Doctrine, progress and history: British religious debate 1845 – 1914

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

By Joshua Maxwell Redford Bennett, Christ Church

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Short abstract

Religion and history became closely related in new ways in the Victorian imagination. This thesis asks why this was so, by focusing on arguments within British Protestant culture over progress and development in the history of Christianity. In an intellectual movement approximately beginning with the 1845 publication of John Henry Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, and powerfully spreading and developing until the earlier years of the twentieth century, British intellectuals came to treat the history of religion – both as a past and present process, and as a didactic genre - as a vital element of broader attempts to stabilise or reconstruct religious belief and social order.

Religious revivalists, determined to use church history as a raw material for the inculcation of exclusive confessional identities and dogmatic theology, were highly successful in pressing it on the attention of early Victorian audiences. But they proved unable to control its meaning. Historians rose to prominence who instead interpreted the history of Christianity as a guide to how religious culture, which many treated as indistinguishable from society as a whole, might eventually supersede denominational and dogmatic divisions. Humanity's spiritual development in time, which numerous British critics assessed with the aid of German Idealist thought, also became an attractive apologetic resource as the epistemological basis of Christian belief came under unprecedented public challenge. A major part of that danger was perceived to come from rival, avowedly secularising interpretations of human social progress. Such accounts – the ancestors of twentieth-century secularisation theory – were vigorously opposed by historians who understood modernity as involving not the decline, but the purification of Christianity. By exploring the ways in which Victorian critics – clerical and

lay, religious and secular – approached religious history as a resource for solving the problems of their own age, this thesis offers a new way of understanding the importance of history, claims to knowledge, and the nature and ends of ‘liberalism’ in the long nineteenth century.

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Long abstract

Nineteenth-century British thinkers were preoccupied by the relationship between past, present, and future. To an extent that is still curiously underestimated, they understood that problem in terms of the historical legacy, present condition, and future prospects of Christianity. This thesis reveals something of the scope and scale of that debate. It does so by examining how and why a large number of Victorian thinkers, within broadly-defined British Protestant culture, regarded the interpretation of the human past as involving argument about the shape and credibility of religion. It proposes that the changing ways in which critics approached development within post-apostolic Christian history, and the relationship between Christianity and the historical progress of European society, reveal much about how contemporaries understood denominational conflict; the conditions of social improvement; the basis of knowledge; and the nature and ends of freedom.

The thesis begins from three relatively uncontroversial starting-points. First, the nineteenth century in Britain and around the world witnessed striking religious revival. This evangelical effervescence shaped many aspects of social and intellectual experience; and it generated the preconditions for the 'crisis of faith' that afflicted many Victorians, some of whom are treated here, in important respects. Secondly, the period experienced the growth and first excitements of modern historical consciousness. Contemporary actors in literature, aesthetics, and politics became acutely concerned to define themselves in relation to the past and periods of history which seemed, in a newly intense and disturbing way, to be fundamentally different from the present. Thirdly, and in ways often related to the former two, the nineteenth century was a century of 'liberalism'. Victorian Britons, in ways analogous to but

also different from their counterparts in other countries, sought ways of bringing the ideas and institutions they had inherited from previous centuries into accordance with modern, progressive ideals.

These points should not in themselves seem novel or surprising. The way in which they are integrated and approached in the discussion which follows, however, is new, and has broader implications for how historians understand intellectual debate and wider processes of cultural change in nineteenth-century Britain. The distinctive contribution made by the thesis can be summarised in two ways. First, the argument it offers considerably broadens current understanding of what was at stake in Victorian historical debate. Whereas existing works have focused on the development of 'Whig' and 'scientific' historiography in the period, this study opens up the many ways in which British historical thought was shaped by theological, metaphysical, and deliberately anti-metaphysical frameworks. Biblical, patristic, enlightened, romantic, German Idealist, cultural-historical and sociological paradigms jostled and overlapped in the minds of Victorian critics concerned to draw meaning from the religious past. The thesis accordingly gives an account of how different kinds of historical projection became integral to the articulation of religious revivalism and reformism in Victorian culture. It juxtaposes and interrelates fundamentally religious ways of imagining the human past, and future, to the essentially secular ones they sought to counter. It treats historical argument as a sphere in which the claims of religion on modern cultural attention were put to the test, quite as actively as they were in the debates over the implications of natural science that have received much more scholarly attention. History, in short, widely came to occupy the space held during the age of Enlightenment by natural theology as the primary discursive location in which critics discussed the shape religion should take, and its claims to intellectual credibility.

The discussion of the religious dimensions of Victorian historical thought offered in the dissertation, secondly, breaks new ground in the historical study of Victorian liberalism. The thesis examines neglected forms of historical rhetoric, and progressive typology, which were central to the articulation of the British liberal imagination during the nineteenth century. It is well known that religious agendas often animated British liberal politics in the period, and that liberal politicians often anchored their visions of the British constitution in progressive readings of constitutional history. But in these respects, political historians' focus on conflicts between church and dissent within primarily national contexts, together with intellectual historians' overriding interest in the history of political thought, have led to the neglect or implicit dismissal of forms of progressive ideal that cannot easily be compartmentalised in the ways these forms of historical knowledge traditionally demand. Not every Victorian liberal was consistently or primarily preoccupied by the constitution, church rates, or free trade. Many were also concerned to understand the situation of the modern individual, and the prospects of particular nations and denominations, in the light of the wider history of the church and the universal histories of doctrine and philosophy. Their aspirations for the future of human society were not confined to the British Isles; nor were they obviously determined – though they were often influenced – by denominational allegiances. Indeed, liberals often hoped for the lessening of the barriers separating nations, just as they urged the diminution of ecclesiastical discord. To Victorian thinkers, the history of Christianity offered an obvious framework in which to situate the future of the race, albeit one that often remained heavily centred on the European and Near Eastern Christianity, and their own part within that story. The argument advanced with increasing force and respectability, if not necessarily acceptance after 1850 – that progress did not require, and was even impeded by religion – was both made and answered with reference to the general history of mankind.

The dissertation recovers these hidden energies within liberal argument. Its main focus falls on liberal Protestant thinkers, but as 'liberalism' is always and everywhere a contextual term, it considers them in evolving relation to the more conservative and positivistic thinkers who opposed them and with whom they engaged. When religiously liberal historians studied the dynamics of the religious past, and sought to interpret them to Victorian audiences through verbal addresses and print media, they were in general attempting to achieve two things. First, they hoped to show that the heavily dualistic theology, and ecclesiological exclusivism, which evangelical and high Anglican revivalists often projected onto an historical canvas were not in fact of the essence of Christianity. By drawing out how Christianity had changed in the past, and might develop in the future, religious liberals elevated the progressive authority they took to be inherent in history above the claims of particular groups to possess the entirety of truth. Secondly, they aimed to vindicate the providential and spiritual character of history as a whole, by placing religious developments and the spiritual forces that supposedly underlay them at the heart of world-history. It was at this point that liberal and reformist intentions were joined to protective and conservative ones. As challenges to Christianity from natural science, agnosticism, and the secularising interpretations of historical progress they informed became more pronounced, religious historians became more strenuous in their insistence that history witnessed to the mind of God. Later in the Victorian period, religious conservatives among Anglicans, Presbyterians and nonconformists - the heirs to those who had once been volubly opposed to liberal historicism – began to stress the progressive and providential character of religious history as a whole, in ways that undermined their earlier exclusivist and anti-humanist inclinations. By 1914, changing understandings of religious tradition, and of the spiritual dimensions of history, had widely worked to ameliorate the tensions of the evangelical revival, and to turn history into a more dynamic element of Christian apologetics.

These overarching conceptual points, and the broad chronology of how Victorian religious historicism and liberalism developed, are demonstrated by means of an innovative and contextually sensitive methodology. Although the thesis may be described as an intellectual history of Victorian religion, in that it seeks to understand the religious or specifically anti-religious categories through which contemporaries made sense of experience, it is not conceived as a study of theology or religious historiography in an abstract sense. Rather, the thesis avoids reifying the always provisional distinctions between canonical and non-canonical texts, between elite and non-elite beliefs, and between ideas and experience. Historicist rhetoric and reflection extended beyond the multivolume works of university philosophers and cathedral deans, into popular sermons, ephemeral pamphlet literature, and the periodical press. The chapters reflect the fact that so much Victorian argument took place on a continuum, in which elites and readers were connected by shared cultural references and a high view of the potential of serious argument.

The first chapter introduces the range of intellectual actors and the primary analytical distinctions around which the argument of the thesis is structured. As historicism and revivalism spread through western culture, religious revivalists emerged who used ecclesiastical history as a means of constructing religious traditionalism. For all the differences that separated the Free Church of Scotland and the Oxford Movement, for example, polemicists belonging to both of these roughly contemporaneously-originating groupings were similar in that they looked to idealised pasts as ways of legitimating different claims to religious authority. But whilst revivalists spread awareness of ecclesiastical history through books, pamphlets, and sermons, their attempts to use it as a proxy for scholastic theological instruction were less successful. In a movement symbolised by John Henry Newman's 1845 *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, in some ways a radically reactionary document, liberal historians emerged who, whilst still laying claim to the

authority of religious tradition, sought to define that tradition as progressive. History, in the hands of a number of early- and mid-Victorian liberal Anglicans and liberal Presbyterians, became a progressive standard by which religious claims could be judged. But there was a latent, and eventually an open, tension between the forms of liberalism these historians promoted. Some, such as the liberal Anglicans Henry Hart Milman and Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, sought to modernise Christianity by defining its historical importance as lying in its ethical elevation of social and political structures. In this they gave voice to indigenous latitudinarian or Enlightenment traditions. Others, especially those influenced by German historical philosophy and its British analogues, gave a greater emphasis to the doctrinal and philosophical history of religion. Figures such as Julius Hare and John Tulloch hoped that by stressing the subjective and inward dimensions of Christianity's development in time, it would be easier to convince the newly-authoritative modern self of the religion's objective truth. As the challenge to both socio-political and doctrinal forms of religious liberalism became more pronounced, including from the secular progressives who form the third liberal grouping treated in the thesis, growing numbers of religiously anxious figures would seek support for religious claims in idealist philosophies of history and approaches to Christian doctrine.

The structure of the remaining chapters gives voice to the tendency for Victorian debate about particular cultural problems to centre on particular historical periods. Just as nineteenth-century constitutional debates often fastened on the seventeenth century, and discussion of sexual mores often took the form of discourses on classical Greece, different aspects of Victorian debate about the role of religion in society tended to be expressed in terms of engagement with discrete periods in the history of Christianity. These were felt to have left important legacies in the present day – and even to remain constituent elements of modern reality. The second chapter considers developments in how Victorian critics

approached the history of the early church. It does not focus on contemporary debates over the formation of the biblical canon, but on how Victorians understood the development of doctrine and the early spread of Christianity, in order to examine changing understandings of doctrinal orthodoxy. Over time, a field of study initially monopolised by high church and Tractarian critics came to be amenable to liberal critics concerned to define the historical growth of orthodoxy as the slow expansion of Christian rationality. These critics eventually came into conflict with another, less speculative kind of liberalism, which sought to rescue Christianity's credibility by downplaying the importance of orthodoxy in favour of ethical homiletics.

The third chapter considers the ways in which liberal Victorian treatments of medieval Catholicism formed ways of responding to contemporary Roman Catholicism and the wider Catholic revival. Early Victorian revivalists and social critics either idealised or execrated the middle ages as a lost age of faith or the incubation period of the papal Antichrist. Beginning above all with Milman's *History of Latin Christianity* (1854-1855), religious liberals instead depicted medieval Christendom as occupying a creative, but temporary role in the development of European religion and civilisation. This procedure offered a way of reaching a (one-sided) intellectual rapprochement with Catholics, whilst still defining them as constituting an anachronism. More fundamentally, it also offered a theodicy of Catholicism to moralists increasingly anxious to cast world history as a providentially-underpinned, progressive movement. The approach became ever-more compelling later in the century, as Idealist historical thought gained greater traction.

Whereas the second and third chapters attend to Victorian engagement with relatively distant epochs, the fourth turns to how British critics reflected on the more immediate origins of their own religion in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods. Evangelical Protestants across Britain, and high Anglicans in England, popularised sixteenth- and seventeenth-

century religious history in the early Victorian period as ways of confirming their denominational self-understandings, and low view of mankind's natural state. Liberal Protestants such as John Tulloch made an historical rhetoric, drawing out progressive principles from Protestant history, intrinsic to their attempts to wrest authentic Protestantism from traditionalist hands. These ideas diffused widely in debates over the authority of the bible and Reformation-era creeds. As well as tempering evangelicalism through historical argument, late-century religious liberals had to confront a fundamental challenge to the cultural authority of Christianity from growing enthusiasm for the Renaissance. Religious historians looked for ways of bringing the Reformation and the Renaissance together, in order to make an argument that earthly human fulfilment and what Matthew Arnold called 'Hebraist' religious commitment were complementary, rather than antagonistic forces.

The fifth and final chapter enters directly into the historical conflicts between believers and unbelievers which, especially in the latter decades of the century, had begun to inflect debates over early church, medieval and Reformation history. It does so by focusing on how historians of religion constructed the origins of modernity, and the relationship between history and mind. Henry Thomas Buckle, Positivists, and Leslie Stephen pointedly maintained that modern intellectual and social progress caused – and mandated – the retreat of theological religion. This later argument, which formed the kernel of twentieth-century secularisation theory, was volubly opposed during the period of its inception by historians such as Tulloch and John Hunt. Modern history, they argued, was characterised less by the retreat than by the purification and rationalisation of Christianity. The question of the historical roots of progress, and whether historians and historical actors could lay claim to transcendental intuition, focused late-Victorian attention on the nature and limits of mind. Tulloch, the Church of Scotland professor Robert Flint, and the future dean of St Paul's William Inge, drew significant connections between history and psychology in this context.

The wide diffusion of loosely idealist conceptions of historical progress, which by the 1900s often seemed a compelling answer to secularism and materialism, pointed forwards to an early twentieth-century preoccupation with psychology, more than history, as the crucible in which religious claims could be tested.

Across the spheres of argument studied in the thesis, Victorian engagement with the history of Christianity, both as a subject of criticism and as part of lived experience, wrought broader changes in nineteenth-century culture. The widespread percolation of progressive understandings of religious tradition in educated society contributed to the decline of the religious sectarianism that had been characteristic of early Victorian society. Attempts to redefine religion as a progressive historical force, and to construct forms of historical philosophy that emphasised the spiritual aspects of mental and moral existence, became increasingly important apologetic resources for thinkers concerned to resist secular conceptions of human time. Widespread confidence in the transcendent moral significance of the human past helped Victorian religion to accommodate, albeit with some strain, developments in biblical criticism, philosophy, science and sociology, as well as the legacies of religious division. When that confidence began to ebb away in the twentieth century, so too did the remarkable intellectual synthesis it had often sustained.

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List of abbreviations

BEM – Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine
BQR – British Quarterly Review
CHR – Christian Remembrancer
CM - The Churchman. A monthly magazine conducted by clergymen and laymen of the Church of England
CR – Contemporary Review
DR – Dublin Review
DUM – Dublin University Magazine
ECR – Eclectic Review
ENR – English Review
ER – Edinburgh Review
FM – Fraser's Magazine
FR – Fortnightly Review
GW – Good Words
HCE – H. T. Buckle, *History of civilization in England* (2 vols, London, 1857-1861)
HEM – W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (2 vols, London, 1869)
HLC – H. H. Milman, *History of Latin Christianity: including that of the popes to the pontificate of Nicolas V* (6 vols, London, 1854-1855)
HRE – W. E. H. Lecky, *History of the rise and influence of the spirit of rationalism in Europe* (2 vols, London, 1865)
JSL – Journal of Sacred Literature
LEC – A. P. Stanley, *Lectures on the history of the Eastern Church: with an introduction on the study of ecclesiastical history*, 2nd edn (London, 1862) [first edition 1861]
LQR – London Quarterly Review
MM – Macmillan's Magazine
MR – Modern Review
NBR – North British Review
NC – Nineteenth Century
NQR – New Quarterly Review
NR – National Review
ODNB - H. C. G. Matthew, B. Harrison and L. Goldman (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004-) [online edition, last accessed 4 May, 2015]
OED – Oxford English Dictionary [online edition, last accessed 4 May, 2015]
PR – Prospective Review
QR – Quarterly Review
SR – Saturday Review
TR - Theological Review: a journal of religious thought and life
WMM – Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine
WR – Westminster Review

For information concerning periodicals' editorial sympathies, and for the identification of anonymous contributors, I have relied on the online edition of W. E. Houghton (ed.), *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900* (5 vols, Toronto and London, 1966-1989) [http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3520/home.do; last accessed 4 May, 2015]. I have entered the names of periodical contributors thus identified in square brackets.

Chapter one. Religion and history in nineteenth-century Britain

I. First principles

Wouldst thou a temple? Look above;
The heavens stretch over all in love: -
A Book? For thine evangel scan
The wondrous history of man.[1]

These lines, professedly adapted from Thomas Carlyle, appeared in a collection of hymns edited by the Unitarian minister and professor of mental and moral philosophy at Manchester College, London, James Martineau, and published in 1874.[2] The assumptions about history which not only recommended them to Martineau, but made them seem sacred, make vivid the conceptual distance which separates the twenty-first century from the world of two or three lifetimes ago. The mental categories through which Victorians experienced the world have subsequently been replaced, as Colin Matthew once observed, by a deep secularity which has made it difficult for historians thus socialised to follow the unifying rhythms of nineteenth-century thought without travesty.[3] The associations drawn in the verse between history and divinised nature, and between history and religion, were no isolated eccentricity. They instead drew their force from a long-running and, today, very foreign complex of discussion in which historical thought had become an essential medium for reflecting on the cultural authority of religion. This study seeks to understand why that debate assumed the form that it did, and why contemporaries – clerical, lay, and secular-minded – invested it with such importance.

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[1] J. Martineau, *Hymns of praise and prayer* (London, 1874), nr. 626.
[2] R. Waller, 'Martineau, James (1805-1900)', *ODNB*. At greater length, see idem, 'James Martineau: the development of his religious thought', in B. Smith (ed.), *Truth, liberty, religion: essays celebrating two hundred years of Manchester College* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 227–264.
[3] H.C.G. Matthew, 'Introduction: the United Kingdom and the Victorian century, 1815-1901', in idem (ed.), *The nineteenth century. The British Isles: 1815-1901* (Oxford, 2000), p. 36.

Specifically, this thesis examines why Victorian thinkers were so preoccupied with the relationship between religion and 'development' or 'progress' in history. Historians have at all times dealt in 'change'; but the Victorian critics who gave peculiar significance to 'progress' and 'development' meant something more than this. When it was stated 'that a true development retains the *essential idea* of the subject from which it has proceeded', or that 'there must be PROGRESS', straightforward 'change' – by itself, an atomised sequence of events - was subsumed into a larger and more meaningful whole, which pointed beyond itself to a world of ultimate realities.[4] Faith in 'progress' was something bolder than acceptance of 'development'; but both presumed that past experience amounted to more than a datum for disinterested analysis or a register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind. For Victorians, the past was embedded in the present. Thinking about how the past might yield an evaluative ideal for the benefit of posterity was one way of choosing an ideal future and, it was hoped, of steering the present towards it.

