripture. When the papacy denied Luther's right to speak, however, he was compelled to take on himself the office of purifying the church. In the exercise of this office, Luther's main desire remained to free himself from a hierarchy which claimed divine authority. Looking back on all this, Ranke contended that Luther, in his opposition to radical changes from the Roman Church, and in his aversion to the sects, appeared as one of the greatest conservatives who ever lived.[102]

Although Ranke's profound admiration for Luther's personal qualities showed clearly, he actually presented Luther as a man caught up in the tide of events surrounding

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[101]Ibid., 4:4-5.

[102]Ibid., 1:224, 291-92; ibid., 3:66-67, 479-80; ibid., 4:5.

him. For example, in treating the alliance of Luther and Frederick, Elector of Saxony, Ranke noted that no formal agreement resulted but only a mutual understanding in which two men simply let matters take their course. Ranke left the impression that both Frederick and Luther were swept along with the current of the Reformation. Ranke traced this current as it grew to agitate the whole world at points where spiritual concerns coincided with temporal interests.[103]

As an example of this phenomenon, Ranke considered the Lutheran doctrine of justification as a powerful idea in the modern world. It brought the certainty of eternal blessing. It worked so powerfully because it ruled a deeper spirit than could externals. It showed that sinful man's hope lay only in God's compassion. In strong trust in God's incomprehensible grace came new birth. Only in surrender to the divine will comes true freedom of the human will.[104] Ranke carried over to history this vigorous idea of freedom in complete submission, for only in complete immersion in the past could men perceive God's hand at work in human affairs.

Ranke believed the Reformation constituted a watershed in history and that it had produced radical and extensive changes in life and thought. Among these changes was the violent conflict of the religious wars. In the end, Ranke

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[103]Ibid., 1:227.

[104]Ibid., 5:388.

concluded that the new directions emanating from the Reformation were not the result of human will but were grounded deeply in the nature of human affairs.[105]

The Reformation had a significance of its own, but more importantly, it showed the way that divine ideas enter the human realm and, finding conflict and cooperation, bring a new level of human activity. The work of Luther, whom Ranke admired above all other figures of modern times, became an example of how an idea at work in an epoch calls forth a genius to reflect its divine quality and carry it out in human affairs.[106]

In other writings on modern European political history, Ranke immersed the individual in his times and made the times reflect themselves in the individual. Pondering the reign of Louis XIV, Ranke concluded that all human behavior depends on the religious concepts by which a person lives. Ranke cast the timid prudence and versatility of Catherine d'Medici's spirit within the world historical movement of her era.[107]

Contemplating the remarkable career of Cardinal Richelieu, Ranke remembered a time in the youth of humanity when heroes in simple voices prescribed paths for mankind to

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[105]Ibid., 3:7.

[106]Ibid., p. 211; Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 229.

[107]Leopold Ranke, Französische Geschichte, 1:259; ibid., 5:187.

follow. Ranke found these times long past. In the modern era, now and then, a person of extraordinary talent and strength appeared. Through these individuals, powerful thoughts became the standard of national life. Yet, after their death, the strength of the old order often regained its hold. Ranke saw a potent inner community in history which worked above the freedom of the individual will.[108]

When Ranke considered the emergence of Prussia and its consolidation of territory in the seventeenth century, he placed this momentous development within a great movement of things existing outside the free choice of any individual. Ranke saw this as an historical necessity, the founding of an inner independent European-German order.[109]

In Ranke's mind, the true actors in man's history were not great individuals but the hidden higher elements of life. True to his Lutheran heritage, Ranke saw individual freedom in the vastness of strength. In the Idealist adaptation of Luther's ideas, Ranke longed for a contented existence in those higher elements which mankind encounters in his history. This attitude toward the individual, and his immersion in the greatness of God's rule in human affairs, accounted for the tone with which Ranke approached the history of Western civilization. This formed Ranke's inner coherence of history, giving it its meaning. History must always be the

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[108]Ibid., 3:174.

[109]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 25:xx.

stuff of human action, but its true end was the deeper inner connection which rules over all and from which no one individual is completely independent. Freedom exists within historical necessity.[110]

Ranke's belief in the inner coherence of history gave to his philosophy of history a marvelous unity of thought. In turn, this unity of thought owed its inspiration to Luther's example and spirit. Ranke's search for God in history, for divine ideas at work in the world, and his placing of men and events in the flow of history were means to an end, that of the writing of a universal history in which man's place in God's scheme and God's part in men's affairs would be fully illuminated.[111]

Ranke experienced a lifelong devotion to the cause of universal history. His adaptation of the Lutheran outlook to history led inevitably to the attempt at the ideal of finding out how historical events fit into the general relationship of things. In an article written in 1830, Ranke asked rhetorically why one should study history. His answer was to understand the life of humanity in its totality.[112] This statement, more than any other Ranke made, summed up his goal in the research and writing of history.

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[110]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, pp. 129, 159; Leopold Ranke, Aus Werk und Nachlass, 4:296.

[111]Gerhard Masur, Rankes Begriff der Weltgeschichte, Beiheft der Historische Zeitschrift, no. 6 (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1926), pp. 52-54, 127.

[112]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, p. 238.

Leopold Ranke, the one so often understood as the nationalist historian of Prussia and Germany, and as the historical scientist applying the critical method to the sources, was actually the truth seeker, probing the deepest questions of human existence. The inquiry into the purpose of mankind's existence, or of man's relationship to his Maker, traditionally discussed in the realms of theology and philosophy, was now to be addressed in history. For Ranke, theology, philosophy, and history merged into one field of inquiry, the search for the spiritual and the ideal, and for God's hand in human affairs. Here Ranke's Lutheran outlook was most telling. Such an aim could only be achieved by perceiving human life as a whole. In a characteristically intimate manner, Ranke wrote to his brother, Heinrich, in 1835:

> I am more and more of the opinion that in the end, nothing can be written further than universal history. All our studies strive to bring this about. The particular will never shine in its full light as well as when it is presented in its general relationship.[113]

Ranke devoted the majority of his research to national history and politics. Yet, these works must be seen as parts of a series and as pieces of a puzzle, painstakingly placed over a lifetime of study and contemplation in the faith that ultimately they would yield the vision of God in the human spirit and contribute to man's education and enlightenment. Ranke wrote of the Prussians, Germans, English,

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[113]Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, p. 265.

and French, as well as other epochs, because these were, in his view, component parts of a common humanity. Together, they formed the leading unit of civilization. Ranke preoccupied himself with politics and ruling houses because he believed the direction of things, and the dynamic at work in each era's history was played out on the political stage. Behind nations and rulers lay hidden the spiritual reality of historical life, which, for Ranke, constituted the contemplation of history.

