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A History of Modern Culture

Preserved Smith (1880–1941), a professor in the history department of Cornell University, owed his unusual first name to Puritan ancestors who could be traced back to the seventeenth century. His great interest was in the Protestant reformation, and its wide-ranging political and cultural effects in Europe and America. An obituary remarks that his writings ‘reveal a remarkable breadth of knowledge and interest and a consistent devotion to high standards of scholarly integrity’. This two-volume work of 1930–4, discussing ‘modern culture’ from 1543 to 1776, displays these qualities in abundance. Volume 1, after an introductory chapter, considers the state of the sciences in the sixteenth century, then the humanities and the social and political context of law, morality and art. The emphasis on the importance of science as a driver of change makes this a remarkable and readable overview of the emergence of modern society.

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VOLUME 1

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A HISTORY OF MODERN CULTURE

BY

PRESERVED SMITH

HON. LITT.D. AMHERST

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY IN CORNELL UNIVERSITY

THE GREAT RENEWAL

1543–1687

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TO

CHARLES HOMER HASKINS

IN HONOR AND IN FRIENDSHIP

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PREFACE

Though the duties of the professoriate are arduous they allow considerable intervals of leisure which may be devoted to reading and writing. In addition to summer vacations I have been granted, by Cornell University, two longer periods of freedom from academic duties. An appropriation from the fund for the promotion of research given by Mr. August Heckscher, to whom I tender my thanks, allowed me during the spring term of 1926 to transfer the burden of teaching to other shoulders and thus to devote my time to study. A second and longer interval of leisure was granted me in 1928-29, in the sabbatic year which it is the wisdom of our universities to allow professors after six or seven years of academic labor.

For assistance in coping with a task which would otherwise have far exceeded my capacity, I am indebted to kind and able friends. The introductory chapter and those on Laws and on Morals and Manners, have been read and corrected in manuscript by Professor Carl Becker of Cornell University; the chapters on Astronomy, Physics, and Mathematics by Professor Frederick A. Saunders of Harvard; the chapter on Philosophy by Professor Charles H. Toll of Amherst College; the chapter on Political Theory by Professor George E. G. Catlin of Cornell University; the chapters on Religion, Free-thought, Superstition, and Tolerance by Professor George Lincoln Burr of Cornell University; the chapters on Literature and Art by my sister, Professor Winifred Smith of Vassar College. The first and second chapters have been read in proof by Professor Burr, and the fifth and sixth chapters by Dr. W. T. W. Forbes, of Cornell. While the careful criticisms of these eminent scholars have been invaluable to me, I must relieve my

collaborators of all responsibility for the general point of view adopted throughout the book, as well as for the expression of certain opinions with which they might not agree. Their help has enabled me, I hope, to present the various subjects treated with that degree of accuracy and in that perspective suitable to a work on so large a scale as this. My purpose has been to survey the intellectual progress of Western culture as a whole, not to amplify and qualify every detail with the meticulous refinement rightly demanded in the history of a small subject. One rule governs the drawing of a world map, another the drafting of the plan of a city or county.

For making the index, for reading the proof, and for other help, I am indebted to my wife.

P. S.

*Ithaca, New York,
April 14, 1929.*

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