This thesis is concerned with those who accepted or equally rejected the possibility that the wider framework within which the past became worthwhile, both in itself and as a subject for study, was a religious one. 'The human heart refuses to believe in a universe without a purpose', the future archbishop of Canterbury Frederick Temple declared in a piece arguing that the history of religion should be seen as 'the education of the world'. It was a claim he made in the radical collection *Essays and Reviews*, itself largely dedicated to the implications of historical criticism for conventional religion.[5] Like any text which elicits a significant contemporary response, Temple's argument was provocative precisely because it played on assumptions that were, by that point, recognisable and familiar, if not necessarily welcome.

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[4] J.H. Newman, *An essay on the development of Christian doctrine* (London, 1845), p. 204; F.W. Farrar, *History of interpretation. Eight lectures preached before the University of Oxford in the year MDCCCLXXXV* (London, 1886), xvii-xviii.

[5] F. Temple, 'The education of the world', in V. Shea and W. Whitla (eds), *Essays and reviews. The 1860 text and its reading* (Charlottesville and London, 2000), pp. [137]-164; first edition 1860.

This study seeks to understand why so many Victorian moralists thought that development and progress in history had a religious dimension which it was important to take seriously. It further aims to understand the implications of that argument for how Victorian commentators thought about the ends of religion; the place of religious commitment in individual, social and intellectual life; and the purpose of historical thinking. The challenge of history in these respects has so far mainly been thought of in terms of the growth of historical criticism of the bible.[6] This was a fundamental field of controversy which has been the subject of imaginative recent studies. My concern is to explore some of the other ways in which history was thought to be religiously meaningful, which were themselves often forms of commentary on the meaning of the bible. The focus here falls on how nineteenth-century critics argued about progress and development in the history of post-apostolic Christianity: both in their own right, and in terms of their implications for world-history.

The subjects of this account are Protestants, whether believing or secularised. They are both English and Scottish, and include a small number of Irish Protestants.[7] They are located on a broad spectrum encompassing high churchmen (including John Henry Newman), evangelical Protestants, liberal Anglicans,[8] nonconformists, conservative and liberal Presbyterians, Positivists, agnostics and Idealists. The thesis accordingly postulates a British Protestant culture sufficiently unitary to be meaningfully treated as a whole, and possessing its own sequences of intellectual development. There are two main reasons why this may be

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[6] D. Gange and M. Ledger-Lomas (eds), *Cities of God: the Bible and archaeology in nineteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013); M. Bauspiess, C. Landmesser, D. Lincicum (eds), *Ferdinand Christian Baur und die Geschichte des frühen Christentums* (Tübingen, 2014); M. Wheeler, *St John and the Victorians* (Cambridge, 2012); H. Harris, *The Tübingen School. An historical and theological investigation of the school of F.C. Baur*, new edn (Leicester, 1990); G. Parsons, 'Biblical criticism in Victorian Britain: from controversy to acceptance?', in idem (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain. Volume II. Controversies* (Manchester and New York, 1988), pp. [238]-257; P. Hinchliff, *God and history. Aspects of British theology 1875-1914* (Oxford, 1992); J.W. Rogerson, *Old Testament criticism in the nineteenth century: England and Germany* (London, 1984). T. Larsen, *A people of one book: the Bible and the Victorians* (Oxford, 2011) helpfully elucidates how the Bible was an indispensable item of Victorian mental furniture, but does not enter into the question of historical criticism.

[7] I have been unable to identify any relevant Welsh figures.

[8] I take this term, the problematic meaning of which I discuss below, to be synonymous with 'broad church' Anglican.

controversial. First, it is problematic to label as Protestant two of the groups in relation to which the term is here deployed. A sizeable proportion of high Anglicans rejected the appellation, taking it to imply separation from the Catholic Church;[9] and freethinkers had avowedly left anything like dogmatic Protestantism behind. Second, there are ways in which Protestantism divided rather than united its nineteenth-century British adherents. Political historians, so often confronted by constitutional disputes between church and dissent, are often led to stress manifestations of division over forms of unity in Victorian religious culture.[10] From another point of view, the contrasts between the ecclesiastical polities of England and Scotland have featured prominently in challenges to Linda Colley's argument that shared Protestantism was essential to the development of British national identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[11]

Yet it would be wrong consequently to reject the possibility that what may broadly be described as a Protestant intellectual culture existed in the British Isles during the Victorian age. The idea provides a way of discussing the under-studied overlaps and similarities between British denominations which are as undeniable as the great differences that separated them. The British churches shared lines of descent from the verbal, personal and biblical genus of religion fostered by the Reformation. This environment left an impression even on those who broke from it, whether in the direction of Tractarianism or of unbelief. Evangelicals and progressives in one denomination or country often read, resembled and engaged with their counterparts in others. These affinities were not obliterated by divisions

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[9] I distinguish between 'Catholic', as among Protestants conventionally referring to the body of religious doctrine, structure and practice that had matured during the middle ages, and 'catholic', which was understood in a more positive sense as referring to original, universal Christianity. High Anglicans often identified with the former variant, and always with the latter.
[10] See note 52 below.
[11] L. Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, 1992). 'In many ways Protestant religion was the grit in the Union, not its glue': C. Kidd, *Union and unionisms. Political thought in Scotland, 1500-2000* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 211.

over establishment, crucial though these were.[12] High church Anglicans shared educational and ecclesiastical institutions, and a history, with broad churchmen and Anglican evangelicals; and they continued to protest against Roman Catholicism. Different kinds of Victorian freethinker often retained culturally Protestant and anti-Catholic sensibilities. None of these groups was entirely self-contained. The spread of public lectures, periodicals, affordable books and a strikingly widespread appetite for serious argument in the period made it difficult for religious or irreligious moralists to remain unexposed or unrelievedly hostile to those who thought differently from themselves. For all the ecclesiological, intellectual and political disagreements that generated such controversy both within and between British Protestant denominations, and between believers and unbelievers, this study presumes and demonstrates that affinities and shared points of reference – the preconditions of dialogue – also existed. These convergences have been conspicuously neglected in modern scholarship. The thesis accordingly recovers patterns of historical argument that ran across, and often discernibly assuaged, denominational and national divisions in an intellectual culture that was at once saturated by Protestant assumptions and increasingly aware of their problematic status.

The creation of forms of religious commitment and identity intended to be shared and universal, rather than sectarian and local, was a major aim of the religious 'liberalism' that constitutes the main subject of this study. The thesis both expands and complicates the senses in which Victorian liberalism is understood. In its broadest sense, liberalism was simply progressivism, or the body of theory and practice attendant upon the belief that doctrines and institutions inherited from the past should be brought into accordance with 'modern' imperatives. British liberals typically hoped that reform would lessen class, national and

[12] J. Wolffe, 'Anglicanism, Presbyterianism and the religious identities of the United Kingdom', in S. Gilley and B. Stanley (eds), *The Cambridge History of Christianity. World Christianities c. 1815 – c. 1914* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 312-313.

religious tensions. They aimed to create a better future from the conditions presented to them by the past. This was an enterprise very often articulated in religious terms. Whereas previous accounts of the religious dimension of Victorian liberalism have focused on legislative activity, and conflicts between church and dissent, this thesis treats liberal engagement with religion as an intellectual and an imaginative phenomenon. It offers a deep history of patterns of liberal thought and argument concerning the role of religion in freedom, sociability, and modern intellectual order. Secular liberals, who aimed to present dogmatic religion as irrelevant or detrimental to social progress, are here juxtaposed to the more numerous religious liberals for whom the advance of intellect and civilisation was inseparable from the purification and defence of Christianity. The history of religion, being a means of advocating change as well as of recording and interpreting it, became integral to the nineteenth-century British liberal imagination. At the same time, the distinction between liberal and conservative intentions was notably blurred. This complexity is well expressed by John Henry Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, published in 1845. Newman advanced what was in some ways a progressive and subjectivist argument in defence of the infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church. Although the work of a quintessential Romantic reactionary, Newman's *Essay* echoed the characteristic positions of his more liberal contemporaries. The ways in which his text witnessed to a changing intellectual environment make the year of its publication an appropriate starting date for this thesis.

Within these analytical frameworks, the thesis tells the twofold story of how engagement with history liberalised Victorian Protestant self-understanding, and became a new and controversial space for discussing the reality and workings of the divine. As eighteenth-century natural theology lost its intellectual appeal, both as a result of scientific developments and a change of cultural mood towards organicism and subjectivism, the history of religion

became an important new resource for religious apologists.[13] This phase of argument, which eventually prepared the ground for and to some extent gave way to twentieth-century apologetic interest in the psychology of religion, consisted of several interconnected strands.[14] As it came to be more distinctly apprehended that the doctrinal and denominational controversies which had so visibly flared in the early nineteenth century had their origins in specific periods of history, the opportunity intellectually to mollify and, where possible, resolve those conflicts presented itself. Out of the Protestant and high church castigations of 'medieval' Catholicism, or paeans to 'primitive' Christianity and 'Reformation' Protestantism, liberal historians emerged who sought to locate these phenomena in the progressive development of religion towards 'modern' religious ideals. Especially after 1845, the year in which Newman published his *Essay on Development*, history became as crucial to the reshaping of Victorian Protestantism as it had already become to its articulation. Ideas of tradition were refashioned to create space for biblical criticism, Catholicism, and the religious authority of the believing subject.[15]

This historical redefinition of conventional religion, although it had its roots in new and often German-derived forms of historical philosophy, was encouraged by the rising challenges of agnosticism, scientific naturalism, and Positivism. At this point, arguments about the proper shape of Protestantism often opened into broader contentions about the place of religion in social and intellectual progress, and whether that process could be said to have a theistic underpinning. To a striking and largely unremarked extent, history was an important discursive medium through which debates about the sources of progressive knowledge were

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[13] On the problems encountered by natural theology during the nineteenth century, see P. Corsi, *Science and religion. Baden Powell and the Anglican debate, 1800-1860* (Cambridge, 1988); J.H. Brooke, *Science and religion: some historical perspectives* (Cambridge, 1991), esp. pp. 192-225. It was possessed of considerable dynamism, however: P.J. Bowler, *Reconciling science and religion. The debate in early-twentieth-century Britain* (Chicago and London, 2001).

[14] On twentieth-century British psychology, see M. Thomson, *Psychological subjects: identity, culture, and health in twentieth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2006). Thomson gives limited attention to the psychology of religion, however.

[15] Newman, *Essay*.

conducted. Secularising narratives of European progress – the origins of later 'secularisation theory' – competed against theistic theories of history for cultural authority. History became a crucible in which secularisation was alike attempted, and resisted. Two results of inquiry into these matters are worth foregrounding. The first is the importance of a diffuse, historically-applied idealism[16] for both liberals and conservatives concerned to reposition the basis of religious authority in an age of liberalism. As religious apologists sought new ways of making different versions of religious tradition appeal to the inward witness of the subjective mind, many tried to recast tradition as at least in part the gathered result of mental struggle and subjective experience, often with the aid of German historical philosophy. Anglo-German intellectual contact is therefore an important theme in what follows. The second result to which this investigation points is the centrality of historical interpretation to Victorian debate over whether 'the secularization of the European mind' ought to take place.[17]

The protagonists in this study have so far been described as 'thinkers', 'commentators', 'historians', 'apologists', 'critics', 'moralists'. Men (for the subjects of this study were mainly men) such as Henry Hart Milman and John Tulloch were in holy orders, and had much to say about theology, but to describe them and their interlocutors simply as clerics or theologians would be to miss something of fundamental importance to this thesis. These terms will not be fastidiously spurned; yet they are inadequate, for two reasons. First, interest in the historical effects of religion and its place in modern society was by no means restricted to those whose work lay in the ministry or the study of theology. Henry Thomas Buckle, William Lecky and Leslie Stephen, to name only a few of the more prominent figures, were

[16] I alternate between an upper and a lower case 'i' in idealism, in order to make a category distinction. In reference to German or British Idealism as specific movements, I shall use a capital letter; in reference to the broader diffusion of the assumption that reality was primarily to be approached through the active faculties of the mind, and their historical fruits, I shall not.

[17] The allusion is to Owen Chadwick, *The secularization of the European mind in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 1975). Chadwick himself is naturally alert to the significance of history in this context: pp. 189-228.

deeply concerned with the relationship between religion and progress, though they were by no means personally devout. 'Contrast is a kind of relation',[18] and different thinkers who are not often treated together are here brought into dialogue with one another, in order to locate the dynamics and effects of historical argument about religion in Victorian culture conceived as a common discursive field.

The sheer pervasiveness of historical argument about religion in Victorian intellectual culture relates to the second reason why this study is not an internalist review of the practice of theology or clerical opinions in the nineteenth century. The connotations of narrowness, irrelevance and even contemptibility which some Victorians polemically attached to the words 'clergy' and 'theology' have spread much more widely since that time. This latter development is apt to mislead when projected backwards onto a very different Victorian intellectual world. Those who sought publicly to interpret the religious past to the present, to judge only from the capacity of a Stanley or a Newman to attract column inches in periodicals or to invite the interest of commercial publishers, both assumed that they were addressing an issue essential to common and individual experience and were seen to be doing so by others. They contributed to a conversation in which certain assumptions about the power and importance of rigorous argument and common values, not least in relation to religious questions, united otherwise very different thinkers, from parsons to Positivists, and from Oxford dons to Free Church professors.

This thesis listens to the voices of an inclusively-conceived configuration of historically-minded 'public moralists', for whom religion was a more prominent theme than Stefan Collini's original account of that subject conveys.[19] Although this work is broadly conceived as a contribution to modern British intellectual history, this denotation is intended to

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[18] [A. Hare and J.C. Hare], *Guesses at truth by two brothers*, new edn (London and New York, 1871), p. 156; first edition 1827.

[19] S. Collini, *Public moralists. Political thought and intellectual life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford, 1991).

encompass the religious categories through which contemporaries sought to make sense of their wider experience of the world and how it was changing. If it is true that 'the life of nations no less than that of men is lived largely in the imagination', as at least two notably imaginative historians of modern Britain have had reason to suppose, it becomes important not to rigidify the necessary but always provisional distinctions between intellectual, ecclesiastical, political, cultural and social history.[20] It is hoped that what follows, framed in the light of the foregoing remarks, will amount to an original contribution to how historians understand cultural argument in that period of redefinition between the evangelical revival and 'the passing of Protestant England', if not quite 'the death of Christian Britain'.[21]

In the remainder of this chapter, it is necessary to explain how the thesis enhances existing understanding of revivalist, historical and liberal thought in the Victorian period; to introduce the individuals with whom the analysis is chiefly concerned; to indicate the broad reach of religio-historical argument in contemporary culture; and to justify the chosen thesis structure. Nineteenth-century religious revival was articulated in historical terms, and relied on certain paradigms for interpreting past human experience. Historical reassessment therefore became a significant part of the labour which Victorian religious reformists took upon themselves. The chapter identifies the leading individual figures in this context, and situates them both in relation to one another, and to the successive waves of German historical philosophy which helped to form the minds of so many of them. Idealism became an especially important resource for Victorian critics who wished to interpret historical change within a framework of overall, purposeful unity that connected individual subjective experience to the historical movement of the race. Interest in these forms of argument was not limited to a small number

[20] Quoted at ibid., epigraph; S.J.D. Green, *The passing of Protestant England: secularisation and social change, c. 1920-1960* (Cambridge, 2011), p. [303] and n.; the saying is J. Enoch Powell's.
[21] For alternative characterisations of religious history in modern Britain: C.G. Brown, *The death of Christian Britain. Understanding secularisation 1800-2001* (London, 2001); J. Garnett et al. (eds), *Redefining Christian Britain: post-1945 perspectives* (London, 2007); Green, *Passing of Protestant England*.

of sequestered dons and clerics, but spread across the Victorian public sphere through print media, public lectures and institutions of higher education. Crucially, Victorian debates over particular religious questions tended to be expressed in terms of engagement with discrete periods of the history of Christianity. This reflected a general characteristic of the permeation of nineteenth-century discourse by history. Just as constitutional debates inflamed seventeenth-century studies, and homosexuality drew Victorian critics more furtively towards classical Greece, different kinds of religious anxiety gathered around distinctive epochs. The authority of Christian orthodoxy – which an historian writing in the twenty-first century must treat more as a debated concept than a reified object - led discussants back to the history of the early church. Catholic claims summoned the spectre of 'medievalism' before the eyes of Protestant and liberal critics. Discussion of Protestantism directed attention to the origin and legacies of the Reformation. The problem of whether intellectual modernity preserved a place for theology was a question that many Victorians were inclined to answer by looking for its historical origins, in the scientific and philosophical revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The structure of the thesis reflects this pattern of Victorian argument.

II. Revivalism, historicism, liberalism

Revivalism, historicism, and liberalism are necessarily central to any account of the nineteenth-century mind; yet their close interconnections are not as well understood as they might be. This thesis places these phenomena in relation to one another. Revivalist history and progressive historicism offered alternative ways of conceptualising the place of religion in the modern world. The evangelical and high church revivals, so constitutive of Victorian intellectual debate, came significantly to rely on particular constructions of religious

traditionalism, which were articulated historically. However, there were those who criticised traditionalism, while still wishing to legitimise their own, deliberately modernised positions by locating them within progressively-conceived tradition. These figures were also led to see history – in the era of history's extraordinary argumentative power - as a medium for redefining how religion was understood. Historical thought therefore often became a kind of religious thought. Victorian 'historicism' was a capacious and richly ambiguous phenomenon, drawing on a range of indigenous, French and German sources, and had significant theological contexts. Different visions of the religious past informed alternative readings of the place of religion in the modern present. Progressives who sought to modernise religion tried to claim the authority of history, without becoming hidebound by the past. Thus the intellectual components of Victorian liberalism encompassed interpretations of religious history, as well as of political tradition, which likewise offered ways of anchoring present and future in a legitimating past. The interconnected possibilities that religious revival may be historicised as an intellectual phenomenon; that British historical thought often had a fundamentally religious or metaphysical dimension; and that conflicting historical doctrines about the role and foundation of religion in modern society form an important part of the history of Victorian liberalism have not yet received the scholarly attention they merit, though they have each individually received important recognition from a goodly number of recent historians.