Ranke often expressed his attachment to universal history in his various works. In his History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations, Ranke sought the basis for the European system of states. Such understanding, however, would not be enough for Ranke. The historian must place the various epochs on the stage of world history by showing the importance of each one and their relationship to the others. In the similarities and contrasts of their internal workings, world development had advanced because in history events reflect the nature of their epoch.[114]

As Ranke contemplated the formation of the French nation, he found it analogous to the geological formation of the earth. Epoch upon epoch formed a living historical formation. Within each epoch, peoples formed social orders which either warred upon or united with other groups. In surveying the history of France, Ranke hoped to see more

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[114]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 33:323.

clearly the relationship of the world's peoples as they formed themselves into groups.[115]

When Ranke moved to English history, he noted that in universal history, a process of change governs the destiny of man. He believed the greatest event in man's history was the transfer of power and culture from the East, where it had originated, to the West. Ranke placed the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, and all subsequent English history, within the context of the rise of the West. He concluded that the object of universal history was to observe the leading changes and the conflicts among the nations.[116]

This theme of universal history played a particularly strong role in Ranke's History of the Popes. Ranke struggled with the research and writing of this classic, expending his energy and strength in an almost desperate attempt to seize upon thoughts and words to convey the nature of this epoch. In this task, Ranke was encouraged by the thought that every accomplishment brought him closer to the ideal of world history. This was true because life in each epoch and in each nation develops on a spiritual basis and reflects the general influence of the times. Universal history plays a powerful role in epochal history, for in the

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[115]Leopold Ranke, Französische Geschichte, 1:16.

[116]Leopold Ranke, Englische Geschichte, 1:11-12.

individual moments of an era, the historian views various currents of world history.[117]

As Ranke aged, the dream of a fuller understanding of the general nature of things grew even stronger. In 1867, Ranke was honored by his academic colleagues at Berlin upon the fiftieth anniversary of the awarding of his doctorate at Leipzig. In his response, Ranke cast his eyes to the past and the future. He welcomed the plethora of studies in German history which the century had brought. He believed they had yielded a greater general view of things and a wider outlook on the whole. He referred to the dramatic events of the hour in Germany and congratulated the younger generation for its enthusiastic attempts to grasp the meaning of the moment. Ranke concluded that the undertaking of national history is but part of the task of universal history. To grasp the fullness of the moment is to begin to understand its connection with universal history.[118] Ranke exulted, "I look as Moses to the promised land, to a future German historiography which will complete what we have begun."[119]

Ten years later, Ranke commented that poets, mathematicians, or scientists can produce great works at a young age, but the historian must have the perspective of years.

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[117]Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, p. 268; Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 38:1.

[118]Leopold Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke, 52:590-91.

[119]Ibid., p. 591.

One must have seen the change of generations, witnessed the mighty events of an era, and experienced many years of study and contact with the affairs of state. Ranke's long life and association with Prussian officialdom had yielded to him these benefits. He retained to the end of his life a sympathy for the monarchical form of government, yet never allowed himself to be limited to a narrow parochialism in thought. His view was ever to the general.[120]

As Ranke approached the sunset of a life spent in the contemplation of human affairs, he dictated his memoirs with the wish that his last strength might be devoted to the completion of a work on universal history.[121] Ranke's search had led him to try, with Herder, to put into writing a great work which would capture the essence and meaning of the human past. Almost blind, Ranke literally expended his last strength dictating the wisdom collected over sixty years of study and contemplation of man's history by the foremost historian of the nineteenth century.

In the unfinished Universal History, Ranke acknowledged that history was limited by the art of writing, and the theoretical questions of the origin of the world and the relation of man to God and nature were not, in their abstract form, the province of historical research. History's domain remained, for Ranke, the ascertained results of historical

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[120]Leopold Ranke, Tagebücher, pp. 79-80.

[121]Leopold Ranke, Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte, p. 76.

research, and the sequence of events which runs through all nations, which modifies their cultures, and which controls their destinies. Universal history begins with national history but must move toward general historical life. Critical historical research is crowned by comprehensive understanding.[122]

Ranke's thesis in the work was that over the ages, mankind had won advancements in his material and social order, but particularly in his religious and spiritual development. Most precious of all to Ranke were the works of poetry, literature, art, and science, which revealed the common thread of humanity. Ranke concluded that the history of man shows that he always aspires to the divine ideal and that religion and letters express this aspiration for God.[123] Thus, Ranke ended his career where he had begun it, on the theme of spiritual ideals.

By the end of his life, Ranke had come to see the calling of the historian as a priestly office. He saw a progressive stream, hidden, yet seeking to rule the past. The historian must learn, but above all understand. With impartiality, he must keep only his subject in mind. Ranke saw a great divine order of things hovering over human life. This divine order could not be grasped with mere intellectual

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[122]Leopold von Ranke, Weltgeschichte, 4 vols. (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1896), 1:3-5.

[123]Ibid., pp. 6-9.

sense, but it must be surmised and perceived [zu ahnen]. Ranke believed this divine order was identical to the succession of epochs and periods of history. He concluded that in the attempt to understand this mystery, the historical method seeks only truth and authenticity. In this way, it walks in a hidden relation to the highest questions of human society.[124]

This chapter has explored the theme of Martin Luther's influence on Leopold Ranke's philosophy and writing of modern history. Luther's spiritual influence was felt by Ranke from his earliest childhood, for his home was a model Lutheran household. It exposed Ranke to all those influences prevalent in the group-thought of Lutherans at the turn of the nineteenth century. It evidently made a powerful impression on Ranke because he made an early decision to become a Lutheran minister.

Ranke's plans underwent a change, however, during his years of study at the University of Leipzig. He lost his interest in the study of theological dogma, finding instead an intense concern for human language and culture. Ranke also engaged in a deep examination of Luther's life, discovering Luther's appearance as a historical figure and his powerful ability to communicate his spiritual vision to the people. These two factors, his growing interest in human studies and his fascination with Luther, converged in Ranke's

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[124]Leopold Ranke, Das Briefwerk, pp. 518-19.

mind. This began the process by which Ranke adapted Luther's spiritual ideas to the realm of human culture and set the stage for Ranke's long career as the leading historian of his time.

Through his contemplation of history, Ranke began to visualize two realms, the real world of appearances which men can readily see and the hidden ideal world where purposes higher than human plans held sway. Ranke posed the problem of how finite man could understand the ideal realm. He found the solution in the understanding of one's soul, since it reflected the spirit of the ideal world. Thus, man could become one with the whole of humanity.

Ranke developed an approach to history which began with a critical examination of original sources in order to obtain an exact knowledge of the individual moment in history. It proceeded, however, to synthesize history, theology, and philosophy through a personal, subjective perception of the living spiritual reality of past life. This intuitive approach drew on Luther's concept of faith. If history were to be understood as a spiritual entity, then it could best be approached by spiritual means.

As Ranke developed his outlook on history, opportunity followed. He was appointed to the faculty in history at the University of Berlin, a post from which his lectures, research, and writing influenced dramatically the concept of history in modern times. Ranke's work went beyond that of

Johann Gottfried Herder in that he carried out the Idealist conception of reality in historical narratives. In his works, which encompassed the history of the Western nations and epochs, Ranke searched for the hand of God in human affairs and for the general tendencies which animated each epoch of history.

His approach sought to discover the exact point at which ideas enter the world to affect human history. Based on this concept, Ranke developed an outlook on politics and states, making these the areas where great ideas intervene most powerfully. As he discussed the ebb and flow of political and diplomatic events in Prussia, Germany, England, France, and the papacy, as well as other nations, Ranke consistently placed the events and individuals within the dynamic of history operating in that epoch. His historical outlook was an adaptation of Luther's conception that events on earth are mere appearances of a spiritual struggle larger than life going on behind the scenes, and the actions of men are the masks of God by which He shows Himself to those who can see Him by faith.

Whether epochs, kingdoms, or individuals in history, even an individual as great as Luther, or a movement so influential as the Reformation, all developments find their true historical significance in a relationship to the dynamic movement of history in their times. For Ranke, freedom existed within historical necessity. The movers of history were hidden higher forces.

Ranke's emphasis on ideas and tendencies in history led up to his ultimate aim, that of producing a great work of universal history to sum up the whole human experience in its totality and to enlighten the path of his fellows. Ranke ended his last work with the conclusion that mankind always aspires to the divine ideal. By then, he had come to see the office of the historian as a priestly function to be occupied by those with the understanding to perceive the divine order in the succession of epochs.

Leopold Ranke was a figure in the generation of German Idealists who sought, in the face of their times, to find a new certainty to replace the collapsing concepts of the old order. In this search, they relied on their Lutheran spiritual ideals. At the same time, they gave these ideals a cultural-historical expression. In an important sense, they transmitted Luther's goals to the modern cultural world. It was Leopold Ranke's task to accomplish this in the philosophy and writing of history. With Luther as his source, the power of Ranke's spiritual conception of history has touched students of history for generations. As historians continue to exam their discipline and attempt to plot its future, they must look to their spiritual origins in Luther, Herder, and Ranke, to ascertain if these men, to whom history was a living reality, offer an idea-oriented approach to history which is of value in our scientific and technological era.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF LUTHER IN MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Over two centuries separated the life of Martin Luther from that of Johann Gottfried Herder. The time of Leopold Ranke, Herder's spiritual heir, stretched this physical separation from Luther to fully three hundred years. Between the lives and careers of these two German historians, who set the stage for a new historical outlook, and the unique course of Martin Luther, whose theology helped to mold the modern world of thought and action, a veritable revolution had created a new world.

States consolidated territory and political power. The concept of a cosmopolitan empire receded before the onslaught of nations, each claiming sovereignty within its territory. The agrarian economy, which was the mainstay of medieval Europe, gradually diversified with the growth of capitalistic enterprise and the beginnings of the industrialization of the West.

The new intellectual world of Isaac Newton and Johannes Kepler appeared to open the possibility for man to control his destiny through knowledge of the laws of nature. Christianity, its unity shattered by the Protestant Reformation, and its growing subjection to the state brought

on by the new religion of nationalism, fought for the minds of people in the face of a new Enlightenment, which preached reason as the way toward a heaven on earth.

Thus, the world of Herder and Ranke was fundamentally different from that of Martin Luther. This brings forth the question of how the theology of Martin Luther could have made so profound an impact on the thought of these two German historians. The answer to this problem lies in the character of Martin Luther as an historical figure and in the nature of his views and their adaptability to human situations. The resolution of this problem rests also in the outlook of the German Idealists and in their ability to re-formulate Luther's theology in cultural and historical modes.

The subtle interaction of these three historical figures began with the common experiences of their personal lives. It should be remembered that both Herder and Ranke were born, reared, and educated in staunch Lutheran homes. They were exposed to the conscious and unconscious flow of ideas which are part of the group life of institutionalized Protestant Churches. Both Herder and Ranke made youthful decisions to go into the Lutheran ministry. Both were schooled in theology in preparation for that calling.

Moreover, Luther, Herder, and Ranke all experienced a time of soul searching. The outcome of these times influenced profoundly the future direction of their lives and thought. Luther's early suffering came with his struggle

with youthful passions and his inability as a young Augustinian monk to achieve the righteousness which he desperately sought before God. It was out of this search for righteousness that Luther discovered Paul's doctrine of the righteousness of God by faith, an idea which became the foundation of Luther's theology.

Herder bore the same sense of emotional isolation and underwent a similar pursuit of certainty in his life. His discontent was a combination of several factors. He resented the prevailing tendency of the Enlightenment to disregard the past and exalt the present. He longed to fulfill a purpose in his life which would transcend the day to day existence which he disliked. Herder envisioned a great work of history to light the pathway of humanity.

In his discontent, which lasted over a period of many years, Herder turned away from theology as the focus of his thought and toward human concerns, a development which led him toward his work in the philosophy of history. Moreover, Herder engaged in a penetrating examination of Luther's life and experience. This inquiry grew in its proportions until Herder's knowledge of Luther matched or surpassed that of any of his contemporaries. It finally blossomed into the hope that he, Herder, might become a second Luther and implement a cultural reformation of his times.

Ranke's period of suffering was not as long as that of Herder. It was confined largely to his university years at Leipzig and resolved itself soon thereafter. It was

nevertheless just as decisive in pointing Ranke toward historical research. It began with Ranke's uncertainty about his youthful theological beliefs and his movement in the direction of a more mystical approach to Christianity. His discovery of the historical world of antiquity and his interest in languages led him to Luther. Ranke developed an intense fascination with Luther as an historical figure, collecting notes for a biography of the Reformer. Ranke's search took the form of a longing for a direct insight into the past.

In addition to a period of suffering, Luther, Herder, and Ranke each experienced a time of inspiration in which the uncertainties faded and the future direction of his life came into focus. For Luther, this came as he waited in the castle at Koburg, surrendering finally in full submission to the purposes of God. Herder experienced his inspiration on his journey to France and Italy, when he envisioned a great work on God's presence through the centuries. Ranke discovered his calling as an historian when he viewed the great literary works of the world in Westermann's Library. For each man, these moments of inspiration, coupled with a period of suffering, proved decisive in the direction which his life subsequently took.

Taken together, the difficult experiences and the periods of inspiration of Luther, Herder, and Ranke form a

pattern.[1] Luther's ordeal pointed him toward faith and a new certainty in God. For Herder and Ranke, their trials caused them to draw on the inspiration of Luther. Both were led away from traditional theology. In this change, each historian took the major outlines of Luther's theology out of the theological realm, giving them a cultural-historical expression and applying them in the realm of human affairs.

Another common element in the experiences of Luther, Herder, and Ranke concerned the aims which each pursued in his work. Once Luther became convinced that God had appointed him as a teacher of the people, he considered it as his public duty as a Doctor of the Sacred Scriptures to instruct the people in the truth.

Similarly, both Herder and Ranke thought of themselves as teachers of the people, engaged in a priestly activity in the footsteps of Luther. Neither historian believed that the Reformation of the sixteenth century could be duplicated in his own time, nor for that matter did he desire to lead a religious reformation. Each historian envisioned writing a great work of history which would reveal God's hand in human affairs and illuminate mankind's pathway. They had, in fact, shifted Luther's educative ideal to human history, believing that in giving Luther's thought cultural forms, they could help to realize his lofty aims in society.

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[1]The common experiences of Luther, Herder, and Ranke extended to such personal areas as the timing of their marriages. Each man married relatively late in his life.