The nineteenth century, it is now generally accepted, experienced a remarkable revival of religion in the west and its growth and consolidation across the globe.[22] There were also

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[22] H. McLeod, *Religion and the people of Western Europe 1789-1989*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1997); the 1981 first edition was seminal; C.A. Bayly, *The birth of the modern world 1780-1914. Global connections and comparisons* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 325-365; C.M. Clark and W. Kaiser (eds), *Culture wars: secular-Catholic conflict in nineteenth-century Europe* (Cambridge, 2003); M.B. Gross, *The war against Catholicism: liberalism and the anti-Catholic imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* (Ann Arbor, 2004); R. Harris, *Lourdes: body and spirit in the secular age* (London, 1999); D. Blackbourn, *Marpingen: apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany* (Oxford, 1993); B. Hilton, *The age of atonement: the influence of evangelicalism on social and economic thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford, 1988); H. McLeod (ed.), *European religion in the age of*

significant erosions of religious belief and the cultural authority of Christianity across Europe; but overall, secularisation was 'the fly in the wheel, not the wheel itself' in the nineteenth century.[23] The ambiguous transitions denoted by the words 'modernisation' and 'modernity', it is now seen, have been inescapable contexts for religious organisation and religious growth; but they did not structurally predetermine religious decline – which, where it has occurred, has stemmed much more from cultural change. Though both enlightened liberalism and religious conservatism have offered competing visions of the modern, they are both themselves equally modern.[24] Whilst the eclipse of the 'secularisation thesis' has fruitfully informed recent work on the social, political and cultural history of the nineteenth century, intellectual historians have generally been more reluctant to consider how to adapt their own activities to relevant developments in other fields. A recent *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Thought*, edited by Gregory Claeys, summarises the intellectual story of nineteenth-century Christianity as 'Religion, Secularization, and the Crisis of Faith', and generally excludes religious thinkers from having participated in 'nineteenth-century thought'.[25] But religion was there. Debates about the intellectual and cultural authority of

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great cities 1830-1930 (London and New York, 1995); on nineteenth-century church reform in England, see A. Burns, *The diocesan revival in the Church of England c. 1800-1870* (Oxford, 1999).

[23] Important discussions of these themes include E. Royle, *Victorian infidels: the origins of the British secularist movement, 1791-1866* (London, 1974); L. Schwartz, *Infidel feminism: secularism, religion and women's emancipation, England 1830-1914* (Manchester, 2013); T. Dixon, *The invention of altruism: making moral meanings in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2008); T.R. Wright, *The religion of humanity: the impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 1986); H. McLeod, *Secularisation in western Europe, 1848-1914* (Basingstoke and London, 2000). There was a crisis of doubt, as well as a crisis of faith: T. Larsen, *Crisis of doubt. Honest faith in nineteenth-century England* (Oxford, 2006), pp. [1]-17. I quote from Bayly, *Birth of the modern world*, p. 330.

[24] For a compelling programmatic elaboration of this position, see S. Hellemans, 'How modern is religion in modernity?', in J. Frishman, W. Otten, and G. Rouwhorst (eds), *Religious identity and the problem of historical foundation. The foundational character of authoritative sources in the history of Christianity and Judaism* (Leiden and Boston, 2004), pp. 76-94. Two helpful recent historiographical essays on the *status quaestionis* in modern religious history and the 'secularisation thesis' are J.C.D. Clark, 'Secularization and Modernization: the failure of a 'Grand Narrative'', *Historical Journal*, 55:1 (March, 2012), pp. 161-194; J. Morris, 'Secularization and religious experience: arguments in the historiography of modern British religion', *Historical Journal*, 55:1 (March, 2012), pp. 195-219.

[25] G. Claeys (ed.), *Encyclopedia of nineteenth-century thought* (London, 2005), critiqued by Larsen, *Crisis of doubt*, pp. 2-3. Maurice Cowling laid down different waymarks, as yet less followed: *Religion and public doctrine in modern England* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1980-2001). S.J.D. Green has likened the reception of this work to that accorded to Hume's *Treatise*: 'As if religion mattered: an alternative reading of English intellectual history since c. 1840', in R. Cowcroft, S.J.D. Green and R. Whiting (eds), *The philosophy, politics and religion*

religion in the nineteenth century did not have a predetermined outcome, and absorbed a great deal of contemporary energy. Religious change was discursively articulated and fought over. Twentieth-century narratives of nineteenth-century secularisation, or the view still sometimes voiced that religion cannot be a historically significant force, often amount to uncritical reifications of certain sides of a complex Victorian argument about the implications of history for religion. To avoid anachronism, the ways in which religion was an intellectual presence for Victorian thinkers must be seriously considered. Even for those who saw religion as an objectionable intrusion, its intellectual and cultural pretensions had to be countered rather than ignored.

That most modern of phenomena – religious revivalism, often in the form of anti-modern religious reaction – was powerfully manifested in Britain, as in other countries. Voluntary religion, in the forms of 'old' and 'new' dissent, grew strongly in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the established churches struggled to keep pace with urbanisation, old social hierarchies buckled, and the bewildering events of the French Revolution inflamed millennial or anti-Jacobin feeling.[26] Reviving Catholicism across Europe, often though not always rooted in a fundamental rejection of the values espoused by the French Revolution and general yearning for an imagined lost world of spiritual and social stability, won high-society Romantic converts and, to unreceptive Britons, appeared to risk submerging Europe in priestcraft once again.[27] As well as external hostility, the British established churches also faced internal dissension. The Church of England was thrown into

of British democracy. Maurice Cowling and conservatism (London, 2010), pp. 189-222, here p. 190. It is perhaps too early to judge whether the comparison is fully appropriate.

[26] D.W. Bebbington, 'The growth of voluntary religion', in Gilley and Stanley, *World Christianities*, pp. 53-69.

[27] On the nineteenth-century Catholic revival, see Clark and Kaiser, *Culture wars*; M. Heimann, 'Catholic revivalism in worship and devotion', in Gilley and Stanley, *World Christianities*, pp. 70-83; Blackbourn, *Marpingen*; Harris, *Lourdes*; J. Wolffe, *The Protestant crusade in Great Britain 1829-1860* (Oxford, 1991); D.G. Paz, *Popular anti-Catholicism in mid-Victorian England* (Stanford, 1992). On British converts to Catholicism, see P. Adams, *English Catholic converts in mid 19th century Britain* (Bethesda, 2010); D. Newsome, *The parting of friends. The Wilberforces and Henry Manning* (Grand Rapids and Leominster, 1993). Hugh Trevor-Roper's study of Catholic conversions in nineteenth-century Britain, which exists in manuscript, is regrettably unpublishable.

turmoil by medievalising 'Tractarians' after 1833.[28] One third of the ministers of the Church of Scotland left for the Free Church at the Disruption in 1843.[29]

These events had intellectual implications, which were worked out in a deeply historicist context. As historicism spread across western culture, the religious, social and political implications of evangelical movements came to be debated and articulated in historical idioms. The two moods – the evangelical stress on conversion and moral struggle, and the growing cultural preoccupation with the power and persistence of the past - were potent when combined. The revolutionary era left nineteenth-century actors 'stranded in the present' by tearing away unreflectively prescriptive socio-political order.[30] With new and restless self-consciousness, critics defined and hoped to stabilise the present by relating it to pasts that were at once tangibly close and irrecoverably distant. In the new environment, religious positions came to be articulated in historical languages. Religious polemics were often also historical polemics. This revivalism deployed a certain kind of historicism, which tended to idealise particular periods as being especially rich in divine favour. Such an historical mentality both derived from and helped to corroborate a dualistic view of the relationship between mankind and divinity, stressing the fallen nature of the one and the absolute transcendence of the other, which liberal thought was to challenge. In its purely religious aspect, Tractarianism promoted itself as restoring the purity of the first Christian centuries to

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[28] The best synoptic study of Tractarianism remains P. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in context. Anglican high churchmanship 1760-1857* (Cambridge, 1994); see more recently S.J. Brown and P. Nockles (eds), *The Oxford Movement. Europe and the wider world 1830-1930* (Cambridge, 2012). On the later impact of Anglo-Catholicism in English intellectual culture and ecclesiastical politics, see G. Rowell, *The vision glorious: themes and personalities of the Catholic revival in Anglicanism* (Oxford, 1983); J. Bentley, *Ritualism and politics in Victorian Britain: the attempt to legislate for belief* (Oxford, 1978); M. Wellings, *Evangelicals embattled. Responses of evangelicals in the Church of England to ritualism, Darwinism, and theological liberalism 1890-1930* (Carlisle, 2003).

[29] The contexts, course, and afterlives of the Disruption are studied most exhaustively in A. Drummond and J. Bulloch, *The Scottish church 1688-1843: the age of the moderates* (Edinburgh, 1973); idem, *The church in Victorian Scotland, 1843-1874* (Edinburgh, 1975); idem, *The church in late Victorian Scotland, 1874-1900* (Edinburgh, 1978).

[30] P. Fritzsche, *Stranded in the present. Modern time and the melancholy of history* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

which the Church of England was rightfully the heir.[31] In their radical assault on Utilitarianism and commercialist society, Tractarians – in common with the very different cultural dissident, Thomas Carlyle – looked to the middle ages as a model of social integration and conscientious rule.[32] It was a society which the Catholic convert Augustus Pugin quite literally strove to rebuild.[33] Evangelicals' eulogies for Luther and Reformation-era biblical translation were their answers to Tractarian enthusiasm for Athanasius and monasticism.[34]

Revivalist uses of the religious past have caught the attention of historians more than others, but they by no means monopolised it. Religion, being such a pervasive force in the nineteenth century, confronted conservatives, liberals, radicals and secularists alike, and so too did the history of religion. There is an intellectual history to be drawn out here. The ways in which particular deployments of the religious past in the Victorian period relied on distinctive intellectual paradigms remain far from clear, and merit explanation. Although many studies have been written treating how historical thought and writing changed over the course of the nineteenth century, there have been relatively few attempts to explore how thought and writing about the history of religion changed in the same period. The question of which models were available for thinking about the subject, and why they became attractive or ceased to seem compelling, should be posed directly.[35] This thesis does so.

Religious history, it is maintained here, had a history not less important than and in some ways analogous to the Whig, scientific, and professionalising historiography more commonly associated with the Victorian period. The broad outlines of the conventional picture of

[31] See chapter two below.
[32] S.A. Skinner, *Tractarians and the 'Condition of England': the social and political thought of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 203-213; T. Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London, 1843).
[33] R. Hill, *God's architect: Pugin and the building of Romantic Britain* (London, 2007).
[34] P. Nockles and V. Westbrook (eds), *The Reformation revised? The contested reception of the English Reformation in nineteenth-century Protestantism*, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 90:1 (Spring, 2014).
[35] John Pocock has approached Gibbon in this way, with rich results: *Barbarism and religion* (5 vols, Cambridge, 1999-).

Victorian historiography are familiar. Romantic and literary ‘men of letters’ such as Thomas Carlyle, James Anthony Froude and Charles Kingsley, it is held, gave way to salaried and source-critical ‘scientific’ historians in the reformed universities after 1870, guided by William Stubbs and, at one or more removes, by Leopold von Ranke.[36] This standard narrative, which is true as far as it goes, has been richly complicated in recent years. John Burrow, Michael Bentley and other recent historians of historiography have taken important steps away from older approaches to the subject which construed it as a kind of lesson in mental hygiene. Whig and literary histories, we now know, were not exactly replaced by a swing towards history as it actually was, but by new forms of doctrine and theory with rhetorical pretensions to scientific objectivity which should not be taken at face value, even while they must be respected as historically autonomous.[37] These seminal insights have not entirely dispersed older approaches to the subject. The editors of the volume of the *Oxford History of Historical Writing* covering the period from 1800 to 1945, for example, implicitly reprimand a ‘transitional’ Ranke for drawing on ‘pre-disciplinary intellectual influences’, and while the entries in the volume are often individually excellent, the editors have chosen to privilege professional and institutional contexts for historical thought over what appear to moderns to be the less sanitised and straightforwardly comprehensible forms of historical engagement.[38] There is, then, still work to do in situating the categories of Whig, professional, and scientific history in thicker intellectual and cultural contexts.

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[36] D.S. Goldstein, ‘The professionalization of history in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’, *Storia della storiografia*, 3 (1983), pp. 3-25; R. Jann, *The art and the science of Victorian history* (Columbus, 1985); I. Hesketh, *The science of history in Victorian Britain: making the past speak* (London, 2011).

[37] M. Bentley, *Modernizing England’s past: English historiography in the age of modernism, 1870-1970* (Cambridge, 2005); J.W. Burrow, *A liberal descent. Victorian historians and the English past* (Cambridge, 1981); idem, *A history of histories. Epics, chronicles, romances and inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the twentieth century* (London, 2007); P.R.H. Slee, *Learning and a liberal education: the study of modern history in the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester, 1800-1914* (Manchester, 1986).

[38] S. Macintyre, J. Maiguashca and A. Pók, ‘Editors’ introduction’, to idem (eds), *The Oxford history of historical writing. Volume 4. 1800-1945* (Oxford, 2011), p. 2.

Even by this relative standard, nineteenth-century religious historiography – with some notable exceptions - has not benefited from fruitful reconsideration to anything like the same extent.[39] It is a field that has implicitly been severed from how later historians, perhaps more for uncritically dispositional than reflexively rational reasons, have thought about what mattered to nineteenth-century historical thinkers. The few existing accounts of the writing of religious history in the nineteenth century generally hail from a period in which clear-cut narratives of professionalisation, or a putative growth of objectivity, sufficed to provide organising analytical principles.[40] This is problematic. Twentieth-century historians, located within what they liked to think of as modern, disinterested and professionally organised disciplines, were inclined to locate the origins of those things in the nineteenth century. In many ways they were right to do so. But it would be stultifying to make nineteenth-century historiography significant only insofar as it advanced the modern over the supposedly unmodern facets of historical enquiry. The past is often strange; and so too are the ways in which past societies have regarded their own histories.

Relatively little will be heard of professionalisation within history or theology in the pages that follow, therefore – although arguments about the claims of different lines of analysis to access knowledge, at a period when the lines between them were often unclear, are central to

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[39] Among the exceptions are: J. Garnett, 'Protestant histories: James Anthony Froude, partisanship and national identity', in P. Ghosh and L. Goldman (eds), *Politics and culture in Victorian Britain. Essays in memory of Colin Matthew* (Oxford, 2006), pp. [171]-191; M.J. Lloyd, 'The historical thought of S. T. Coleridge: the later prose works', (Oxford Univ. Dphil thesis, 1998); M. Spence, 'Time and eternity in British evangelicalism, c. 1820 – c. 1860', (Oxford Univ. Dphil thesis, 2008); J.E. Kirby, 'Historians and the Church of England: religion and historical scholarship, c. 1870-1920' (Oxford Univ. Dphil thesis, 2014); J.M.R. Bennett, 'The British Luther Commemoration of 1883-1884 in European context', *Historical Journal*, 58:2 (June, 2015), pp. 543-564; E. Cameron, *Interpreting Christian history. The challenge of the churches' past* (Malden and Oxford, 2005) gives more attention to early modern than to modern historians of Christianity. On religion in histories of the English Civil War, see T. Lang, *The Victorians and the Stuart heritage: interpretations of a discordant past* (Cambridge, 1995); J.M.R. Bennett, *The Victorian high church and the era of the Great Rebellion* (Oxford, 2011); M. Nixon, *Samuel Rawson Gardiner and the idea of history* (London, 2011).

[40] H.W. Bowden, *Church history in the age of science: historiographical patterns in the United States, 1876-1918* (Carbondale, 1991); A.G. Dickens and J. Tonkin, *The Reformation in historical thought* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 150-197. There have been promising developments very recently, however: Nockles and Westbrook, *Reformation revised?*.

this account.[41] Apologetic imperatives – whether on behalf of religion, or of secularity – did not dissipate as approaches to the history of religion became 'professionalised'. Specialised academics, in a way not radically dissimilar from the men of letters who preceded them, often feared the onset of cultural sectarianism and resisted it as far as they could. These general characteristics of Victorian religious debate both significantly preceded and long survived the beginnings of the modern research university. Ideals of professionalisation should not automatically provide the master-narrative in a study of how Victorians thought about the past in general or religious history in particular.

In showing that engagements with the religious past, and the past significance of religion, were as important in Victorian historicism as discussions of scientific method, nation, and constitution, it is necessary to start from a capacious definition of historical thought, which surged more widely through Victorian discourse than the possibly narrower term 'historiography' might imply.[42] The term 'historicism' is often associated with the belief, especially as held by Ranke, that the phenomena of nature and history are fundamentally different from one another and require essentially different explanatory approaches. History, unlike nature, is in this reading comprised of unique and unrepeatable individualities.[43] I shall take 'historicism' and 'historical thought' to include this meaning, but not in an exclusive or pedantic way. As well as evangelical and high church projections of essentially scholastic traditionalism onto an historical canvas, Coleridgean, Idealist and Positivist approaches to history, which made reflection on religion inherent to historical thought, also became

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[41] Important studies of these subjects include J.P. Kenyon, *The history men: the historical profession in England since the Renaissance* (London, 1983); D. Inman, *The making of modern English theology. God and the academy at Oxford, 1833-1945* (Minneapolis, 2014); more generally, A.J. Engel, *From clergyman to don: the rise of the academic profession in nineteenth-century Oxford* (Oxford, 1983). On theology in nineteenth-century German universities, see T.A. Howard, *Protestant theology and the making of the modern German university* (Oxford, 2006); J. Zachhuber, *Theology as science in nineteenth-century Germany. From F. C. Baur to E. Troeltsch* (Oxford, 2013).
[42] A distinction important to John Pocock: J.G.A. Pocock, *Political thought and history. Essays on theory and method* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 24-25.
[43] G.G. Iggers, *The German conception of history. The national tradition of historical thought from Herder to the present*, revised edn (Middletown, 1983), pp. 4-5; idem, 'Historicism: the history and meaning of the term', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56:1 (January, 1995), pp. 129-152.

available as forms of historical knowledge. The development and implications of these and related concepts will be treated here as particular manifestations of a broader historicist intellectual culture. Some of these were avowedly secularising; others were not. The presumption is sometimes voiced that when Victorians averred that Christianity must be treated on the same terms as any other part of history, this was 'an illustration of how historical consciousness might contribute to the nineteenth century 'secularisation of the European mind''.[44] But this rests on an unexamined view of what Victorian critics thought that history was, and restricts the contemporary scope of the religious significance of history in a way that simply ignores what many Victorians actually thought.

If students of British historical writing in recent years have generally not paid attention to its transcendental, theological or anti-theological contexts, the same certainly cannot be said of German historians of their own historical tradition. The history of *Historismus* and its relation to Idealism has attracted a much more sophisticated literature over a longer period than its British analogues, for reasons which are themselves historically interesting.[45] German historians after unification found it easier to articulate national identity with reference to religious, literary and intellectual traditions than to the continuous life of institutions. Whence in part their early receptivity, and continuing ease, at regarding intellectual phenomena as properly the subjects of history, where British historians have sometimes proved stolidly reluctant to do so. This reluctance is regrettable, not least because what British and German scholars took history to be took shape, for a time, in a shared space; and British historians,

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[44] D. Nimmo, 'Learning against religion, learning as religion: Mark Pattison and the 'Victorian crisis of faith', in K. Robbins (ed.), *Religion and humanism. Papers read at the eighteenth summer meeting and the nineteenth winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Oxford, 1981), p. 318.

[45] On which subject, see J.W. Burrow, 'Intellectual history in English academic life: reflections on a revolution', in R. Whatmore and B.W. Young (eds), *Palgrave advances in intellectual history* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 8-48; E. Fueter, *Geschichte der neureren Historiographie*, 3rd edn (Munich and Berlin, 1936); W.J. Mommsen (ed.), *Leopold von Ranke und die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1988); A. Wittkau-Horgby, *Historismus: zur Geschichte des Begriffs und des Problems* (Göttingen, 1992); J. Rüsen, *Konfigurationen des Historismus: Studien zur deutschen Wissenschaftskultur* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993). H. Wolf, D. Burkard and U. Muhlack, *Rankes "Päpste" auf dem Index. Dogma und Historie im Widerstreit* (Paderborn, 2003), is a stimulating study of the interfaces between historical and theological imperatives in nineteenth-century Europe, taking Ranke's *Indizierung* as its subject; it is highly relevant to understanding analogous British debates.

however unwittingly, continue to live with the eventual outcomes of that argument.[46] Before history and theology faculties emerged in Britain, and for some time after that, the boundaries between the two subjects were for many held in solution by a slow diffusion of German intellectual typologies which presumed that the motor of history was the reflective mind – the mind of God, and the mind of man which was the earthly witness to its plans. Although the debates generated by *Historismus* and *Methode* in Germany were not those which shaped the formation and development of British history faculties, the religious dimensions of British historical thought – which was something wider than a collection of faculty dryasdusts - were indeed affected by the second German renaissance of which those discussions were important instances.[47] It will be shown here that nineteenth-century British thought concerning the history of religion was permeated by post-Kantian Idealist influences which helped both British and German critics, in different ways, to read history as a spiritually-directed process which offered a means of establishing objective values.

As well as treating Victorian historical thought as a broader phenomenon than it is conventionally taken to be, this thesis also demonstrates how enmeshed it was with active contemporary debate over the continuing, or declining, claims of religion on modern cultural attention. At the core of the work are those who adopted what I earlier characterised as progressive and developmental interpretations of religious history, and of the relationship between religion and civilisation. The suggestion that a close relationship existed between

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[46] On Anglo-German cultural transfer in the nineteenth century, see K. Robbins, *Protestant Germany through British eyes: a complex Victorian encounter* (London, 1993); R. Ashton, *The German idea. Four English writers and the reception of German thought 1800-1860* (Cambridge, 1980); M. Ledger-Lomas, '*Lyra Germanica*: German sacred music in mid-Victorian England', *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 29:2 (November, 2007), pp. 8-42; J.R. Davis, *The Victorians and Germany* (Oxford and Bern, 2007). On the influence of German theology in nineteenth-century America, see A.G. Aubert, *The German roots of nineteenth-century American theology* (Oxford, 2013).

[47] For comparisons between British and German historiography in the nineteenth century, see B. Stuchtey and P. Wende (eds), *British and German historiography, 1750-1950. Traditions, perceptions, and transfers* (Oxford, 2000); a useful summary is provided by M. Bentley, 'Shape and pattern in British historical writing, 1815-1945', in Macintyre et al., *Oxford history of historical writing*, pp. [204]-224. K. Dockhorn, *Der deutsche Historismus in England: ein Beitrag zur englischen Geistesgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1950) remains a foundational study of the connections between British and German scholars; but it does not enter into the debates charted here.

ideas of progress – in the sense of the advance of freedom, the spread of knowledge, the elevation of society - and value judgements about religion is not an original one in nineteenth-century studies. In his subtle book, *Progress and Pessimism*, the Jesuit historian Jeffrey Paul von Arx identified how fears of religious revivalism corroded the confidence of Victorian liberal thinkers in progressive advance.[48] He saw that even those critics who sought to construct avowedly secular understandings of social progress – the Buckles and the Comtes who are today much more remembered than the Tullochs or the Cairds – were unavoidably drawn to discuss religion when they did so. Alarmed by the forces of reaction and revival around them, secular critics became interested in the historical power of religion, even while they castigated the conventional forms of it as lamentably retrograde. However, von Arx did not take account of the ways in which progressivism itself often relied on theological categories, albeit ones that markedly departed from revivalist assumptions. A full account of the interplay between religion and progress in nineteenth-century thought must restore to providential and spiritualised conceptions of progress, in some ways the hardest for moderns to understand, a sense of the promise and open-ended possibility which admiring contemporaries took them to possess. Conceptions of historical progress and development which made a point of rejecting theological points of departure could only arise in a world in which it was plausible to think the reverse. The different kinds of liberal outlook – religious and secular - must be studied together, and treated as historically autonomous.

This exploration of how progressive and developmental forms of historicism were deployed to counter and overcome revivalism can be summarised as a study in how Victorian critics sought to talk about the place of religion, if any, in a consciously modernising society. This issue, it is now generally recognised, was one that lay at the heart of that complex of

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[48] J.P. von Arx, *Progress and pessimism. Religion, politics, and history in late nineteenth century Britain* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1985), pp. [1]-10.

nineteenth-century values and doctrines called 'liberalism' in Britain and around the world.[49] It is in the study of political practice, more than that of political theory or intellectual life more generally, that this insight has been most fruitfully applied. Historians of continental Europe have shown how, during the 'culture wars' fought between the emergent liberal state and (especially) reviving Roman Catholicism, liberalism often assumed the form of an alternative secular value-system. Liberals who aimed to free the state from clerical influence sought to fashion the modern self after their own rational, masculine and publicly-engaged self-image, to which the figure of the wily, sexually dubious Jesuit – an order that enjoyed a striking nineteenth-century recrudescence - was the horrifying anti-type.[50] Nineteenth-century political liberalism in continental Europe, it is clear, was far from neutral and dispassionate, and even secular-minded forms of liberalism were often articulated in anti-clerical language. Liberalism had non-political aspects; liberal political programmes often served social and religious, or anti-religious, ends.[51]

Liberal politics in nineteenth-century Britain, despite points of affinity, seldom took on the specifically secular form they often acquired on the continent. Political historians, working from the once radical hypothesis that actors' intellectual assumptions provide an important context for their actions, have recovered the ways in which British liberals' striving after the greater harmony of classes, nationalities and sects was often understood as a means of clearing away the obstacles to Christian renewal. The dismantling of Anglican political hegemony, as the work of Colin Matthew and others makes clear, was not as an instance of secularisation in the ultimate sense ascribed to the term by twentieth-century sociologists. Rather, advocates of the legal acceptance and political affirmation of the immovable fact of British religious pluralism hoped that church reform, the extension of civil liberties to

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[49] A helpful overview of changing scholarly conceptions of liberalism may be found in Bayly, *Birth of the modern world*, pp. 284-324.
[50] Clark and Kaiser, *Culture Wars*; Gross, *War against Catholicism*.
[51] I. Katznelson and G. Stedman Jones (eds), *Religion and the political imagination* (Cambridge, 2010).

religious minorities, and the lessening of the exclusiveness of the church-state relation would edge Britain closer to the ideal of a Christian society, in which religion was freely chosen and seriously lived and meant. The Anglican and nonconformist elements of political Liberalism were divided on major issues – chiefly those following from the question of whether the state and the state church could be positive religious actors – but the idea that politics should, in its higher aspects, serve religious ends became a commonplace among many Victorian reformists and their opponents. They also tended to share the belief that progressive improvement should benefit not solely Britain, but the wider world.[52]

The implications of this changing scholarly setting, in which ideas are treated as relevant to politics, and the ends of Victorian liberalism are seen to have carried contemporary imaginations beyond what one poet called 'the democratic whirl and hum' and into the sphere of ultimate value,[53] can be further developed. Liberals of different kinds – high and liberal Anglican, dissenting, secularist – understood liberalism to be partly a means of spreading truth in religious matters, and of overcoming sectarian conflict in the interests of religious progress. They took the implications of religious advance to be significant not solely for Britain, but for the general history of mankind. It therefore becomes important to examine the intellectual assumptions that underlay and the argumentative strategies that furthered liberal aspirations in these spheres. Liberal hopes came very widely to be articulated in terms drawn from the history of religion. Historians of religious and popular politics have noticed the

[52] R. Brent, *Liberal Anglican politics. Religion, Whiggery, and reform 1830-1841* (Oxford, 1987); J.P. Parry, *Democracy and religion. Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875* (Cambridge, 1986); idem, *The rise and fall of liberal government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven and London, 1993), pp. 1-20; idem, 'Nonconformity, clericalism and 'Englishness': the United Kingdom', in Clark and Kaiser, *Culture Wars*, pp. 152-180; idem, 'Liberalism and liberty', in P. Mandler (ed.), *Liberty and authority in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2006), pp. [71]-100; D.W. Bebbington, *The nonconformist conscience. Chapel and politics, 1870-1914* (London, 1982); J.P. Ellens, *Religious routes to Gladstonian Liberalism. The church rate conflict in England and Wales, 1832-1868* (Pennsylvania, 1994); T. Larsen, *Friends of religious equality: nonconformist politics in mid-Victorian England* (Woodbridge, 1999). For a representative glimpse of H.C.G. Matthew's transformative approach to Victorian politics, see his *Gladstone 1809-1898* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 337-350. Intellectual studies of individual Victorian statesmen include D.W. Bebbington, *The mind of Gladstone. Religion, Homer, and politics* (Oxford, 2004), esp. pp. [105]-141; M. Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's world. Conservative environments in late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 188-219.
[53] A. Gurney, *King Charles the First. A dramatic poem*, 2nd edn (London, 1852), xi-xii.

presence of typologies drawn from religious history, especially the Reformation and the Puritan revolution, in the expression of divisions between church and dissent, and in the rhetoric of what Eugenio Biagini has called ‘popular liberalism’.[54] The importance of popular radicalism and conflicts between church and dissent in the history of Victorian liberalism is indisputable. It is also true, however, that many who engaged with religious history, both as a process and as a genre, hoped thereby to reconcile conflicting sects, focus minds on common religion, and find the origins of general improvement. Existing secondary frameworks cannot neatly accommodate such activity. This presents an opportunity to expand established notions of what liberalism as an intellectual phenomenon involved.

Liberalism as a body of doctrine was closely related to historicism; and questions of how the religious future should grow out of the past were as important to many liberal moralists as constitutional issues. John Burrow showed how liberal thinkers grounded political progress in Whig conceptions of English and British constitutional history.[55] Analogous tendencies existed in the religious sphere. These debates worked themselves out at several interconnected levels. Whilst accounts of Victorian politics, religion and culture have often focused on the establishment and articulation of forms of division, liberal approaches to the history of religion were often animated by a desire to assuage or transcend the confessional separateness inflamed by the evangelical revival, and so to place religious and political sociability on a new footing. Religious liberals connectedly hoped that by recasting Christianity as the fruit of development in the past and the potential subject of development in the future, and as a religion that transcended denominational division, they would reaffirm the credibility of Christianity in a situation where this was under threat as never before. The question of whether historical progress had an essentially spiritual underpinning was regarded

[54] T. Larsen, *Contested Christianity. The political and social context of Victorian theology* (Waco, 2004); E.F. Biagini, *Liberty, retrenchment and reform. Popular Liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, 1992), esp. pp. 31-83.
[55] J.W. Burrow, *A liberal descent*.

as acutely relevant to the continuing claims of religion on intellectual, political and social life. Intellectual interpretations of these kinds were often also public and political acts, for it was not solely the historical processes they unearthed that historians took to be important in shaping the future basis of society, but the popular dissemination of historical truth. In these contexts, progressive readings of religious tradition, developed in opposition to revivalist traditionalism, became part of the intellectual furniture of Victorian liberalism in a manner akin to evolutionary adaptations of the Whig political tradition. The essayists, politicians, politically-connected churchmen and relatively apolitical writers treated here all breathed this same atmosphere.

The argument that religion, historiography, and liberalism all fed into contemporary views of progress has been advanced before, especially in relation to the role of 'liberal Anglicanism' in political and intellectual culture. This thesis involves the revisiting of liberal Anglican historiography, in order to illuminate its unexplored dimensions; to discuss the neglected parallels between liberal Anglicans and Scottish and nonconformist authors; and to consider the complex intersections between theological approaches to history and secular ideas of progress that rejected them entirely. Historians have generally seen the importance of liberal Anglicans and their historical ideas as lying in the inspiration they gave to Whig-Liberal hopes for the Christian regeneration of the nation through education, church comprehension and related species of reform.[56] But liberal Anglican historians did not solely write about the nation, a category which historians of the nineteenth century have understandably but perhaps unduly prioritised as the main context for historical thought in the period. The different strands of Victorian liberalism were often concerned with how the nation might impede or facilitate salvation, whether in heaven or on earth; but liberal and salvific hopes carried imaginations beyond the nation. Thus liberal Anglicans were also deeply interested in the

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[56] D. Forbes, *The liberal Anglican idea of history* (Cambridge, 1952); Brent, *Liberal Anglican politics*, pp. 27-28, [144]-183; Parry, *Democracy and religion*, pp. 57-104; 460-468.

intellectual, philosophical and universal dimensions of Christianity, as were a broad range of historians outside the Anglican fold. To the considerable extent that Victorians attached importance to the histories of Europe and the wider world, the history of the church often seemed the most natural category through which to interpret them; and church history, by its nature, connected British history to a broader story. Victorian liberals, concerned to position themselves in relation to how they understood the ultimate future of the race, often made that question coextensive with the problem of the fate of Christianity in an age of science, doubt and confessionalism. The following essay focuses on these under-studied aspects of contemporary liberal thought.

In doing so, this thesis makes several primary distinctions between different kinds of thinker and argumentative aim, which should be borne in mind throughout and require a word both in explanation and qualification. First, the evangelical Protestants and high church Anglicans who made ecclesiastical history into a polemical resource in the early Victorian period, for all their differences, resembled one another in important respects. These resemblances are here summarised as a shared commitment to traditionalism, or the reaffirmation of pure and authoritative pasts. At the broadest level, the religious liberals who criticised evangelical, high church and Roman Catholic traditionalism through the medium of history thought about the significance of religious history in one of two ways. The first tendency, visible for example in the writings of the liberal Anglicans Arthur Penrhyn Stanley and Henry Hart Milman, was to render the history of Christianity as essentially the history of a socio-political force. Just as Christianity had itself been shaped by different social, political, and racial contexts, Christianity – generally construed in these accounts as centring on a simple gospel – had bequeathed freedom and humanity to successive societies, in a providential and hence broadly progressive ascent.

This attitude often represented an argumentative projection of the belief that the way to improve and strengthen religion was by lessening its dogmatic component. As such, it should be distinguished from a second, more doctrinally committed kind of liberalism that was often indebted to different kinds of German Idealism. Although historians such as Julius Hare and Edward Caird were opposed to dogmatism, in the sense that they rejected the assertion of doctrine without corresponding justification, they were anything but anti-doctrinal. For these historians, history was a way of making Christian doctrine – sometimes in a radically overhauled form - appeal to and rule over the newly-authoritative self, often by blending the enterprise of historical explanation with that of moral and metaphysical philosophising. Thus understood, history involved neither the relativisation nor the reduction of Christianity's doctrinal content. The two strands of religious liberalism sometimes overlapped. But their distinctness became increasingly pronounced, as thinkers who were more anxious to defend the basic plausibility than the inherent comprehensiveness of Christianity came to emphasise the history of Christian thought more than the history of ecclesiastical polity in their essays towards a Christianised historical philosophy. The need for such a philosophy became more pressing once the interrelated dangers to religion from scientific naturalism and sociological interpretations of history, attractive to the loose grouping of historically-engaged secular liberals treated in this account, became acutely felt and resisted in the latter decades of the century.

The fact that many historical thinkers aimed to reform religion, and how it was understood, in order to strengthen and defend it renders any absolute distinction between 'liberal' and 'conservative' thinkers impossible. These relative and contextual terms remain useful as forms of shorthand, but this thesis pays attention to the important intersections between typically liberal and typically conservative agendas. The duality visible in liberal political theorists - the desire to reform sources of authority whilst also preserving them – can also be

seen operating among those liberal historians of religion who wished to advance the freedom of the religious subject at the same time as defining that freedom within a Christian framework.[57] Conversely, evangelical Protestants or high churchmen who thought and wrote after liberalising historicism had recognisably crystallised could not cut themselves off from it, and often did not wish to do so. Later in the Victorian period, many of those who sought to vindicate the enduring truth of Reformed theology or Catholic ecclesiology found it helpful to do so in terms which drew support from, and reinforced, the importance of the subjective mind in arriving at orthodox belief which had been posited, at first highly provocatively, by liberal thinkers – and, tellingly, by Newman. Conservatives, no less than liberals, had to appeal to the rational judgement of the free individual, however much they sometimes decried it.[58] The change on the conservative side by 1914 was not total. The career of William Stubbs, among others, indicates how resolutely counter-cultural Tractarianism was capable of shaping historians' intellectual agendas up to a surprisingly late point.[59] But a broad generational shift had undoubtedly taken place by the early 1900s. The wider, late-century reaction against associationism and scientific naturalism that coloured late-Victorian philosophical, political and psychological inquiry also found expression in the historical thought of both relatively liberal and relatively conservative thinkers.[60] Many of the hopes that had once been invested in natural theology for the vindication and redefinition of religion had now come to rest, across a culture, on apologetic interpretations of the development of religion, human civilisation and moral consciousness in time. This movement was at once powerful and unstable.

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[57] G. Claeys, *Mill and paternalism* (Cambridge, 2013), is characteristic of recent writing on Victorian liberal political theory.
[58] See D. Fisher, *Roman Catholic saints and early Victorian literature. Conservatism, liberalism, and the emergence of secular culture* (Farnham and Burlingham, 2012), pp. [1]-21.
[59] J.E. Kirby, 'An ecclesiastical descent: religion and history in the work of William Stubbs', in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 65:1 (2014), pp. 84-110.
[60] F.M. Turner, *Between science and religion. The reaction to scientific naturalism in late Victorian England* (New Haven and London, 1974); S.M. den Otter, *British Idealism and social explanation: a study in late-Victorian thought* (Oxford, 1996); R. Rylance, *Victorian psychology and British culture, 1850-1880* (Oxford, 2000).

III. Networks and generations

In the twentieth century, it came to appear as though tough-minded Darwinians, social scientists, and the popularisers of biblical criticism had carried the nineteenth century into the modern age.[61] The kinds of intellectual activity studied here followed a different course of evolution. They drew in networks of historians, essayists and divines typically omitted from the canon which seemed obvious to the first historians of Victorian thought, who imbibed their points of reference from the Victorian period's more secularised successor culture.[62] In considering how Victorian historical thinkers approached the problem of progress and development in Christian history, and in the religious aspects of history as a whole, it is possible to identify several overlapping series of individual authors who shared important intellectual characteristics. These groupings, though diffuse, were united by personal or institutional connections; shared reverence for particular British, German and French thinkers; common dispositions, or by some combination of the three. The interrelation of these alignments, and their discursive significance, must be illustrated before the particular historical debates they shaped can be rightly approached.