That Herder and Ranke looked to Luther for their inspiration not only tells a great deal about their individual personalities but it also shows something about the character of the era of German Idealism. In a time of the passing of the old order, a time of revolution and warfare, of social and political changes of the most important sort, and of an increased awareness of national identities, this generation looked back to the origins of German society for solutions to the meaning of historical events.

The common experiences shared by Luther, Herder, and Ranke were in some ways accidental circumstances of life. In other ways, they were the studied reaction of two men, Herder and Ranke, who imitated the spirit and purpose of Luther as they understood him. In this way Luther's character as an historical figure, along with the receptive outlook of the Idealist historians, combined to produce the impact which Luther's personality had on them. This relationship became the means by which Luther's thought had its influence on Herder and Ranke.

Three major aspects of Luther's thought influenced the Idealist historians. The first of these was Luther's idea that events have a significance larger than life and that they reflect a spiritual struggle understood only by faith. The second was Luther's notion that the direction of affairs in general proceeds independently of the desires and actions of individuals and therefore possesses an organic quality.

The third of these aspects was Luther's concept of faith as a gift of God allowing man to understand the spiritual truth of his own depravity and God's mercy, as well as the internal clarity of the Word of God. These concepts held many implications for the philosophy and writing of human history, and the Idealist historians used them to construct an approach to the past.

Luther's theology was based largely on the idea of the existence of two separate kingdoms, one spiritual and the other temporal. Events in life, one's calling on earth, or the office of a ruler were activities which took place in the temporal sphere but which held a spiritual significance. They masked the presence of a God who hides Himself to all except those who see Him by faith. It was but one step from Luther's two kingdoms to the two historical realms, one real and the other ideal, which Herder and Ranke defined in their philosophy and treatment of history.

When Herder urged that human passions be acted out on the stage of history, he did so in the belief that events concealed the inscrutable purposes of a God working His way in the world. Herder made a distinction between the whole meaning of history and individuality in history. Each event in the latter category reflected the appearances of the whole.

Herder hoped to rise above the calamity and ruin of centuries of human history to discern a pattern in the past and reveal the central focus and purpose of human existence.

He believed that a spiritual connection existed between cause and effect in history. He searched for the divine order in history, the laws of God which regulate the movement of history. His conclusion was that humanity and happiness, those qualities of improvement which extend man's reach toward God, will prevail in human history. Out of the struggle of reason and irrationality, which goes on ceaselessly behind the events of life, truth and justice reign victorious in human life. History became, therefore, more than mere events. It took on the character of God's design for mankind.

Ranke, too, identified the two worlds, one ideal and the other real. Men might discover the real world easily, but the ideal world remained a mystery. Ranke's aim in history was to search out the divine idea at work in history as God carried out His purpose in individuals and nations. Ranke wanted to know how this idea, which was the whole of human existence, was in the individual appearance of human affairs.

Ranke's searched for an inner grasp of the higher meaning of events and personalities in history. He believed that the historian must see in the individual moments of history a development which transcends the questions of how, when, and where. He searched for the idea which animates all history, and for that general historical life which moves according to God's aims.

Ranke paid particularly close attention to how ideas affect the life of nations. Here he saw tendencies and impulses at work, especially in political affairs. Therefore, every epoch, with its leading tendencies, bore an immediate relationship to God. He saw behind events of his own time the conflict of two great systems, monarchy and representative government. In his treatment of the history of the major Western nations, Ranke viewed a great commonwealth, characterized by the interaction of church and state. This trend reflected itself in the history of individual nations.

Ranke's search for the spiritual substance of history led him finally to universal history. He concluded that man's universal history shows that he always aspires to the divine ideal and that mankind's aspiration for God is expressed in religion and literature. This was the great divine order which hovered over all human history.

Thus, both Herder and Ranke took Luther's concept of the spiritual meaning of human affairs and made it an important part of their approach to history. Through them, it became part of the character of Idealist historiography.

Luther contended that the actions of individuals were not the result of choice but the effect of either the will of God or the will of Satan. Thus, human action reflected the immediate direction of the contest between Christ and Satan. Outside of God the individual was nothing. Only in faith can the individual find an identity in the vastness of

God's grace. The Idealists applied these ideas of Luther to human history.

In the writing of both Herder and Ranke, this use of Luther's idea took the form of references to the transcendent stream of history in which the individual became but only a small drop. Herder used this approach in his comments on the Reformation. He called the movement an inevitable necessity of history and spoke of a direction of affairs in the sixteenth century. Herder affirmed that the Reformation could not have happened at any other time. He called Luther a blind instrument in God's hands, who hesitantly acted out his role. Luther found true freedom in submission to the will of God.

Herder's philosophy of history dwelled on the great collective forces of the centuries. Compared to these, great men appeared as mere points in time. He observed a law of historical necessity that meant whatever can happen in an era actually happens. Herder saw a great chain of improvement in history which bound all individuals together, immersing them in the ongoing movement of human culture.

This theme of a dynamic of history was even more pronounced in Ranke's writings. In treating the Protestant Reformation, Ranke placed it in a period of world-wide flux and change. Ranke pondered how Luther could have an impact on all of Europe, given his lack of personal ambition. He attributed this development to the hidden life of the spirit

which moved forward to influence a continent. As Ranke viewed the history of individual nations, he was attracted to the elemental forces which give them their essential character. To Ranke, the interaction of political and ecclesiastical tendencies was a hidden dynamic in the history of England, France, and Germany. Ranke's writings were filled with references to the nature of things, to the dynamic of an epoch, to the movement of the times, and to the direction of spiritual forces.

In emphasizing a dynamic of the times, Ranke immersed the individuals of history in the sweeping movement of history. He believed that the general life of the centuries far surpassed that of the individual, who is limited by time and place. The individual, even so great a man as Luther, was typical of his epoch. When Ranke came to universal history, he wanted to recognize the inner track of mankind's development. History resulted not from human will but from the nature of human affairs. The significance of events and individuals in history lay in how they expressed the direction of their times and the meaning of human culture as a whole.

Again, both Herder and Ranke took Luther's concept of the bondage of the human will to a higher power, adapting it to human history. In their philosophies and treatment of the past, they gave the general movement of history an organic character of its own, making it a thing in itself apart from individual choice. Through the writing of Herder

and Ranke, this type of history became a part of the heritage of the Idealists.

Luther's concept of faith also greatly influenced the Idealists. Luther conceived of faith as a gift of God, completely apart from human reason. Faith allowed the Christian to grasp God's promises as if they were actual events. Luther's concept of faith reflected his intensely personal spiritual experiences. The Idealist adaptation of Luther's thought made faith an intuitive method of perceiving the hidden spiritual reality which existed behind the appearance of historical events.

Herder, who was close to the German Enlightenment, placed some emphasis on reason in his writings. Yet, he sought with his inner being to grasp the whole of history. As he contemplated the picture of man's history, he often blessed God and was seized with a trembling anticipation of a better future. Too, Herder advocated that the historian write history as it appeared to him and that he should bring to history his own spiritual experiences and outlook.