In the earlier part of the century, especially during the 1830s and 1840s, Protestant and catholicising revivalists emerged who used ecclesiastical history as a kind of proxy onto which to project acute denominational divisions, and a dualistic separation between God and fallen humanity which militated against any kind of religious, political or social progressivism. At the same time, in a move best represented by Newman's *Essay*, liberalising

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[61] A view which still informs the popular image of the nineteenth century: A.N. Wilson, *God's funeral* (London, 1999).

[62] N. Annan et al., *Ideas and beliefs of the Victorians: an historic revaluation of the Victorian age* (London, 1949); G.M. Young, *Victorian England: portrait of an age* (London, 1936); W.E. Houghton, *The Victorian frame of mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven and London, 1957). Lytton Strachey naughtily included Mandell Creighton in his *Portraits in miniature and other essays* (London, 1931), pp. 207-[218].

thinkers emerged who interpreted religious history itself as a developmental authority which rose above confessional or dogmatic exclusivism. History, on the newer reading, seemed to witness to God's progressive workings. The influence of differing permutations of German Idealism was perhaps the single most important element underlying the change in how religious history was conceived, though it is not an all-explanatory factor. Histories that interpreted the religious past in terms of development of and towards an ideal first came to seem compelling in the wake of Coleridge and Schleiermacher. From the 1860s, the more radical British Idealist movement emerged, substantially indebted to Hegel, which aimed to construe the history of religion as a fundamental embodiment of the history of absolute mind or spirit. Slightly later, historians arose who were receptive to Albrecht Ritschl's and Adolf von Harnack's attempts to end the subordination of historical analysis to transcendental, logical or dogmatic imperatives, even while they continued to see history as the master-category of religious debate. Alongside these developments in religio-historical apologetic, the influence of Comtean Positivism, and the belief that history should be brought under the control of law, gave new armaments to consciously secularising thinkers. Arguments which had centred on denominational debates in the earlier part of the period increasingly became debates about the spiritual dimension of mind and history as a whole.

By 1845, Church history had become a crucial polemical and rhetorical resource for the early revivalists. They used it to frame the battle between the church and the world around them. A central text of the evangelical revival, for instance, was Joseph Milner's evangelical *History of the Church of Christ*, completed after his death by his brother, Isaac.[63] It offered a compendious record of biographical examples of past effusions of grace, showing the abiding

[63] I use the 1847 edition here: J. Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ*, ed. I. Milner and T. Grantham (4 vols, London, 1847); first edition 1794-1809. R.W. Church acknowledged the importance of the *History* in evangelical circles, in opposition to its tendencies: 'Newton and Romaine and the Milners were too limited and narrow in their compass of ideas to found a powerful theology': R.W. Church, *The Oxford Movement. Twelve years 1833-1845* (London, 1891), pp. 11-12.

presence of the Protestant conception of the Holy Spirit through history.[64] The evangelical Anglican leader, Edward Bickersteth, hailed Milner as 'an eminent instrument' of that revival of religion which had once more encouraged Christians to think of their purpose in earthly life as being to prepare for the next.[65] Although the manifestations of revival – whether Protestant or more catholic – were in some ways radically different, it is possible to point to views of the nature of religious truth, and its relation or lack of relation to history, which they held in common. These relied on and bolstered what may be described as pre-Enlightenment readings of church history. When they looked to the past experience of the church, revivalists were not primarily interested in its connections with civil or social history, as the profaner historians of the eighteenth century – especially Gibbon - had so often been. They instead posited an immutable deposit of faith and centred their attention on tracking its fortunes. The inspired apostles and holy fathers of the first Christian centuries communicated this truth in its fullness to succeeding generations. That deposit was defended or restored by great systematic theologians or zealous sixteenth-century Reformers. It was searingly separable from the heresies against which the orthodox of all ages ranged themselves. There was a clear standard of truth which could be held up against later error as true for all time. The idea that truth had both a 'subjective' and an 'objective' side, and that what was taken for truth might be determined more by historical situation than by good logic, had not yet become naturalised in Britain in the 1830s and 1840s. Traditionalists of different kinds tended to fasten on particular periods – the early church, the middle ages, the Reformation – as canvases onto which they could project good and evil as discerned by scholastic theology. It led them to think of history as a sequence of golden pasts and dramatic ruptures, where later liberals – who often divinised history itself – saw progressive continuities.

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[64] On Milner, see J.D. Walsh, 'Joseph Milner's evangelical church history', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 10 (1959), pp. 174-187.

[65] E. Bickersteth, *The Christian student designed to assist Christians in general in acquiring religious knowledge. With lists of books, adapted to the various classes of society*, 3rd edn (London, 1832), [v]-xi, pp. [1], 347.

The first major British intervention to make historical reflection not merely a proxy for scholastic theology, but inherent to determining ultimate value, did not come from a straightforwardly progressive thinker. It was instead the mystical and quintessentially Romantic convert to Catholicism, John Henry Newman, who pushed the issue to the centre of British intellectual debate with his *Essay on Development*. The full significance of this text will be discussed in chapter two. What must be noticed here is that in arguing that development was inherent to religion, and that grasping the dynamics of past development might legitimise future change, Newman was not an isolated figure. However widely its author was reviled, Newman's *Essay* was in fact an early and seminal instance of a significant change in the conventional framework of Victorian religious discussion.

Newman's decision to make a particular mode of reading ecclesiastical history his preferred medium of religious criticism brought him intellectually (though not personally) near to an influential grouping of early- and mid-Victorian liberal Anglican historians. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Henry Hart Milman, Julius Hare and Connop Thirlwall, whose preferred medium for replying to evangelical and high church self-assertion was very often church history, formed less a close circle than a network loosely connected through friendship, institutions and patronage. Connop Thirlwall and Julius Hare edited *The Philological Museum* together at Trinity College, Cambridge between 1831 and 1833. Thirlwall became the bishop of St David's in 1840, remaining in the see until his death in 1875, while Hare took up the family living of Hurstmonceaux in Sussex in 1833, from where he occasionally journeyed to Cambridge to sermonise on the results of his prodigious German reading.[66] Stanley and Milman were both products of Oxford, though Milman had left his Brasenose fellowship for

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[66] J.W. Clark and H.C.G. Matthew, 'Thirlwall, Connop (Newell) (1797-1875)', *ODNB*; N. Merrill Distad, *Guessing at truth: the life of Julius Charles Hare (1795-1855)* (Shepherdstown, 1979).

a clerical living fifteen years before Stanley arrived as an undergraduate at Balliol.[67] Their acquaintance developed later. Milman, by then dean of St Paul's, could warmly endorse Stanley's appointment as Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford in 1856.[68] They saw each other often after Stanley's instalment at dean of Westminster in 1864, until Milman's death in 1868.[69] Stanley wrote the definitive biography of Thomas Arnold, his former headmaster and an early Victorian advocate of ecclesiastical comprehension. Stanley also obituarised Hare, and edited Thirlwall's letters.[70]

Linked to this grouping, though not quite a part of it, was Frederick Denison Maurice. Maurice came from Unitarian stock, but decided to seek ordination in the Church of England while at Cambridge in the 1820s. A pupil and, later, friend and brother-in-law of Hare's, Maurice also looked for God's purposes in the past. But he understood history, as he approached religion, in an idiosyncratically mystical way that was in some respects closer to Newman's sensibility than to that of the liberal Anglican historians. Maurice blended an eschatology that controversially dispensed with a conception of God as the dispenser of rewards and punishments, with the belief that mankind's unity with Christ was the starting-point of ethical association.[71] Unlike Arnold or Stanley, for whom history showed the marginality of the variable 'opinions' expressed in creeds and formularies to the moral life of nations, Maurice took the ideas they preserved to express the immutable voice of God in past

[67] P.C. Hammond, 'Stanley, Arthur Penrhyn (1815-1881)', *ODNB*; H.C.G. Matthew, 'Milman, Henry Hart (1791-1868)', *ODNB*. When George Eliot, depicting pre-Reform *Middlemarch*, made Mr Casaubon fear for the reception of his *Key to all mythologies* among 'the leading minds of Brasenose', she may have had Milman in mind: G. Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. D. Carroll (Oxford, 1996) (first edn 1871-1872), p. 263.
[68] G.G. Bradley, *Recollections of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, late Dean of Westminster. Three lectures delivered in Edinburgh in November, 1882* (London, 1883), pp. 78-79.
[69] A. Milman, *Henry Hart Milman, D.D. Dean of St. Paul's. A biographical sketch* (London, 1900), pp. 262-263.
[70] C. Thirlwall, *Letters to a friend by Connop Thirlwall. Late Lord Bishop of St David's*, ed. A.P. Stanley (London, 1881); [A.P. Stanley], 'Archdeacon Hare', *QR*, 97:193 (June, 1855), pp. 1-28; A.P. Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold* (2 vols, London, 1844).
[71] J. Morris, 'A social doctrine of the Trinity? A reappraisal of F. D. Maurice on eternal life', *Anglican and episcopal history*, 69:1 (2000), pp. 73-100. Morris stresses that Maurice's past and present reputation for universalism has little basis in his own writings.

and present.[72] A remarkable number of Victorian thinkers were touched by his intellectual sensibility, which signified wider divisions within Victorian religious liberals' ways of understanding the importance of history for modern religion.

The network extended beyond England. John Tulloch, who also combined the roles of religious historian and public figure, represented a similar reforming tendency within the Church of Scotland, of which he served as Moderator in 1878. As the principal and primarius professor of theology in St Mary's College, St Andrews, from 1854 until his death in 1886, he was physically distant from these English clerics, save perhaps for when he was at the Athenaeum.[73] But he wrote warmly of them in periodicals and in his *Movements of Religious Thought*, a review of Victorian intellectual history published in 1885.[74] Christian von Bunsen, a student of Niebuhr, minister of the Prussian crown in London from 1842 to 1854, and transmitter of German historical philosophy into British intellectual life, became something of a guru to these mid-century religious liberals while in his host country. He was a friend of Thirlwall and Hare, engineered the establishment of the controversial Anglo-German Jerusalem bishopric, and received the favour of Queen Victoria.[75]

These early- and mid-Victorian liberals were distinguished by effusive mutual admiration, and more substantially by their belief that history amounted to more than an aggregate of atomised human events. History was instead the sphere in which the religious life of mankind was gathered up and cast into its denominational, national and intellectual forms. To align

[72] B.M.G. Reardon, 'Maurice, [John] Frederick Denison (1805-1872)', *ODNB*; J. Morris, *F. D. Maurice and the crisis of Christian authority* (Oxford, 2005); J. Tulloch, *Movements of religious thought in Britain during the nineteenth century* (Leicester, 1971), pp. 53-65, [254]-286 (first edition 1885); Forbes, *Liberal Anglican idea*, pp. 29-39.
[73] M. Oliphant, *A memoir of the life of John Tulloch, D.D., LL.D.*, 3rd edn (Edinburgh and London, 1889), p. 238.
[74] [J. Tulloch], 'Dean Stanley as a spiritual teacher and theologian', *NC*, 10:58 (December, 1881), pp. 869-885; Tulloch, *Movements of religious thought*; T.W. Bayne and H.C.G. Matthew, 'Tulloch, John (1823-1886)', *ODNB*.
[75] F. Bunsen, *A memoir of Baron Bunsen. Late minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary of his majesty Frederick William IV at the Court of St James* (2 vols, London, 1868), i, 315, 593-635, ii, 18-19; W. Höcker, *Der Gesandte Bunsen als Vermittler zwischen Deutschland und England* (Göttingen, 1951).

oneself with the larger movements of history, grounded in providence, was a surer guide to truth than the private or sectarian opinions of individuals who resisted the purposive sweep of time. Duncan Forbes brilliantly recaptured how liberal Anglican historians thought of national history in this way in *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History*, published in 1952.[76] Yet there was another crucial side to liberal Anglican historical interest, distinct if never apart from their preoccupation with the nation, which Forbes left relatively unremarked. This was the history of the church: the plane at which the history of nations flowed into a universal history, where the ends and destiny of mankind were made most visible. In this context Anglican writers were by no means alone. To an extent not heretofore recognised, British historians of religion did not confine their attention to their own national pasts. They also studied the philosophical, doctrinal and socio-political histories of Christianity, which offered ways of understanding the past, present and future of Europe and the race, in relation to which the particular histories of nations and denominations could be given deeper meaning. In seeking to understand the broader appeal of cosmopolitan ideas of religious history, it is important not unduly to prioritise convenient but potentially misleading denominational dimensions in a way that risks missing Anglican affinities with Presbyterian, nonconformist or secularising thought.

Stanley's inaugural lectures as Regius Professor, delivered in 1857, exemplify the importance which he and a whole generation of British religious liberals ascribed to ecclesiastical history. The spirit in which church history was to be written, he assumed, was pre-eminently a religious, not a secular one. For Stanley, ecclesiastical history was not a study of the institutional, dogmatic and liturgical forms for their own sake – the faults, as he saw them, of older approaches to the subject - but the moral and spiritual side of general history, analytically distinct though conceptually inseparable from civil history, which gave world

[76] Forbes, *Liberal Anglican idea*.

history its progressive unity.[77] Ecclesiastical-historical study fulfilled specifiable cultural functions. Just as the peaks and valleys of a mountain-range only came into visual relation when the traveller turned back to gaze upon them from a distant point, Stanley argued, the leading truths of the bible could only be grasped after the long passage of time.[78] The enlarging effects of ecclesiastical-historical study served to reduce divisions between the churches. 'The distinguishing characteristic of the Christian Church', Stanley argued, 'has been, that it has assumed different forms, and yet not perished in the process; that the gulf, however wide, which separates Greek from Latin, and both from Protestant, has yet not been wide enough to swallow up the common Christianity which has been transmitted from one to the other.'[79]

Connected to Stanley's admiration for the historic mutability of Christianity was his belief, shared with growing volubility by many, that the history of the church was itself a form of Christian evidence: 'nothing less than one of the prime agencies of the world could be so interwoven with the progress of great events'. He continued by asking, 'what is the history of the church but a long commentary on the sacred records of its first beginnings?'[80] Connop Thirlwall had made a similar argument in a charge of 1857, which Stanley cited: 'the fullness of the stream is the glory of the fountain; and it is because the Ganges is not lost among its nature hills, but deepens and widens until it reaches the ocean, that so many pilgrimages are made to its springs.'[81] In Scotland, John Tulloch also privileged progressive historical thought as the proper route to religious truth. 'The Evangelical party, deficient in learning

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[77] *LEC*, xxxii-xxxvii.
[78] Ibid., lxxv-lxxvi.
[79] Ibid., lxxii-lxxiii.
[80] Ibid., lxxii-lxxiv.
[81] Quoted at ibid., lxxiv n. 1.

generally, were especially deficient in breadth of historical knowledge', he pronounced, scornfully adducing Milner's *History* as his evidence.[82]

This emphasis on the peculiar importance of historical approaches to religion united Victorian religious liberals, from the early to the late Victorian periods. The epistemological divergence between them and traditionalist writers was made acutely apparent in the wake of Newman's *Essay*, an episode examined in the second chapter. But the broad agreement concealed important variations. These derived in no small measure from differing responses to the waves of German historical philosophy beginning to enter Britain with Coleridge, and which were themselves far from identical. This contact was formative for successive generations of Victorian religio-historical thinkers. When Forbes wrote of the 'German Movement' behind liberal Anglican thought, he primarily meant the attraction of Niebuhr's conception of national life-cycles, above all to Thomas Arnold.[83] He omitted, however, the equally formative contact of other liberal Anglican thinkers with historical approaches inspired by Schelling and Schleiermacher, the implications of which concerned philosophy and doctrine more immediately than they did the life of nations. Yet these thinkers cannot be omitted from any satisfactory account of Victorian historical thought, and not solely its liberal Anglican variety.

Well before British religious liberals began to see historical thought as a way of making their case, an extraordinary transition had reshaped the normative analytical assumptions of German academic church historians between the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. In this period, as in Britain, there took place a pronounced reaction against eighteenth-century modes of conceptualising church history.[84] The so-called 'pragmatism' of

[82] J. Tulloch, 'Coleridge as spiritual thinker', *FR*, 37:217 (January, 1885), pp. 23-24.
[83] Forbes, *Liberal Anglican idea*, pp. 1, 12-20.
[84] On eighteenth-century German church historical study, see D. Fleischer, *Zwischen Tradition und Fortschritt: Der Strukturwandel der protestantischen Kirchen-geschichtsschreibung im deutschsprachigen Diskurs der*

Semler, Mosheim, or Walch, which cast church history as a series of atomised events, separate from revelation and upon which the historian could pronounce edifying judgement from the point of view of superior, universal reason, fell out of favour. The pietistic Friedrich Schleiermacher pioneered the absorption of Schelling's anti-pragmatic organicism directly into church history.[85] Church history, according to Schleiermacher, was an organic element of world history. Its subject was no longer the sealed-off ecclesiastical structure studied by the pragmatic historians, but a moving whole in which advancement could be nothing other than a greater affinity and more complete unification with the laws of Christ.[86] Schleiermacher posited, however, a fundamental distinction between a religious feeling of absolute dependence and the dogmatic systems which bore a historically-specific relation to it. It was that subjective feeling, an 'intuition of the universe', upon which religion rested.[87] It stood as a standing corrective to the unreal excesses of metaphysical systems which aimed to define that feeling through the reasoning consciousness, necessary though these were. Indeed, outward verbal religious forms took their meaning solely from their giving voice to the believing consciousness, a necessarily social activity which occurred through the church and its formularies.[88] Because religious doctrine was a form of human self-consciousness, it was to be treated historically. Schleiermacher's strong emphasis on the importance of the historical study of Christian doctrine exerted a major influence on university research in Germany and critical attitudes further afield.[89]

Aufklärung (2 pts, Waltrop, 2006); F.C. Baur, *Die Epochen der kirchlichen Geschichtschreibung* (Tübingen, 1852), pp. 108-197.

[85] G.A. Benrath, 'Evangelische und katholische Kirchenhistorie im Zeichen der Aufklärung und der Romantik', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 82 (1971), pp. 203-217.

[86] Ibid., p. 211 and n.

[87] F.D.E. Schleiermacher, 'Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern', in his *Werke. Auswahl in vier Bänden*, ed. O. Braun and J. Bauer (4 vols, Leipzig, 1910-1913), iv, 243; B.A. Gerrish, 'Friedrich Schleiermacher', in N. Smart et al. (eds), *Nineteenth-century religious thought in the west* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1985), i, 123-156.

[88] F.D.E. Schleiermacher, 'Der christliche Glaube', in his *Werke*, iii, 634, 660.

[89] Howard, *Protestant theology*, pp. 310-311.

Schleiermacher nourished, directly and by derivation, the historical sensibilities of two church historians particularly noteworthy for their effects in Britain, whether by appropriation or resistance. These were Augustus Neander and Johann Adam Möhler. Möhler, a member of the Catholic theological faculty at Tübingen, had portrayed the church as an organism, moved by the Holy Spirit, in which interior faith was the root of exterior faith, or assent to dogmas.[90] Möhler would later change his position to demarcate himself more clearly from his more radical Tübingen colleagues; but the fact that he had adopted it revealed his close intellectual relationship with Johann Sebastian Drey, the Schleiermacher-inspired leader of the early Catholic Tübingen School.[91] Newman's *Essay* showed significant traces of contact with this way of thinking.[92]

On the Protestant side, Neander recognisably belonged to the same philosophical moment. Though largely forgotten today, in his time he was widely thought to have made an epoch in the writing of church history.[93] Born in 1789, Neander converted to Lutheranism from his ancestral Judaism for reasons connected to his youthful study of Platonic Idealism; in 1813, at Schleiermacher's instigation, he was called to join the theology faculty of the university newly founded at Berlin. His great work was to be a *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, published in successive volumes between 1826 and 1852. His other projects included a confutation of Strauss, published in 1837.[94] A quintessential exponent of *Vermittlungstheologie*, or that early- and mid-century Protestant fashion for 'mediation' between subjective or speculative tendencies of thought and orthodoxy, Neander married a

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[90] J.A. Möhler, *Die Einheit in der Kirche oder das Prinzip des Katholicismus dargestellt im Geiste der Kirchenväter der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Mainz and Wiesbaden, 1925), first edn 1825; O. Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1987) pp. 108-110.
[91] Ibid., pp. 104-105; J.R. Geiselmann, *Lebendiger Glaube aus geheiligter Überlieferung. Der Grundgedanke der Theologie Johann Adam Möhlers und der katholischen Tübinger Schule*, 2nd edn (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1966), pp. [17]-53, 167-168.
[92] See chapter 2 below.
[93] [Worthington, S.D.], 'Neander's Werke', *BQR*, 96 (October, 1868), pp. [305]-350. Dockhorn, *Der Deutsche Historismus*, pp. 82-108, makes a few incidental and undeveloped references to him. Neander makes no appearance in Forbes, *Liberal Anglican idea*.
[94] G. Uhlhorn, 'Neander, Dr Johann August Wilhelm', in D.J.J. Herzog, D.G.T. Plitt and L.A. Hauck (eds), *Real-Encyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd edn (18 vols, Leipzig, 1877-1886), x, 447-457.

deep reverence for Schleiermacher's pietistic and psychological approach to religion with an explicit affirmation that the Christian revelation descended on mankind from without.[95] He sought to move beyond Schleiermacher's subjectivism by studying concrete historical personalities rather than abstract ideas.[96] But his seminal contribution was generally taken by his admirers to have been the abolition of the division between speculative and empirical history, by integrating a depiction of the unrepeatable individuality of each Christian life with a broader picture of the church as the slow upwards movement of the footsteps of Christ on earth. He was not, like the more familiar Leopold von Ranke, particularly interested in the interaction of the church with international politics; he preferred to bring forward the life of the church insofar as it flowed from the life of Christ.[97]

A number of early- and mid-Victorian liberal critics alighted upon these developments in historical philosophy as ways of vindicating the progressiveness and credibility of the Christian religion. Coleridge's pioneering work in this respect remained a significant intellectual presence throughout the Victorian period. He had placed great importance on the historical relationship of reflective man to God, actualised by Reason and the symbolic bible, in a sense construed partly through his contact with Kant and Schelling.[98] But Coleridge met the normal fate of genius, and he was more esteemed in death than in life. Maurice would adapt Coleridgean epistemology to locate the apprehension of religious verities in the universal experience of mankind, rather than in individual deduction.[99] Julius Hare was also among Coleridge's admirers, lobbying Trinity College to establish a prize essay in his memory which would take the 'philosophy of Christianity' as its theme.[100]

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[95] A. Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche*, 3rd edn (4 vols in 2, Gotha, 1856), i, i.
[96] O. Krabbe, *August Neander. Ein Beitrag zu seiner Charaketeristik* (Hamburg, 1852), pp. 26-28.
[97] Ibid., p. 100.
[98] Lloyd, 'The historical thought of S. T. Coleridge', pp. 36-167; Ashton, *The German Idea*, pp. 27-63.
[99] Morris, *Maurice*, pp. 38-41.
[100] Trinity College, Cambridge, Add. MS 206/165-166: J.C. Hare to W. Whewell, 12 October 1834.

Coleridge was not alone in seeking to promote the results of German historical philosophy, eclectically arranged and distinctively interpreted, to British audiences. In the view of Julius Hare, the prime contribution of German philosophy was to have established the principle that the worth of any religious system could only be judged in relation to its place in the progressive history of human opinion. Maurice, not himself a great reader of German, relied on Hare to translate intriguing passages of Schelling and Schleiermacher for him.[101] Like his friend at Trinity and co-translator of Niebuhr's *Roman History*, Connop Thirlwall, Hare regarded Schleiermacher as one of the greatest Christian philosophers, though both resisted attempts to read Christian history as pantheistically or logically determined.[102] Along these lines, Neander was especially congenial to Hare, who considered that he was much closer than Catholic theorists to understanding the real significance of historical development. Hare judged that Neander had exquisitely combined faith and knowledge to fulfil the ideal of the historian of Christianity: 'the setting forth of this twofold manifestation of Christianity, in its constancy and in its progressiveness'.[103] John Tulloch agreed, describing Neander as 'in some respects the highest expression of the Christian reason in this century'.[104] Bunsen, an admirer of Hare's and Tulloch's conservative liberalism and partly the inspiration of it in Hare's case, tended to express support for mediating theologians such as Neander, and behind him Schleiermacher, in his own writings.[105] He evoked Friedrich Schelling's philosophical and theological promise in his letters, at a time when, in Germany, Schelling – proclaiming a 'philosophy of revelation' rooted in concrete historical existence - was becoming the

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[101] F. Maurice (ed.), *The life of Frederick Denison Maurice chiefly told in his own letters* (2 vols, London, 1884), ii, 453-454, 468.
[102] [Hare and Hare], *Guesses at truth*, pp. 312-313, 470. Thirlwall had been Schleiermacher's first English translator: F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *A critical essay on the gospel of St Luke*, [trans. C. Thirlwall] (London, 1825). Thirlwall called Hegel 'one of the most impudent of all literary quacks': Trinity College, Cambridge, Add. MS a 213/180: C. Thirlwall to W. Whewell, 31 October 1849.
[103] [Hare and Hare], *Guesses at truth*, p. 313.
[104] J. Tulloch, 'Rationalism', *CR*, 1 (March, 1866), pp. 361-384.
[105] C.C.J. Bunsen, *Hippolytus and his age; or, the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome under Commodus and Alexander Severus: and Ancient and Modern Christianity and divinity compared* (4 vols, London, 1852), i, 86-88, ii, 27-28.

intellectual figurehead of the reaction against the 'atheism' of young Hegelians such as David Friedrich Strauss, Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach.[106]

Not every early- or mid-Victorian religious liberal thought about history within discernibly germanised or Coleridgean terms of reference. Those who did so tended to privilege intellectual and doctrinal history, read as the growth of mind or conscience. History, theology and philosophy blended together in attempts to make Christianity – and often in an orthodox form – credible. There was, however, a second broad approach to religious history, promoted by historians who, while still deeply interested in the historical effects of religion, deliberately tried to separate historical from theological categories. They construed historical development more as a matter of the interaction between Christianity and 'external' circumstances, than as a growth of 'internal' spirit in religious history. Among the earlier liberal Anglicans, before the later form of British Idealism gained momentum, Milman and Stanley had been notably distant from Hare's attempts to invigorate established theology by portraying it as the fruit of Coleridgean Reason and, from one aspect, subjective consciousness. They belonged more identifiably to an indigenous, latitudinarian tradition. Their brand of historically-projected liberalism did not centre on an attempt to revitalise orthodoxy by making it the outcome of a reasoning process. They instead emphasised the relative unimportance of doctrine, when compared to the variety of social forms and ecclesiastical polities in which moralising religion flourished.[107] Such an emphasis was, in Milman's and Stanley's case, connected to their desire to establish a comprehensive Church of England on the basis that there were essentials and non-essentials in orthodox religion. Stanley was more stridently Arnoldian than Milman on this point; his historical writings were

[106] C.C.J. Bunsen to T. Arnold, 1 August 1838, in Bunsen, *Memoir*, i, 462-464; C.C.J. Bunsen to G.C.F. Lücke, 25 April 1849, ibid., ii, 219-224. On the work of Schelling and Bunsen in supposedly preserving religion and nation, see J.E. Toews, *Becoming historical. Cultural Reformation and public memory in early nineteenth-century Berlin* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1-114.
[107] See chapter two below.

in some ways the narrative counterpart to Arnold's *Principles of Church Reform*.[108] Hare, by contrast, preferred to set about the work of instructing in what orthodoxy meant, and was relatively unmoved by political questions.[109] The difference between them was essentially one of slight and more intense engagement with German Idealism. Liberal critics of Milman and Stanley were to remark on their unhelpfully unspeculative casts of mind. In the eyes of John Tulloch, for example, who combined impatience with dogmatism with a growing interest in the development of thought as the expression of Christian mind and character, this disposition did not make enough of the epistemological promise of religious history in the face of new conceptual dangers. Idealism, more often than simple unsectarianism, was increasingly to meet that need among late-Victorian religious liberals.

Milman and Stanley were intellectually distant from the arguments over how to conceptualise the role of divinity and spirit in historical time that followed in the wake of the British Idealist movement. Gathering pace from the 1860s, British Idealism represented a newly systematic and academically influential successor, founded upon Plato, Kant and Hegel, to the idealist tremors of the earlier part of the century. Tulloch and Hare had complained, in counterpoint to their fondness for Neander, about the hard and abstract historical logic of the Hegelians; and, from Bunsen's point of view, the extremism of some of Hegel's followers contaminated his philosophy. But for some, historical logic was the only way to overcome the inherent subjectivism of trying to locate a sustainable foundation for religious commitment in personalities or particular theological approaches.[110] The British Idealists, reflecting their more unapologetically Hegelian roots, included philosophers who were also historians of religious ideas, and who took a keen interest in identifying a more thoroughgoing logic in the

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[108] J. Witheridge, *Excellent Dr Stanley. The life of Dean Stanley of Westminster* (Norwich, 2013), pp. [25]-67, 83-84, 272-273; A. Milman, *Milman*, pp. 244-245; T. Arnold, *Principles of church reform*, ed. M.J. Jackson and J. Rogan (London, 1962); first edition 1833.

[109] Cf. J. Morris, 'The spirit of comprehension: examining the Broad Church synthesis in England', *Anglican and episcopal history*, 75:3 (2006), pp. 423-443.

[110] Cf. F.C. Baur on Neander: Baur, *Epochen*, pp. 202-232.

course of church history.[111] The Church of Scotland historian George Matheson and the brothers John and Edward Caird were influential figures in this context. John, the elder of the Caird brothers, was consecutively professor of divinity at Glasgow and then the university's principal from 1862 to his death in 1898.[112] Edward, after a period as Snell Exhibitioner at Balliol College, Oxford, where he came under the influence of T. H. Green, became professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow in 1866 before returning to Balliol as master of the college following the death of Benjamin Jowett in 1893; unlike his brother, he did not take holy orders.[113] Matheson was introduced to Hegel by John Caird's lectures, while he studied for the ministry in the Divinity Hall of Glasgow University; and it was by more direct and sustained reading of Hegel in the manse of Innellan, which he occupied from 1867, that Matheson would claim he was saved from atheism.[114] Although these Idealists seldom described themselves as Hegelians, and wrote fondly of Coleridge and Carlyle, they were intellectually and physically distant from Stanley, or even from Thirlwall and Tulloch. The latter generation were dying just as Idealists were entering intellectual maturity, and there was little interaction between the two groupings. Idealists took very different points of reference.

Idealists tended not to make the interventions in denominational disputes periodically undertaken by the earlier liberals, having left such alleged trivialities much further behind. Nor did they make the same separation between religion and reflection which their predecessors or Schleiermacher tended to do. 'Faith is *just undeveloped knowledge*', said Edward Caird in a lecture to Glasgow students.[115] Idealists' concern, above all, was to delineate the rationality of the universe and the reality of an underlying spirit upon which

[111] For a discussion of the influences on British Idealism, see W. Mander, *British Idealism: a history* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 13-39.
[112] Stewart J. Brown, 'Caird, John (1820-1898)', *ODNB*.
[113] S.M. den Otter, 'Caird, Edward (1835-1908)', *ODNB*.
[114] D. Macmillan, *The Life of George Matheson D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.* (London, 1907), pp. 24-46, 87-129.
[115] Glasgow University Archive, DC 379/1/1 31355: J.L. Steven, 'Notes of lectures on moral philosophy delivered by Professor Edward Caird in the Glasgow University session 1875-6', vol. ii, 81-83.

such rationality necessarily depended. Christianity with them became a stage or central means of the working of absolute spirit, which was the ground and end of the universe, as part of which all other things were intelligible. Christ became the earthly impress of a greater idea, rather than intrinsically the ground and end of all theologico-historical development, as he was with Tulloch or the earlier liberal Anglicans. That idea was divine-human unity, which could only be realised in time, as it was being realised in the mutually-completing stages of the history of church – which was also the history of the world.[116] Edward Caird regarded attempts to go beyond this idea, to lay hold of an 'eternal something' at the heart of Christianity, as absurd.[117]

At the same time as Idealism was coming to suffuse many parts of British intellectual life in the 1880s, an alternative historical paradigm, characterising ecclesiastical history not as a record of progressive providence or absolute spirit but as a secular sequence, attracted attention. Here Ritschlianism and the effects it exerted on the historical study of religion were crucial. Formed within the Idealist tradition, yet in several ways reacting against its leading characteristics, Albrecht Ritschl, from the 1860s to the 1870s, proposed that the essence of Christianity lay in the direct moral impression produced by Christ on the disciples; the kingdom of God was to be worked out socially, in secular time. Mysticism and dogmatism were alike mistaken. Theological science, in his view, had to start from this position, which church history tended to confirm. But the study of church history, which Ritschl construed as the study of a phenomenon radically different from the normative expression of positive religion in the historical Christ, could not be guided by an Idealist assumption of continuous, divinised progress.[118] The Berlin theologian Adolf von Harnack applied a similar position to

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[116] G. Matheson, *Growth of the spirit of Christianity from the first century to the dawn of the Lutheran era* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1877); E. Caird, *The evolution of theology in the Greek philosophers. The Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Glasgow in sessions 1900-1901 and 1901-1902* (2 vols, Glasgow, 1904).
[117] Edward Caird to Mary Talbot, 14 January, 1906, in H. Jones and J.H. Muirhead (eds), *The life and philosophy of Edward Caird LL.D., D.C.L., F.B.A.* (Glasgow, 1921), pp. 241-242.
[118] Zachhuber, *Theology as science*, pp. [135]-174.

a wider field of church-historical study, after he reacted against dogmatic Lutheranism, vague mediation-theology and speculative Idealism in favour of a heavily ethicised Ritschlian Christology.[119] This total idea of Christianity was, for Harnack, confirmed by imaginative grasp of the sum of doctrinal development understood to consist of the genetic evolution of autonomous historical individualities.[120] As with Ritschl, however, such development was not development in the sense of the logical ascent of an idea or the progressive unfolding of divine truth. In place of these older, Idealist and *vermittlungstheologische* ideas, there came a tension. History continued to be privileged as the means of arriving at theological truth, and procedural specialisation was not taken to fragment an abiding ideal of higher epistemological unity, founded on God. Yet divinity was substantially removed from historical time; in writing history, it was no longer necessary to be seen to record God's footsteps.[121] It will be seen how echoes of this late-Idealist German moment were heard in Britain, especially in the controversies generated by Edwin Hatch, Harnack's admirer and correspondent and Oxford's reader in ecclesiastical history from 1884 until his death in 1889.[122]

The apparently secularising historicism of Ritschl, Harnack and Hatch left them at odds with the general tone of late Victorian religious historians, for whom a diffuse idealism – which made doctrine reasonable, and secular history spiritual – was much the more influential intellectual presence. The in some ways bullishly Protestant, in others markedly radical Henry Melvill Gwatkin, Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge from 1891

[119] C. Nottmeier, *Adolf von Harnack und die deutsche Politik 1890-1930. Eine biographische Studie zum Verhältnis von Protestantismus, Wissenschaft und Politik* (Tübingen, 2004), pp. 66-68 and 68 n.; M. Basse, *Die dogmengeschichtliche Konzeptionen Adolf von Harnacks und Reinhold Seebergs* (Göttingen, 2001), p. 54; Universitäts-Bibliothek Marburg / HS 695 371-411: A. Harnack to A. Jülicher, 6/1/89.
[120] A. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (3 vols, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1886-1890); K. Nowak, 'Theologie, Philologie und Geschichte. Adolf von Harnack als Kirchenhistoriker', in K. Nowak and O.G. Oexle (eds), *Adolf von Harnack. Theologe, Historiker, Wissenschaftspolitiker* (Göttingen, 2001), pp. 189-228.
[121] Peter Ghosh has argued that the Ritschlian relative secularisation of religious history, alongside its continuing affirmation of religion's world-historical importance, was a crucial context for Max Weber's disenchanted yet religiously-originating vision of modernity: P. Ghosh, *Max Weber and* The Protestant Ethic: *twin histories* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 92-93.
[122] See chapter two below.

until his death in 1916, argued in his inaugural lecture that 'Ecclesiastical History is simply the spiritual side of universal history'.[123] Much of his scholarship bore idealist traces. More self-consciously conservative figures were also touched by the same movement. Edinburgh University's Professor of Divinity from 1876, Robert Flint, was an outspoken defender of Scottish common sense philosophy and the traditional theology of the Church of Scotland to which it had historically been connected. Yet Flint began to see an apologetic advantage in stressing the fact that a process of mental expansion and reasonable elucidation had interposed between the creed of the modern believer and the scriptures upon which it stood. He argued in his inaugural lecture that theology properly rested on respect for 'the collective reason in history'. This not only countered unthinking traditionalism, he argued, but also confuted those 'who would have us cast off ... just what the reason and piety of the Christian world have been able to elicit from the original revelation'.[124] In the Church of England, the Tractarians' successors also began to suppose that idealism offered a way of linking divine and earthly reason through a process of historical development. The high church Mandell Creighton, Cambridge's first Dixie Professor and Gwatkin's predecessor in the chair, always maintained that the Oxford undergraduate tutor to whom he owed the most was Edward Caird.[125] 'The Church and the world must be studied together, in their mutual relations', he said in his 1885 inaugural lecture.[126] These developments within religious conservatism are an important part of the history related in this thesis. As changing conceptions of tradition and denominational history helped to soothe the confessional discord of the earlier Victorian

[123] H.M. Gwatkin, *The Meaning of Ecclesiastical History. An inaugural lecture* (Cambridge, 1891), pp. 8-9.
[124] D. Macmillan, *The Life of Robert Flint D.D., LL.D.* (London, New York and Toronto, 1914), pp. 264-265; S.R. Obitts, 'The Thought of Robert Flint. A thesis presented to the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh' (Edinburgh Univ. PhD thesis, 1962).
[125] L. Creighton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton, D.D. Oxon and Cam, sometime bishop of London* (2 vols, London, 1904), i, 26.
[126] M. Creighton, 'The teaching of ecclesiastical history. Inaugural lecture as Dixie professor of ecclesiastical history', in his *Historical Lectures and Addresses*, ed. L. Creighton (London, New York and Bombay, 1903), p. 9.

period, the question at the heart of engagement with religious history increasingly became one of whether history could be seen to amount to a spiritually-directed world-process.