Herder believed that cause and effect, which the historian must discern in the past, could not be seen empirically because it was hidden behind the appearance. This spiritual content of history could only be presumed and recognized philosophically. It was to be understood only by the intuitive perception of the historian. Herder exercised this spirit of reflection toward the events of history,

experiencing something akin to a magic spell and viewing developments through his soul. Herder surrendered in faith to history as God's revelation, believing that its ultimate purpose would prove beneficial to mankind and that a clouded historical horizon would someday become clear.

This intuitive method of perceiving reality was even more pronounced in Ranke's thought. Ranke dealt early on with the problem of knowing a thing empirically. He concluded that a sense of certainty and a knowledge of things in the world came from understanding one's inner spiritual nature. Ranke heard the voice of God speaking in his inward spirit, telling him of former times.

In Ranke's accounts of the Western nations, he sought an intensely personal comprehension of the whole of their development. He believed this was possible only by a searching recognition and a spiritual perception of history's inner track. Actual reality in the past could not be achieved by reason or human intellect alone. Only in a philosophical spirit, in understanding the incommunicable things lying before the historian, and in divining the spiritual truth of the past could history be recovered as it actually was. The historian must examine thoroughly the sources, but ultimately history was to be witnessed inwardly by the historian.

Through his concepts of the significance of events beyond their appearance, of the subordination of the individual

to the general direction of affairs, and of the inward experience of faith, Martin Luther influenced the major outlines of the philosophy and historical writing of Herder and Ranke. In a true sense, these two historians, along with others of their generation, translated Luther's theological vision into cultural and historical forms. In these forms, Luther's ideas had an even greater impact in many ways than they did in their purely theological expression.

As Herder and Ranke developed an approach to history, they not only looked back to their vision of Martin Luther, but, through his inspiration, they also prepared a new historical outlook. Herder made the break with the historical outlook of the Enlightenment, and the broad outlines of a new history took shape in his writings. Herder despised the chronicles of the past which pointed only toward the eighteenth century. He urged that the writing of history be organized around great peoples, broad changes, and revolutions which transmit the spirit of human culture.

Furthermore, Herder advocated that the historian must consider the unique characteristics of each epoch in its time and location. This opened up history to the variety, color, and detail in every age. Herder moved away from natural law as an explanation for the direction of history and toward the unfolding of history and the events of history themselves. The happenings of each epoch held the whole of history in them, just as the whole represented each

individuality. In Herder's thought, the religious power of Idealism opened a whole new meaning for human history.

Herder also sought to portray history as it actually was. He wanted to recognize the spiritual message borne in the events of human life, the presence of God in the ebb and flow of mankind's existence. Herder raised history to the level of faith, and in so doing, gave it the potential of influencing human behavior as never before. He brought a contemplative approach to history. He believed the historian must not be content with a mere factual approach. Drawing on his inward spirit, Herder sought to reflect on the whole of human experience and move toward a general understanding of all things.

Ranke translated these ideas into the actual writing of history, setting a standard for Idealist historians. Ranke fused detail, an exact knowledge of the individual moment in history, with an idea at work in an epoch in order to understand the true spirit of an age. Despite his reputation as an empirical historian, the height of Ranke's method was a perception, an understanding, and a divining of the higher substance of historical reality. To do so was to show the past as it actually was. In bringing the spiritual power of Idealism to bear on the writing of historical narratives, Ranke developed a seminal historical mode and became one of the most influential historians of the modern era.

The work of Herder and Ranke demonstrated that the purpose of history, with all its devastation and grandeur, leads finally toward an idea and that what is most important in history is what people believe to be true. In a very real sense, their history was a history of thought. This is why they can be called Idealists. In stressing the importance of ideas in history, the work of the Idealists disclosed the significant part the subjective understanding of the historian plays in the writing of Idealist history.

The influence of Martin Luther in modern historiography did not end with Ranke's death. The manner in which Luther has touched the writing of history in the twentieth century forms a sequel to the major discussion in this essay. This problem probes the form that Idealist history has taken in recent historical research.

It might be supposed that the work of Heinrich Treitschke, a younger contemporary of Ranke and a leading historian of the nineteenth century, would carry the tone which Ranke had struck. There were some significant likenesses in the work of Ranke and Treitschke, even if the latter historian took a more deterministic approach in his treatment of historical affairs. Treitschke was an Idealist to the extent that he believed a dynamic of history worked in the affairs of nations. He maintained that states possessed certain personalities, that ideas come into existence in the course of history, and that centuries encompass living

forces.[2] Treitschke came close to Luther's metaphysic when he maintained that "the world of individual freedom, the coming and going of historical personalities, are under the sway of laws whose divine rationality we can at times dimly realize but never fully understand."[3]

There was an important difference, however, between the history which Ranke wrote and that of Treitschke. This difference lay in the tone of their respective writings. Ranke attempted to remain dispassionate and non-judgmental in history, a characteristic for which he was severely criticized by Treitschke, as well as others both in and out of Germany. Treitschke insisted that history must be written with passion. Treitschke's advocacy of Prussia and the Prussian solution to the German question showed clearly in his history.[4] The quiet historical faith of Ranke could allow him to withhold judgment. The excited nationalism of Treitschke demanded that history stir the will of people to action.

Treitschke's work reminds one of the extremes to which a historian could take the Idealist approach--the intemperate attacks on the Jews, the glorification of state power, and the romanticizing of war. These excesses may have held sway

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[2]Heinrich von Treitschke, Treitschke's History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, 6 vols. (New York: McBride, Nast, and Company, 1915-19), 3:276.

[3]Ibid., 6:474.

[4]Ibid., 4:549; ibid., 5:247; ibid., 6:643.

in German political life, auguring disastrous consequences for the world, but they were not inherent in the basic Idealist approach to history. To comprehend fully the spiritual contribution of Idealism to modern historiography, we must turn, not to Treitschke, but to his student, Friedrich Meinecke, who became the foremost German historian of the twentieth century.

Herder had experienced the rise of German cultural nationalism in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and Ranke had seen the achievement of a German Empire in Europe. Meinecke came to maturity during a time when Germany was the pre-eminent power in Europe in the period of aggressive nationalism prior to World War I. Herder, and to some extent Ranke, could deal with nationalism in the context of Idealist thought. Meinecke, however, was forced by the events of his time to treat more critically the impetus of nationalism in history. His work forms a natural sequel to that of the two earlier historians.

Carl Hinrichs, in the introduction to Meinecke's most recent work, Historism, The Rise of a New Historical Outlook, has traced effectively the cultural milieu in which Meinecke grew. While it is not within the purpose of this essay to detail the events of Meinecke's life, it is nevertheless interesting to note the striking similarities between Meinecke's early experiences and those of Herder and Ranke. Like them, Meinecke was reared in a pious Lutheran home. He

endured a youthful period of uncertainty about the time of his confirmation, characterized by an intense search for a philosophy of life to replace the theological dogma from which he was turning away.[5] If Meinecke left the God of theology, he began to seek the God hidden behind the ideal world, and this process ultimately broadened into a philosophy which aimed at understanding the divine basis of world historical life. Evidently Meinecke experienced the same emotional and intellectual restructuring of thought as had Herder and Ranke, a metamorphosis which permitted the transferring and application of spiritual modes of thought to the cultural world.