As will be seen especially in chapter five, the latter issue was at the centre of contemporary debate about the origins of modernity, and the implications of regarding its emergence as the result of historical law. Just as the dissertation's examination of different kinds of idealist and providentialist historical thought draws thinkers together who are not normally regarded as analogous or related, the discussion it offers of how these intellectual modes intersected with sociological and 'scientific' approaches to history also draws out patterns of similarity and shared intellectual lineage across a spectrum of critics. A number of historical thinkers rose to prominence after the mid-century who were united in their sometimes regretful confidence that the nature of socio-political and intellectual progress eroded Christianity's claims to rational commitment. These tremors witnessed to the transmission of Auguste Comte's sociological system into British intellectual life, but also to a range of other personal and textual influences. The independent man of letters and freethinker, Henry Thomas Buckle; the melancholy agnostic, Leslie Stephen; and the dogmatically Positivist Frederic Harrison were among those for whom the laws of historical growth overbore religion and who removed spiritual claims from the sphere of progressive knowledge. Often receptive to such arguments, but starting from an idiosyncratic location, was Mark Pattison, the rebarbative Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, from 1861. Pattison became notably interested in the historical conditions of intellectual life and scholarship after falling away from his youthful, and seemingly rather forced Tractarianism. Though he professedly found a way out of agnosticism in devotion to the principle of reason itself, inflected by Hegel and Fichte, this

pioneering advocate of the research university often targeted religion in his studies of intellectual history.[127]

Such critics' religiously apologetic interlocutors did not dispute the orderliness of history; but they instead tried to situate it within an explicitly theological framework. These important permutations of Victorian religious thought about history, arising especially in the final third of the century, are only explicable in the context of fundamental challenges to the bases of Christian belief from scientific naturalism, agnosticism and secularised theories of history. The Anglo-Irish historian and future Member of Parliament for Dublin University, William Lecky, set his sociological approach to the past within a Milman-like framework of the progressive purification of Christianity. The bases of ethics, creativity, and the capacity both of the historian and the historical subject for spiritual intuition became important questions in these contexts. In the hands of John Tulloch, Robert Flint, and William Inge – a future dean of St Paul's and pioneer of the psychology of religion – issues of historical interpretation started to blend, in a new way, with psychological ones concerning the powers and limits of mind. The period covered by the thesis terminates in 1914, not solely because the First World War both damaged progressive historical theories and, where they survived, compelled their re-articulation in a substantially new environment. 1914 has also been chosen because where an earlier generation had come to place their confidence in history as a field for religious apologetic, new philosophical thinkers were becoming keener to ascribe the same function to the psychology of religion and the study of mysticism. As will be seen, that transition was partly facilitated by the changing meanings ascribed to history in the later years of the nineteenth century.

[127] Nimmo, 'Learning against religion, learning as religion', pp. 311-324; on Pattison's life and work, see H.S. Jones, *Intellect and character in Victorian England: Mark Pattison and the invention of the don* (Cambridge, 2007).

(IV) Religious history in the Victorian public sphere

The history just outlined was not solely a story of evolving conceptual paradigms, vital though these were. The strangely unfamiliar arguments recapitulated above appealed to real and often rather conventional personalities. They spread through the reform and expansion of higher educational institutions and by the growth of the religious and secular press. Important elements of this story have already been made apparent. The friendships between liberal Anglican historians forged in common rooms, deaneries, and at the Athenaeum, or the pedagogical relationships fondly recalled by Idealist philosophers and those who sat at their feet, reflected deep-seated intellectual affinities. The discussions into which these critics entered, however, were not conversations which began and ended with a small literary elite. The history of the reform and expansion of Victorian higher education makes clear that there was a growing appetite for instruction in church-historical topics among intending ministers and other university-level students. Though the religious historians who often (though not always) held chairs in these institutions unembarrassedly belonged to a selective circle, their consciousness of so doing involved a dutiful commitment to public engagement through writing and didacticism. In order to understand their self-image, it is necessary to recover something of these moralists' sense of authorial voice and cultural leadership. They were masters of that quintessentially Victorian medium, the public lecture. They often contributed essays to periodical reviews, and not solely to religious journals, increasingly influential though these were in the Victorian period. Their many books, which were normally produced by commercial publishers, attracted reviews and commentary from a wide spectrum of Victorian literary society. Translations of foreign texts, and intellectual interventions by foreign contributors to British media, became at once more common and more generally accessible than they had been previously. Nonconformist and established churches – and

Britain and the world beyond its shores - were by no means severed from one another in the world of public argument.

Although men of letters and beneficed ecclesiastics wrote many of the studies examined in this thesis, there were important developments in the institutional contexts for academic study which gave more thinkers the time and opportunity to engage seriously with the history of religion. The belief that religion should be studied critically, in order to burnish its intellectual credentials, was an important factor in the reform of higher education in Victorian Britain; and it will be seen how consciously liberal agendas often lay behind the academic and ecclesiastical preferment given to religious historians. As part of this wider movement, the historical study of religion obtained official footholds in the older seats of learning. Stanley's chair - Oxford's Regius Professorship of Ecclesiastical History - was founded, alongside a chair in pastoral theology, in 1842, to improve the education of candidates for holy orders. A writer in the non-denominationally Protestant *Eclectic Review* hoped that the new foundations would encourage deeper study of ecclesiastical history, 'the consequences of which cannot be foreseen.'[128] Cambridge's new Dixie Professorship of Ecclesiastical History had its first incumbent, Mandell Creighton, from 1884.[129] The subject extended its reach to undergraduates as new subjects were established at Oxford and Cambridge. Creighton was involved in the reform of the new historical tripos at Cambridge.[130] At Oxford, church history was a prominent subject in the theology and modern history schools after their foundations in 1869 and 1872 respectively.[131] In theology, especially after the initially Puseyite character of

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[128] 'Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*', *ECR*, 12 (July, 1842), p. 2 and n.
[129] S. Bendall, C. Brooke and P. Collinson, *A History of Emmanuel College, Cambridge* (Woodbrige, 1999), pp. 425-426.
[130] Slee, *Learning and a liberal education*, pp. 76-77.
[131] Inman, *Modern English theology*, pp. 145-150. The following two questions, for example, were put to candidates for the honour school of modern history in 1898: 'General History. Period I. (476-1002.) 8. Estimate the immediate influence of the Mahometan awakening on the Christianity of Europe', and 'General History. Period II. (919-1273.) 10. 'The thirteenth century was the golden age of the medieval Church.' Discuss this statement.': *Oxford University Examination Papers. Second public examination. Honour School of Modern History. Trinity Term, 1898* (Oxford, 1898), p. [1].

the degree began to change, questions inviting consideration of the philosophical implications of history for religion, not restricted to scripture, began to be posed.[132] These issues also grew in importance in English and Scottish university philosophy as Idealism became more influential.[133]

It is true that the specifically clerical influence at British universities declined in the second half of the nineteenth century.[134] But this is not something which can be uncomplicatedly adduced in support of the view that a broader clerisy was swept out of Victorian seats of learning as part of a general 'secularization of thought' in the period.[135] 'These magnificent societies', the biblical critic, church historian and future university reformer Brooke Foss Westcott preached in 1868, 'which are themselves the monuments of the ancient spiritual power of England, contain within them the elements of a new spiritual power fitted to deal with the problems of our own age.'[136] 'The first work of the University as a spiritual power', he continued, was 'to connect its literary teaching both in form and purpose with the whole progress of humanity.'[137] Westcott was far from unusual in holding this view. Even after the repeal of university tests and the abolition of most clerical fellowships at Oxford and Cambridge, a large number of dons continued to think of their scholarship at least in part as involving the defence of religion. The *avant garde* of radical critics generally launched their arrows from outside the ancient universities. Despite the much greater subsequent attention

[132] The two following questions, for example, were put to candidates for the honour school of theology in 1895, under the 'evidences of religion' section of the paper: 'I. To what extent have Oriental influences produced sceptical reactions against Christianity in different ages?'; and 'II. Is the modern conception of historical method favourable to dogmatic belief?': *Oxford University Examination Papers. Second public examination. Honour School of Theology. Trinity Term, 1895* (Oxford, 1895).
[133] On Scottish philosophy in the period, see G. Graham (ed.), *Scottish philosophy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Oxford, 2015).
[134] A.G.L. Haig, 'The church, the universities and learning in later Victorian England', *Historical Journal*, 29:1 (1986), pp. 187-201.
[135] T.W. Heyck, *The transformation of intellectual life in Victorian England* (London, Sydney, and New York, 1982), pp. 66-67, 82.
[136] B.F. Westcott, *The spiritual office of the Universities: a sermon preached in the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, at the Commemoration of Benefactors, December 15, 1868* (London and Cambridge, 1869), pp. 7-8.
[137] Ibid., p. 12.

they have received, they were in some ways the counter-culture in relation to a rather less remembered but culturally vital intellectual establishment.

Religious history expanded in academic environments beyond Oxford, Cambridge, and the ancient Scottish universities. Denominational consolidation and rivalry helped to stimulate this expansion; but it was also the case that influences tending to diminish sectarianism in the study of the subject operated from an early point. New nonconformist colleges provided opportunities for higher education and tutorial or professorial positions otherwise unobtainable by those excluded through religious tests (or, even after the repeal of tests, by cultural differences) from Oxford, Cambridge or the ancient Scottish universities. The young institutions typically supported chairs in ecclesiastical history. Westminster Training College, founded in London in 1851 to train teachers in Methodist schools; the Presbyterian college of Belfast opened in 1853; and Edinburgh's New College – founded as a centre of ministerial education for the Free Church – became bases for notable ecclesiastical historians and even centres of church-historical study. Herbert Brook Workman, the first Methodist ecclesiastical historian of acknowledged distinction, became principal of Westminster Training College in 1903.[138] Church history was often an integral subject of the curriculum for prospective ordinands. In 1851, William Cunningham – a sternly Calvinist secession father – lectured to the New College junior and senior class in theology on 'Divinity and Church History'; the fact that the pairing seemed natural was significant.[139] Thomas Martin Lindsay became professor of church history at the Glasgow Free Church College in 1872, and a notable authority on the Reformation.[140] Liberal caricatures of dissenting self-absorption and narrowness were not a fair reflection of the character of these institutions and those who studied in them. Significant numbers of British students, especially Scots and

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[138] E.G. Rupp, 'Workman, Herbert Brook (1862-1951)', *ODNB*.
[139] H. Watt, *New College Edinburgh. A Centenary History* (Edinburgh and London, 1946), pp. 29-31.
[140] R.S. Rait, rev. J. Kirk, 'Lindsay, Thomas Martin (1843-1914)', *ODNB*; see chapter four below.

Nonconformists, began to travel to Germany in the 1830s and 1840s to hear lectures from Schelling, Neander and other luminaries, while domestic opportunities for advanced study also improved.[141] Lindsay, whose first book was a translation of a German treatise on logic, believed that the Kantian, self-regulative moral freedom guaranteed to the Free Church by its severance from the Establishment gave the necessary scope for the reverent advance of theology. The close connection between professors of church history and active ministers, moreover, saved Free Church critics, in his view, from producing the same unsympathetic and sterile abstractions as German professors tended to do.[142] The divisions between establishmentarian and nonconformist churches, especially visible in political life, should not obscure the similarities and overlaps between the sources and aims of their adherents' historical studies.

This changing intellectual world took shape at the same time as publishing, not least of historical and theological works, was experiencing an unprecedented expansion. Statistical indicators must be used with care; but it may be impressionistically informative to note that books classified by the *Publishers' Circular* under 'religion' and 'geography, travel, history and biography', even when taken separately, represented higher proportions of books published than 'arts, science, mathematics and illustrated works' for the periods 1890-9 and 1900-9. The available equivalent figures for the early Victorian period are even more striking.[143] Religious and historical topics sold. The publishers who put religious history through the press, often playing a more creative role in the process than that of the passive conduit, combined avidity with professions of high moral purpose.[144] Particular publishers

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[141] J.C. Paget, 'The reception of Baur in Britain', in Bauspiess et al., *Ferdinand Christian Baur*, pp. 339-340.
[142] F. Ueberweg, *System of logic and history of logical doctrines*, trans. T.M. Lindsay (London, 1871); T.M. Lindsay, 'The study of church history', in his *College Addresses: and sermons preached on various occasions* (Glasgow, 1915), pp. 85-87.
[143] S. Eliot, *Some patterns and trends in British publishing 1800-1919* (London, 1994), pp. 45, 50-51.
[144] On historical publishing in the period, see L. Howsam, *Past into print. The publishing of history in Britain 1850-1950* (London, 2009).

were often associated with different schools of religious thought.[145] Seeley, Burnside and Seeley promoted evangelical Anglicans in the earlier Victorian period.[146] John Henry Parker and the Rivingtons were associated with high Anglicanism.[147] The Religious Tract Society flooded Britain and the wider world with cheap copies of non-denominational evangelical literature.[148] T. & T. Clark of Edinburgh, whose proprietors were Free Churchmen, reflected the remarkable intellectual trajectory of that denomination by becoming Britain's chief marketer of cautiously critical theology. Mark Pattison's characteristically vinegarish and rhetorically exaggerated complaint to a German correspondent that there was no English public for German translations was belied by the Clarks' notable industry in this respect.[149] Their *Biblical Cabinet* series which appeared between 1832 and 1844, and then the *Foreign Theological Library* which ran for forty years after 1846, were important media for making German books available to Anglophone audiences.[150] The high-minded Clarks often published scholarly theological works even where they feared a loss, if they believed they served a current religious need. The *Publishers' Circular* said of John M. Clark that 'he understood the tastes and appreciated the wants of his countrymen, who, almost without exception, are sticklers for theology.'[151]

It was not solely religious publishers who saw a market for ecclesiastical history. Stanley and Milman often published with John Murray, Milman once offering him the revealing and rather bad advice not to become commercially involved with the emerging Thomas Carlyle,

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[145] We lack detailed studies of Victorian religious publishing: may this deficiency someday be remedied. J. Altholz, *The religious press in Britain, 1760-1900* (New York and London, 1989), is the fullest existing study.
[146] For example, E. Bickersteth, *A Brief Practical View of the Evangelical Alliance; in regard to its character, principles, objects, organization, and Christian spirit* (London, 1846); S.A. Walker, *The Church of England Mission in Sierra Leone: including an introductory account of that colony, and a comprehensive sketch of the Niger expedition in the year 1841* (London, 1847).
[147] S. Rivington, *The Publishing House of Rivington* (London, 1894); R. Riddell, 'Parker, John Henry (1806-1884)', *ODNB*.
[148] S.G. Green, *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years* (London, 1899).
[149] Universität- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, S.971, 155-166/156: M. Pattison to J. Bernays, 21 July 1856.
[150] Paget, 'reception of Baur', p. 338; J.A.H. Dempster, *The T&T Clark story. A Victorian publisher and the new theology with an epilogue covering the twentieth-century history of the firm* (Durham, 1992), pp. 3-11, 43-84
[151] Ibid., pp. 16, 26.

on the grounds that his writing was 'strange and fantastic', and too germanised for an English audience.[152] John Tulloch was close to the Blackwoods' firm in Edinburgh.[153] The Longmans, who had cashed in on Macaulay's *History of England* and presented its author with an unprecedented cheque for £20,000, also took on the work of writers as varied as Newman, Buckle, Lecky, Hatch, and the Unitarian Charles Beard.[154] Julius and Augustus Hare's *Guesses at Truth*, a remarkable epigrammatic collection first published in 1827, went through at least twenty editions at the hands of numerous publishing houses.[155] Milman captured something of the professed spirit of these intellectual and commercial partnerships when he remarked, in the course of characterising the transition from Catholic and Latin to Protestant and Teutonic Christianity, that books were becoming 'a co-ordinate priesthood'.[156]

Religious debates were not solely disseminated through books, but also through periodicals, magazines and newspapers. As with book publishing, the growing religious press gave much attention to religious historians' works and the cultural problems to which they were addressed; but so too did general and avowedly secular journals.[157] Josef Altholz estimated that of the twenty to twenty-five thousand Victorian periodicals, three thousand were specifically religious. He located the greatest expansion of Victorian newspapers in the context first of the reduction, then the repeal of the stamp tax, the advertisement duty and the paper duties – the so-called 'taxes on knowledge' – between 1836 and 1861.[158] Mass-circulation religious weeklies grew up, all of which carried book reviews: the *Record* for evangelical Anglicans; the *Guardian* for high Anglicans and the *Church Times* for still higher

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[152] National Library of Scotland. John Murray archive: MS 40819, 77-78: H.H. Milman to J. Murray, 4 October, 1831.
[153] Oliphant, *Memoir*, pp. 350-351.
[154] A. Briggs, 'Longman family (*per*. 1724-1972)', *ODNB*; Howsam, *Past into print*, p. 8.
[155] N. Merrill Distad, 'Hare, Julius (1795-1855)', *ODNB*.
[156] *HLC*, i, 9.
[157] Bayly remarks that print created imagined religious communities just as much as national ones: *Birth of the modern world*, p. 357.
[158] Altholz, *Religious press in Britain*, pp. [1]-13.