In his education, Meinecke was exposed to the richness of Idealist historical thought. One of the most telling influences on him was a series of lectures by the German historian, J. G. Droysen, whom Meinecke heard during his university years. He preserved his notes, quoting Droysen:

> We [historians] are not like the natural scientists, who have all the means for carrying out experiments; we can only search, and go on searching. Then it follows that even the most fragmentary glimpse of the past, and that history and our knowledge of it are poles apart. . . . It would discourage us, but for one fact--we can at any rate follow the development of thought in history, even in spite of the fragmentary nature of our material. . . . Thus we do not arrive at a picture of the past as such, but only our interpretation and intellectual reconstruction of it.[6]

Droysen's statement capsulized the Idealist approach

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[5]Meinecke, Historism, pp. xix-xx.

[6]Cited in Meinecke, Historism, p. xxii.

succinctly. In defining the difficulty of tracing history's spiritual meaning, Droysen showed just how close the Idealists were to Luther and how they translated his vision into an approach to history. Droysen recommended a history of thought. Meinecke's major works became a history of the thought of creative thinkers as they reacted to the flow of the historical world.

The first of Meinecke's major works was entitled, Cosmopolitanism and the National State, which appeared first in the German edition in 1907. The work surveyed the development of the German idea of the national state from the middle of the eighteenth century to Bismarck's German Empire under the Hohenzollern monarchy. Meinecke organized his treatment around the ideas of creative thinkers during the time, men such as Wilhelm Humboldt, Friedrich Schlegel, Johann Fichte, Adam Müller, Georg Hegel, Leopold Ranke, and Otto Bismarck.

Meinecke's immediate concern in the book was the origins of the German national state, or, more precisely, the development of the idea of a German national state. In a broader sense, he was intrigued by the major forces of political and cultural life, by the connection between historical ideas and political action, and by the relationship between national life and the universal destiny of humanity.[7]

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[7]Friedrich Meinecke, Cosmopolitanism and the National State, trans. Robert B. Kimber (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 3, 9.

Meinecke rejected a series of general laws as an explanation for the development of those communities which come together into nationhood, choosing instead to see the events of this phenomenon themselves, while concentrating on the particular features of the nations. In defining the concept of nationhood, Meinecke attributed to nations an organic character. In Meinecke's history, nations have a will, they think, possess personality, and go through a cycle of growth toward maturity. Yet, the ideal of the nation is always carried in individual souls, just as these individuals reflect the spirit of the nation.[8]

Beyond the connection of individual souls with the totality of their nation, Meinecke sought to explore the interrelationship of national life, particularly German national life, with the universal whole of human development. He believed that historical research reaches its highest form in its attempts to confront this basic problem. Meinecke sought to elucidate this relationship, not only from the standpoint of external actions but also from the inner life of men whose thoughts attempted to distinguish between humanity and nationality. As Meinecke related this phenomenon to the German problem, he suggested a complex process of conflict and cooperation of the ideas of cosmopolitanism and German nationality in German historical life.[9]

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[8]Ibid., pp. 9-12, 16-17.

[9]Ibid., pp. 19-22.

When Meinecke came to Wilhelm Humboldt, he found the philosopher's view of the German nation somewhat vague and lacking in concrete plans. He credited Humboldt with identifying a national spirit that lived and worked in individuals and that surrounded the individual as an organic force of history. Meinecke judged that Humboldt's concept of the nation remained in the context of the universal life of humanity and that he wanted to see in the cultural life of the nation examples of thought which were universally believed by all men. Meinecke found Humboldt's ability to move easily from the real to the ideal world an unacceptable method for the modern scientific mind, which demands a strict division between the two realms. It was Meinecke's purpose to show how, in the decades after Humboldt, the concept of nationalism was taken out of the ideal or universal realm and was given concrete and practical goals in the real world.[10]

Meinecke considered the early years of Romanticism, the years of Georg Hardenburg and Friedrich Schlegel. He noted the tendency of these early Romantics to view every spiritual stirring as a manifestation of the spiritual life of the whole of humanity. He showed how they viewed the state as an organism which showed itself in a thousand individualities, just as God showed Himself in manifold ways in the religious community. Although the thought of these early Romantics

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[10]Ibid., pp. 39, 41, 43-44.

leaned slightly more toward real politics than had Humboldt, they still considered the German spirit an ideal embodying the whole of mankind.[11]

Meinecke traced the ideas of Johann Fichte, crediting him with recognizing the hard realities of the necessity of a political form for the German state. Fichte saw that international universalism must yield to patriotic nationalism, all the while insisting that to be patriotic was to be part of a universal culture. Fichte envisioned a European community of competitive states, each attempting to perfect itself and carry out its particular mission in the world. He desired a political state for the German nation in order to facilitate the mission of the Germans in the world, as well as to bring the intellect of the mind to the forefront in all human affairs. Thus, Fichte still tinged his nationalism with universalism.[12]

Meinecke noted in the thought of Adam Müller a tendency to equate nationality with the organization of social life. In advocating the importance of national character, Müller opposed the idea of a shallow universalism. Yet, he believed a confederation of nations constituted a desirable legal order for Europe. Meinecke found the years 1812-15 decisive in bringing a shift from ethical and cultural nationalism within a world order toward the idea of national

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[11]Ibid., pp. 51, 55, 63.

[12]Ibid., pp. 71-72, 74-75, 79, 83, 93.

power. He found the attitude of Wilhelm Humboldt most influential, citing Humboldt's call for a strong Germany, able to defend itself and pursue its national self-development. At this point, the call for national power began to take precedence over the ideal of a cultural nation performing its universal ethical tasks within a world order.[13]

Meinecke did not attribute this change of thinking from universalism to nationalism to certain individuals but to a general transformation of thought and feeling in Germany, to which certain thinkers gave expression. In this respect, Georg Hegel, Leopold Ranke, and Otto Bismarck stood out. Hegel claimed the nation received its authority from the living past. Thus, he rooted in history the right of the state to assert its claims. Hegel claimed also that in each epoch one dominant nation possessed the right to represent humanity. Thus, even Hegel did not dispense completely with the universal principle.[14]

Neither Hegel nor Ranke made the actual world completely separate from the ideal world. Thus, Ranke made nationality a mysterious spiritual substance, and he resisted giving it a limited corporal form. He made the origin of nations rest in the nature of their own nationality. Ranke's idea of historical development bridged the gulf between the idealism of Humboldt and the realism of Bismarck by uniting ideas with

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[13]Ibid., pp. 111, 114-15, 139.

[14]Ibid., pp. 197, 199, 201-2.

the events of history. This approach ultimately meant that cultural, ethical Germany could become the German national state of Bismarck.[15]

Meinecke surveyed the dramatic events of 1848-49, including the Revolutions of 1848, the Frankfurt Assembly, the promulgation of a constitution for a German state, and the offer of the monarchy of this state to the Prussian ruling house. From this point, Meinecke passed on to the Prussian victory over Austria and the formation of the North German Confederation in 1867. All the time, Meinecke emphasized the role of Bismarck and the leadership of the Prussian state. He showed how Prussia used both the universal and national elements of the idea of nationalism, dispensing with the universal elements at the proper time in order to achieve a concrete realization of a German national state.[16]

Meinecke could not delineate the exact points at which the universal idea gave way to the national approach. He left this to be understood as a gradual transformation occurring over the two decades after 1848. He also left unsaid any definite conclusion about the relationship between the new German state and the universal aspirations of mankind. The unhappy events of World War I, the Nazi rule in Europe, and World War II and the dismemberment of Germany

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[15]Ibid., pp. 208, 212, 216-17.

[16]Ibid., pp. 230, 233.

would force Meinecke to deal with German nationalism within a broader context of world historical ideas.

The outcome of World War I and the humiliation of Germany provided the backdrop for Meinecke's second major work entitled, Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison D'État and Its Place in Modern History. Meinecke's tone in this work, first published in Germany in 1924, took on a somber, sometimes fatalistic note when compared with his earlier work. His former optimism and his belief that the dynamic of history worked benevolently for the good of man was now tempered by the horrors of World War I and the prostration of Germany by the Allied victors. Against this reality, Meinecke began to see in history a general causation--the need for self-preservation which all states had experienced. The particular way of life which a state had developed expresses this historical necessity for security.[17]

The statesman is faced, on the one hand, with these necessities of state, and on the other, with the demands of ethical justice which the civilized world recognizes. Meinecke pondered where the boundary between these two motives lies. The historian has the similar problem of delineating the points at which one motive or the other overrules. Meinecke concluded that the historian could not dissect precisely the experience of states or national leaders.

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[17]Friedrich Meinecke, Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison D'Etat and Its Place in Modern History, trans. Douglas Scott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 1-2.

Often, actions are a blending of conflicting motives, creating a blurred area which is neither completely moral, nor completely amoral. To Meinecke, this basic human dilemma reached its highest significance in the area of the rule of states based on the principle of necessity of state.[18]

Meinecke felt deeply this dilemma, both from a personal as well as an historical point of view. He explained the predicament which the historian finds when seeking an understanding of history:

> Our investigation resembles a stroll in the engulfing maze of a garden which continually leads back to the same point. This will happen to us once again when, turning our gaze towards the entrance in one more fresh attempt, we try to grasp the problem.[19]

As a historian, Meinecke felt drawn into a whirlpool, and he concluded that the writer of history, when faced by the gulf between what ought to be and the outcome of actual events, cannot rely merely on his own reason to solve the problem. He must "take the particular processes of the historical world which he is supposed to elucidate, and let these events be seen in the light of higher and more general forces which are present behind and develop in these events."[20]

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[18]Ibid., pp. 3-5.

[19]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[20]Ibid., p. 8.

Meinecke did not believe the historian could determine the essence of these higher forces but could only say he beholds in the historical world a bipolarity, with freedom at one pole and necessity at the other. Moreover, the historian must accept the disturbing fact that the world of elemental forces and the world of the human mind are not easily distinguished but frequently mingle in human actions. To Meinecke, this became the dark mystery of historical life. He commented that the historian who ponders these mysteries is seized, at the same time, with wonder, perplexity, and bewilderment.[21]

As this riddle of history was applied to affairs of state, it asked how the state, which depends on law and ethics for its existence, is often unable, because of the demands of power, to abide by these standards in its behavior toward its citizens and toward other states. Necessity of state is a timeless dynamic which grasps every state and its leaders. For history, the question becomes in what way statecraft is a historical necessity and in what way is it capable of change and development by human choice. This becomes a part of the larger task of modern historicism, which is to grasp that which is individual and particular, while at the same time perceiving the universal element. Thus, a history of ideas attempts to perceive what creative

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[21]Ibid., pp. 8-9, 11.

thinkers discern in what has happened to them historically, and how these thoughts create fresh new life.[22]

Meinecke began his survey of modern statecraft with Niccolò Machiavelli, whom he called the father of the modern idea of necessity of state. Meinecke believed that Machiavelli was basically a heathen. He also maintained that through Machiavelli's idea that moral law could be interdicted by the needs of politics, the forces of evil in the world gained a foothold in the affairs of state. This created a dualism of absolute and relative values. The state was now free of the spiritual restraints which the Middle Ages had imposed on political authority.[23]

Meinecke traced the connection of morality and necessity in statecraft in the thought of political theorists such as Jean Bodin, in the application of necessity of state in the rule of Cardinal Richelieu in France, in the theory of absolutism in the thought of Hugo Grotius and Thomas Hobbes, and in the rule of Frederick the Great of Prussia. Meinecke concluded that a thread of conflict had run through the political thought of the West from the Renaissance to modern times--the conflict of the standards of natural law and the realities of historical and political life.[24]

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[22]Ibid., pp. 13, 16, 19-21.

[23]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[24]Ibid., p. 343.

When Meinecke came to a discussion of German political and historical thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he found a strong impulse to reconcile the interests of the state with the ethical standards of the West. This required a new relationship between the ideal and real worlds, and this was found in the idea of a divine presence in the historical world. Every historical event serves to achieve this divine presence in the whole of human history. This was the accomplishment of Hegel, Fichte, Ranke, and Treitschke. The result was that in Germany men discarded the idea of a uniform natural law and began to emphasize a diverse individuality, the manifestations of which carried in them the life of the whole of human existence. Meinecke considered Ranke the greatest genius of this historicist tradition.[25]

In concluding his work, Meinecke admitted that the outcome of World War I had called into question the tradition of German historical thought from Hegel to Treitschke. He concluded that in departing from the concept of natural law, German historians had breached the unity of Western thought which Germans had once held in common with other European peoples. He further acknowledged the shortcomings of that thought, namely that it tended to excuse the excesses of power politics in the actions of the German state, clearing the way for an ethics of force. Meinecke forthrightly

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[25]Ibid., pp. 349, 361, 378.

maintained that this false worship of the state in Germany must cease.[26]

Despite these weaknesses, Meinecke contended that the German school of history had made an enduring contribution to Western thought by showing how human life is a mysterious mixture of mind and nature, connected, yet separated. As such it delineates the problem of the modern mind, the search for absolutes in the face of the skepticism induced by man's historical experiences.[27] Meinecke summarized his feelings:

> Within the horizon dominated by modern Man, there are only two points at which the Absolute manifests itself unveiled to his gaze: in the pure moral law on the one hand, and in the supreme achievements of art on the other. He can certainly also discern its effects in his world in all kinds of other ways, but he cannot unravel it from the veil of the temporal and transitory, in which it is wrapped. In history we do not see God, but only sense His presence in the clouds that surround Him. But there are only too many things in which God and the devil are entwined together. One of the most important of these . . . is raison d'état. Its character, since it re-entered human consciousness at the beginning of modern history, has always been puzzling, peremptory and seductive. Contemplation can never become tired of gazing into its sphinx-like countenance, and yet can never quite succeed in fathoming it. But it can only appeal to the executive statesman that he should always carry State and God together in his heart, if he is not to let himself be overpowered by the daemon (which he is still not quite capable of shaking off completely).[28]

Meinecke's wish was not to be fulfilled, for what he termed the demonic side of history came to the fore in the

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[26]Ibid., pp. 424-26, 429.

[27]Ibid., p. 427.

[28]Ibid., p. 433.

Nazi rule and the destruction of Germany in World War II. The portent of this disaster was on the horizon in 1936 when Meinecke published his third major work, Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Consciousness. In this enlarged treatment of a subject dealt with in two previous works, Meinecke discussed the thought of the forerunners of historicism, such figures as Lord Shaftesbury, Gottfried Leibnitz, and Giambattista Vico. He summarized the general historical outlook of the Enlightenment through the works of such figures as Voltaire and Baron Montesquieu in France, and David Hume, Edward Gibbon, and William Robertson of Great Britain. Focusing on the German movement as the highest expression of the new historical consciousness, Meinecke traced its beginnings to Gotthold Lessing, Johann Winckelmann, and Justus Möser. Meinecke believed, however, that Johann Gottfried Herder was the first to synthesize the new outlook and that Johann Goethe had broadened that synthesis. Leopold Ranke applied the synthesis to history.

In this work, Meinecke was more conscious than ever about the crisis of historicism, which the events of the twentieth century had brought. For this reason, he attempted to re-define the German historical tradition and to identify the positive characteristics in it. He called historicism the second great achievement of German thought, with the Reformation being the first. Meinecke defined historicism as the substitution of an individual for a general view of

historical life. Significantly, Meinecke commented that the Reformation had pointed the way to the new outlook by defining the individual's relation to God. Drawing on this, historicism set forth the relation of individual phenomena in history to the whole of historical life.[29]

Meinecke believed the great mystery behind all historical life was that events can be at once individual, yet part of a universal context. The task of history as a discipline is to link together the ideal or universal with the real or individual aspects of history. He wanted to find in the appearances of history that which expresses the common thread which runs through all humanity.[30] Meinecke concluded, "This lofty link, [between ideal and real] this golden chain, is both universal and yet at every moment individual. And there are yet more links in it to be forged in this our day and age."[31]

As the foremost exponent of the Idealist approach in the twentieth century, it is important to note how the work of Meinecke forms a sequel to that of Herder and Ranke and particularly in what ways Meinecke reflected the influence of Luther, as Herder and Ranke had before him. This question is more complex in Meinecke's case because he

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[29]Meinecke, Historism, p. liv. In the translation of Meinecke's work, Anderson employs the term historism. I have preserved the more generally used term historicism.

[30]Ibid., pp. 509-10.

[31]Ibid., p. 510.

belonged to a generation which tended toward an empirically based explanation of history. Meinecke's treatment of his subject is couched in more scientific language than earlier Idealist writing, and the terms which characterized Idealist history of another era are less noticeable in his work. Nevertheless, the Idealist approach in Meinecke's history shows his debt to Ranke and Herder, and through them, to Luther.

Four factors of Meinecke's treatment of history connect him to Luther and the Idealist past. First, Meinecke used the two realms of reality as a basic concept of his work. The earlier Idealists had called the two realms the ideal and the real. Meinecke understood the ideal realm to be the general or universal aspect of historical life. He preferred to use the term individual or specific to convey the meaning of that real part of history which men can readily grasp. In this dichotomy of historical life, Meinecke's thought resembles closely Luther's approach to spiritual life, as well as the philosophy of Herder and Ranke. What Luther conceived of as the two kingdoms, one of Christ and the other of Satan, became in the thought of Meinecke an approach in which the universal and individual aspects of historical reality acted and reacted constantly upon each other.

Secondly, Meinecke saw in history a spiritual conflict. In his work on cosmopolitanism and nationalism, this conflict was between universalism and patriotism. In Meinecke's

treatment of Machiavellism, this conflict became a contest between the Christian view of the moral state and the demonic force of power politics. In the work on historicism, this tension was between the individual and the general view of history. The vision of the great spiritual conflict of good and evil, of Christ and Satan, which Luther had made the spiritual basis of human life, and which influenced the Idealist thought of Herder and Ranke, became again in Meinecke's thought an approach to the understanding of human history.

Thirdly, Meinecke came to view history as a maze, an inexplicable riddle. Meinecke saw a blurred area between the ideal and the real realms, where elements of the two fused together in an often inseparable mixture. Luther's vision of the hidden God, understood by faith, became in Meinecke's thought the hidden meaning of the human past.

Fourthly, like Luther, who sought God in faith, Meinecke moved beyond reason as a way to understand the living past. He sought to bring his whole being into the contemplation of history's meaning. Meinecke's history was at once extremely personal and extremely universal because he experienced in his soul the historical struggle of modern man.

The tension in Meinecke's picture of the past, the enigma of history which he defined, and the spiritual content of the past which he traced gave his history a religious

power and allowed him to bring the Idealist thought of an earlier era to bear on the modern problem of nationalism and history. Isaiah Berlin said of him:

> This is the vision that communicates an almost religious fervour to his entire conception of history, and infects his prose style; it derives from Herder and Ranke, rather than his idolised master, the calm, unhistorical Goethe.[32]

Finally, there is the question of what Martin Luther, through the Idealist historical tradition, has contributed to history as a discipline, and what the Idealist mode has to offer to history in our time. This question is important because of the spiritual power which the Idealists exhibited in their history and because of the influence they wielded over the minds of their readers. They lived and worked in a time when the craft of history was admired not only in academic circles but also by the general reading public. It is important to note the source of their power.

The Idealists were generalists and not specialists. They began with the specific and individual but always sought to discover a universal view of things. Their search went far beyond the when, where, or even the how and why of an event or period in history. In the end, they longed to discover the spiritual meaning of an individual event, that is, what it said about the universal destiny of mankind. The basic problem behind all their writing was the question of what in the human experience is related to God. Their

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[32]Cited in Meinecke, Historism, p. xiv.

definition of history took in the spiritual dimension of man. This was the source of the religious and spiritual power of Idealist history.

The Idealists focused on human thought in history. They did this because they believed that thought conveyed the spirit of the centuries to the present. Unlike the Positivists, who claimed to produce a scientific history, the Idealists made no such claims. If anything, they renounced the effort to achieve an empirical understanding of the past. In the absence of such knowledge, the Idealists emphasized an understanding of ideas in history and how they made their appearance in the human experience. An event could never be reproduced exactly, but the leading idea of an era could be understood by the perception of the historian.

The Idealists brought a contemplative method to history. Going beyond the mind, reason, and mere intellect, they sought to experience with their whole being the living past behind the documents and sources. They brought emotion, will, experience, philosophy, and religion to bear on the meaning of history. If history was spiritual in nature, then it could best be understood by the human spirit in all the breadth of its experience.

In our day of specialization, in our worship of the methods of science, in our skepticism of transcendent values, and in our search for a sophisticated secularity, history has

become compartmentalized and limited in its scope. If history regains its rightful place as a form of thought, it must reclaim as its province the universal experiences of humanity. In this task, the vision of the Idealists can provide a perspective with which to reflect on that which is enduring in our Western concept of history. R. G. Collingwood identified the essence of historical thought when he wrote, "The only clue to what man can do is what man has done. The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is."[33]

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[33]R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 10.

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