Anglicans. Gladstone reportedly praised the *Guardian* as the best available news weekly, not merely for ecclesiastical but for general intelligence.[159]

More extended essays, often representing the fruit of serious intellectual labour in an age without specialised academic journals, appeared in the many religious periodicals founded in the period, of which by no means all were sectarian. To instance only a few of the most pertinent to this study, the Unitarian *Prospective Review*, *National Review* and *Theological Review*, which succeeded one another between 1845 and 1879, exercised an intellectual influence disproportionate to the Unitarians' small numbers.[160] The Broad Church cleric and historian John Hunt made tours of Germany in which he sought eminent professors to contribute to the *Contemporary Review* during and after Dean Henry Alford's editorship of the periodical, which was founded in 1866.[161] Alford was a critical evangelical, but Hunt justifiably characterised the *Review*'s historically-minded leanings as liberal Protestant to those German scholars he wished to solicit to write for an English audience.[162] The religious and secular press were not radically severed from one another. The whiggish *Edinburgh Review* under Henry Reeve's editorship, and the radical *Westminster Review* were among the many non-religious journals which offered platforms for historical treatments of religion.[163]

The Victorian period was also marked by the establishment of endowed or specially-funded public lectureships to support different kinds of religious apologetic, and these along with the comparable lecture series founded in the age of the Enlightenment became focal points of commentary and controversy in newspapers and periodicals. These lectures usually took the

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[159] A *bon mot* from R. W. Church, one of the *Guardian*'s founders: A.B. Donaldson, *Five Great Oxford Leaders. Keble, Newman, Pusey, Liddon and Church*, 3rd edn (London, 1902), p. 330.
[160] Altholz, pp. [67]-78.
[161] Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preuβischer Kulturbesitz. Slg. Darmstaedter / 2 m 1852: John Hunt to Emil Du Bois-Reymond, 13 November 1877.
[162] Universitätsbibliothek München / 4⁰ Cod. ms. 917 m (181), 4: John Hunt to Jakob Frohschammer, 18 June 1870.
[163] T. Lynn Broughton, 'Reeve, Henry (1813-1895)', *ODNB*; on the *Westminster Review*, see R. Ashton, *142 Strand. A radical address in Victorian London* (London, 2006).

form of a series given annually or biennially, and they had different origins and emphases. Publication was generally a condition of the lecturer's acceptance of the accompanying stipend. Among the older lecture series, the Boyle Lectures, given in London churches, were dedicated to the relationship between Christianity and natural philosophy.[164] The Bampton Lectures were specifically Anglican – they were preached in St Mary's Church in Oxford - and lecturers were expected to defend Trinitarian orthodoxy.[165] In 1836, Congregationalists established the Congregational Lecture, to emulate the Church of England's equivalent foundations.[166] In Edinburgh, the Cunningham Lectures were founded by the generosity of an Edinburgh surgeon and Free Churchman in his will of 1862, to honour the memory of William Cunningham and provide the centrepiece of the New College's academic calendar.[167] In 1878, the Hibbert Trustees established a lectureship for the treatment of philosophy, biblical criticism, and 'comparative theology' in a freer spirit than the Congregational or Bampton lectures supposedly permitted. They did so after receiving a memorial from liberal worthies, including John Tulloch, John Caird and A. P. Stanley, calling on them to do so. The lectures were to be delivered either in London or in one of the main British cities.[168] The Gifford Lectures, endowed by a bequest from a rich judge in 1888 and thereafter delivered in the ancient Scottish universities, were dedicated to natural theology. [169] Natural and revealed theology were specifically separated in the deed of trust: a stipulation

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[164] On the earlier history of the Lectures, see J.J. Dahm, 'Science and apologetics in the early Boyle Lectures', *Church History*, 39:2 (1970), pp. 172-186.
[165] 'Extract from the last will and testament of the late Rev. John Bampton, Canon of Salisbury', prefixed to W.D. Conybeare, *An analytical examination into the character, value, and just application of the writings of the Christian Fathers during the ante-Nicene period. Being the Bampton Lectures for the year MDCCCXXXIX* (Oxford, 1839).
[166] 'Advertisement', prefixed to J. Stoughton, *Ages of Christendom: before the Reformation* (London, 1857).
[167] 'Extract declaration of trust, etc, March 1, 1862', prefixed to R.S. Candlish, *The fatherhood of God. Being the first course of the Cunningham Lectures delivered before the New College, Edinburgh, in March 1864* (Edinburgh, 1864).
[168] [James Martineau], 'Preface', to F.M. Müller, *Lectures on the origin and growth of religion as illustrated by the religions of India. Delivered in the Chapter House, Westminster Abbey, in April, May, and June, 1878* (London, 1878), [vi]-viii; 'Memorial for the foundation of a Hibbert Lecture', prefixed to Müller, *Lectures*; A. Ruston, 'Hibbert, Robert (1769-1849)', *ODNB*.
[169] J. Tait, 'Gifford, Adam, Lord Gifford (1820-1887)', *ODNB*.

which proved congenial, in the early years of the lectures, to Idealist philosophers.[170] Historical subjects were commonly treated within these avowedly apologetic frameworks. Enlightenment-era natural theology increasingly gave way to historical philosophy in these platform set-pieces.

The discussion of religious history in books, newspapers, periodicals and public lectures would not have taken place with such energy without the distinctive and historically-specific ideas of authorial voice and cultural leadership which prominent and less prominent historical thinkers took for granted. These did not obviously come to an end with the increasing professionalisation of academic study in the closing decades of the century. The liberal Church of Scotland divine John Tulloch grouped together George Eliot, Benjamin Disraeli, Carlyle and Stanley, following their deaths in 1880 and 1881, as 'spiritual teachers' of the past generation.[171] John Caird, welcoming the greater specialisation in Scottish university studies for which he pushed, told Glasgow students in 1885 that 'the science of history' encouraged mankind to be confident of a future of ripened wisdom and self-control. Alluding to Macaulay's metaphor, he declared that no New Zealander would ever come to sketch the ruins from Westminster Bridge provided that Britain resisted insularity, and remained opened to the world as to the past.[172] These assumptions about the power of written and spoken argument to sway attitudes, for better or for worse, were not internal to the self-appointed clerisy; they were generally held. An anonymous reviewer of Stanley's *Lectures on the history of the Eastern Church* (*LEC*) in 1861 considered that, in the present state of higher learning, 'the Oxford Professor of Ecclesiastical History is entitled to regard himself as the

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[170] J.H. Stirling, *Philosophy and theology. Being the first Edinburgh Gifford Lectures* (Edinburgh, 1890).
[171] Tulloch, 'Dean Stanley as spiritual teacher and theologian', p. 869.
[172] J. Caird, 'The science of history', in his *University addresses. Being addresses on subjects of academic study delivered at the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1898), pp. 261-277. For a critical history of 'anglicising' nineteenth-century Scottish university reform, republished for a new age, see G.E. Davie, *The democratic intellect. Scotland and her universities in the nineteenth century*, 3rd edn (Edinburgh, 2013).

Professor for all England, with a chair only locally situated at Oxford … he speaks to the nation, and for the nation'.[173] They were sentiments Stanley certainly shared.

(V) Structure

The structure of the thesis reflects an important characteristic of Victorian historical argument about religion. Rather than taking a biographical or prosopographical form, the chapters are instead thematic, each taking evolving Victorian responses to a particular subject as its theme. In nineteenth-century historical discourse, discussion of particular periods – whose legacies seemed to be embedded in the present - focused attention on particular complexes of intellectual issues. The early church, always foundational to the high church tradition, acquired new and eventually subversive importance in the hands of Tractarians – especially Newman – in their search for the basis of dogmatic authority. Medieval religion, generally understood to live on in the nineteenth century in the form of Roman Catholicism, invited discussion of the rights and wrongs of that newly re-energised system. The Reformation, and the difficult religious history of post-Reformation Britain and Europe, were understood to have formed the Protestant traditions by which British social and intellectual life were still so deeply coloured. The possibilities and limits of those traditions were reshaped in the Victorian period by engagement with Protestant history. Connected to and distinct from these arguments was a debate, often informed by new, sociological approaches to the past, about the sources and character of intellectual and social modernity. This informed conflicting interpretations of how the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had prepared the ground for nineteenth-century thought. The Victorian preoccupation with origins extended beyond

[173] 'Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church', *SR*, 11:289 (11 May, 1861), p. 482.

natural history, to encompass equally the religious past.[174] By examining changing Victorian attitudes to the epochs in which Christian orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, and modernity were understood to have taken shape, it becomes possible better to understand how critics viewed the present and future prospects of religion and secularity.

Traditionalists and liberal interpreters of tradition approached these periods in markedly different ways. Revivalists tended to fasten on particular points or phases in religious history as worthy of exaltation and present-day emulation. The periods selected, and the ways in which they were discussed, expressed a particular set of values and assumptions about true religion and its relationship to human experience in time. 'The monuments of antiquity', the Tractarian John Keble advised the hearers of his sermon on 'primitive tradition', 'may disclose to our devout perusal much that will be to this age new, because it has been mislaid or forgotten'.[175] Strong Protestants and hard-line Tractarians combined this disposition with the belief that history was marked by dramatic ruptures, when pure and holy states of religion and society gave way to corruption: ruptures with crucial consequences for the present. Edward Bickersteth, endorsing 'the excellent Joseph Milner', denied that there was such a thing as gradual progression in religious knowledge: pure religion came and went as the Holy Spirit poured itself forth, or withheld its operations.[176] The greatest such effusion, from an evangelical point of view, was the Reformation – which others execrated with equal force. The violently Tractarian Hurrell Froude shocked posterity by admitting that 'really I hate the Reformation and the Reformers more and more', preferring the supposed social and religious unity of the middle ages.[177] Early-Victorian evangelicals and high churchmen, for all their

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[174] An observation made by M. Wheeler, *The old enemies. Catholic and Protestant in nineteenth-century English culture* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 51.
[175] J. Keble, *Primitive tradition recognised in Holy Scripture. A sermon, preached in the cathedral church of Winchester, at the visitation of the worshipful and reverend William Dealtry, D.D., chancellor of the diocese, September 27, 1836* (London, 1836), p. 53.
[176] Bickersteth, *Christian student*, p. 236 n.
[177] [J.H. Newman and J. Keble] (eds), *Remains of the late reverend Richard Hurrell Froude, M.A.* (4 vols, London and Derby, 1838-1839), i, 389.

differences, were united in their hostility to the alleged religious indifference and secularity of the eighteenth century.[178]

Liberal critics viewed these desires to resurrect or reignite the past to be characteristic of the conservatives they opposed. They stressed that such programmes were untenable, preferring instead to understand the significance of past periods within the context of a broader, progressive unity – on the nature of which, of course, they could not agree. Westcott noted with displeasure that 'a powerful school of churchmen aims at regenerating society by reproducing the past'.[179] John Caird insisted, with notes of Carlyle, that religious and political life could only ever be the spontaneous expression of the age as it was in the present. For men to 'revive what they call primitive customs, re-introduce the cloister-life into a world of railways and stock exchanges' was no saner than for a man 'to speak in baby-talk, or clothe himself in the bibs and tuckers of his childhood'.[180] The metaphor of spiritual progression from childhood to manhood in the history of the race often surfaced in liberal historical argument, though it was controversial. John Tulloch encapsulated the liberalising spirit in a sermon he delivered in the 1870s:

> Faith is a progressive insight, and dogma is a variable factor. No sane man nowadays has the faith of the medievalist. No modern Christian can think in many respects as the Christians of the seventeenth century, or of the twelfth century, or of the fourth century. No primitive Christian would have fully understood Athanasius in his contest against the world. It was very easy at one time to chant the Athanasian hymn – it is easy for some still; but very hard for others. Are the latter worse or better Christians on this account?[181]

The following chapters track how liberal thinkers sought to apply analogous insights to the intellectual problems raised by different periods of the religious past, and what the

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[178] D. Welsh, *Elements of church history. Vol. I. Comprising the external history of the church during the first three centuries* (Edinburgh, 1844), pp. 403-405; M. Pattison, 'Tendencies of religious thought in England, 1688-1750', in Shea and Whitla, *Essays and Reviews*, p. [387].
[179] Westcott, *spiritual office of the universities*, p. 11.
[180] J. Caird, 'The study of history', in his *University addresses*, p. 238.
[181] J. Tulloch, *Religion and theology. A sermon for the times*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh and London, 1875), p. 12.

implications of doing so were. Chapter two shows how the early Victorian monopolisation of early church history by Tractarians gave way both to social and political histories of the period which construed the ends of religion very differently, and to idealising re-readings of doctrinal history as the expression of developing mind. The chapter considers Newman's *Essay* and its reception, and contends that this text epitomised a crucial change in the epistemological significance of history in Victorian argument about religion. Chapter three, focusing especially on Milman's *History of Latin Christianity* (*HLC*) and its contexts, explores how liberal histories of medieval Catholicism acted to challenge both anti-Catholicism and reactionary eulogies for 'medievalism' as the period came to seem to have played a progressive role in the emergence of modern Europe. Chapter four examines how liberal demands for a reformation of British Protestant culture demanded a reassessment of the origins and significance of the Reformation and its legacy. These chapters show how the diminution of confessionalism through changing ideas of history was linked to the growing urgency of vindicating the spiritual and providential character of history as a whole, in the face of secularising dangers. The fifth chapter focuses directly on this latter problem. It analyses rival conceptions of the emergence and historical character of social and intellectual modernity. Critics who aimed to historicise the intellectual and socio-political trends of the modern period were deeply divided on the fundamental question of whether they amounted to secularisation or to the purification of Christianity. Positivist, 'scientific' and agnostic constructions of social and intellectual history are examined in relation to rival, liberal Protestant readings of history as a spiritually-guided ascent; the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came to bear new meanings in this context. The chapter argues that the limits of mind – both the mind of the historian as a religious interpreter, and the mind of the historical subject – were increasingly at the centre of this argument. By 1914, the beliefs that Christian doctrine had been shaped and purified by human subjective experience, and that historical

progress could not be severed from the spiritual roots of higher human volition, had become reassuring, if somewhat fragile barriers to materialist and secularised understandings of human time. It was only rather later that these post-theological conceptions of historical dynamism acquired their appearance of inevitability.

Chapter two. The early church

I) Introduction

> The unrest of our time is essentially religious, for political questions depend on social, and social on religious. Thus the reconstruction of society depends on the reconstruction of religion; and that is a work we shall have to do from the foundations, as it was done in the time of Athanasius.[182]

H. M. Gwatkin, the Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge, spoke for many of his generation when he claimed that the early Christian era bore a close resemblance to the nineteenth century. In depicting the fourth century to be of foundational importance for his own time, Gwatkin was offering a late-Victorian inflection of a view which to his contemporaries and immediate forebears, clerical, lay and indeed secular-minded, would have seemed conventional. The importance of the growth of a new religion which had subsumed classical civilisation into incipient Christendom, in a process that had entrenched theological dogmatism as the intellectual starting-point of the modern west and carried with it the seeds of long-distant revolutions, was obvious to them. Victorian thinkers engaged intensively with this epoch, whose political and intellectual transformations were ultimately constitutive of their own mental worlds. To study it – to narrate and analyse afresh the early doctrinal controversies and their relation to later classical civilisation – was, as Gwatkin perceived, also to re-examine and possibly to rework the founding assumptions of national and European religion and, by Victorian extension, the framework of all other experience. Such was the effect, whether the guiding intention was conservative, transformative, or both together.

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[182] H.M. Gwatkin, *The unrest of our time. A paper read at the Church Congress, Bradford, September, 1898* (Derby, 1898), p. 2.

Subsequent scholarship has not ignored the complex and controversial Victorian approaches to the early church so much as it has considered them unevenly. Because historians have tended to be drawn into Victorian patristic engagement as a result of their prior interests in the Oxford Movement, which presented itself as a restoration of Christian antiquity, or nineteenth-century biblical critics, for whom patristic research was often a way into the textual history of the New Testament, Victorian preoccupations with the dynamics of the early church as an autonomous period are today only glimpsed in fragments.[183] The fact that even this interest, moreover, has arisen more often from theological than from strictly historical questions has meant that current understanding of the historical contexts, and wider intellectual-historical significance, of the writing of early church history in the nineteenth century remains underdeveloped.[184] This chapter provides a more integrated assessment of the different ways in which Victorians came to think about the development of the early church as representing a creative period in its own right. It recovers the neglected and unexpected ways in which they found the initial consolidation of Christian orthodoxy and

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[183] On the relationship between the Oxford Movement and the study of patristics, see Nockles, *Oxford Movement in context*, pp. 104-145; L. Frappell, '"Science" in the service of orthodoxy: the early intellectual development of E.B. Pusey', in P. Butler (ed.), *Pusey rediscovered* (London, 1983), pp. 1-33; N. Lossky, 'The Oxford Movement and the revival of patristic theology', in P. Vaiss (ed.), *From Oxford to the people. Reconsidering Newman and the Oxford Movement* (Leominster, 1996), pp. 76-82. A suggestive foray into the publishing history of the early church fathers in the Victorian period may be found in D.F. Wright, '"From a quarter so totally unexpected": translation of the Early Church Fathers in Victorian Scotland', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 30 (2000), pp. 124-169. The development of British New Testament criticism has understandably loomed large in scholarly accounts of Victorian interest in early Christianity, though a synoptic history of biblical criticism in nineteenth-century Britain has yet to be written. On Ferdinand Christian Baur's impact in Britain, see Paget, 'reception of Baur', pp. [335]-386. The 'Cambridge Triumvirate' of Lightfoot, Hort and Westcott, as biblical critics and as historians of early Christianity, have attracted considerable interest: S. Neill and T. Wright, *The interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1988), esp. pp. [35]-64; D.M. Thompson, *Cambridge theology in the nineteenth century. Enquiry, controversy and truth* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. [95]-121; G.R. Treloar, *Lightfoot the historian: the nature and role of history in the life and thought of J.B. Lightfoot (1828-1889) as churchman and scholar* (Tübingen, 1998); G.A. Patrick, *The miners' bishop. Brooke Foss Westcott*, 2nd edn (Peterborough, 2004), esp. pp. 42-66; G. A. Patrick, *F. J. A. Hort, eminent Victorian* (Sheffield, 1988). On Victorian literary engagements with the early church as ways of discussing martyrdom, sex, and the Christian life, see N. Vance, *The Victorians and ancient Rome* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. [197]-221; Wheeler, *The old enemies*, pp. 51-76. On Arianism in the nineteenth century, see M. Wiles, *Archetypal heresy. Arianism through the centuries* (Oxford, 1996), pp. [165]-176.

[184] B.J. King, *Newman and the Alexandrian fathers: shaping doctrine in nineteenth-century England* (Oxford, 2009), integrates Newman's developing patristic priorities with changes in the intellectual worlds he inhabited; though published in a theological monograph series, it represents an important historical advance.

civilisation relevant to the religious and philosophical problems of their own age. Orthodoxy was itself a contingent concept, which was understood, appropriated or marginalised through different interpretations of the historical period leading up to its definition by the general councils of the church.

The history of Victorian engagement with the early church necessarily begins with the Oxford Movement and its intellectual prehistory. The second section of the chapter accordingly examines how patristic exegesis became fundamental to the self-image of anti-dissenting and anti-latitudinarian high churchmen during the 1830s, and considers the rejoinders launched by more strongly Protestant thinkers across the same terrain. Growing out of this discord, yet substantially transmuting it, Newman's 1845 *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* subsequently heralded an epochal change in the ways in which the early church immediately, and religious history as a whole, were to be conceived.

The third section introduces the process by which interest in the early church moved beyond the controversy provoked by Tractarianism. Newman's *Essay*, by reading history as a kind of moral philosophy and recording the expansion of collective and ultimately Roman Catholic Christian principles from the point of view of his own overpowering conscience, wrought two prime discursive effects. The first was to force the issue of development in the early church onto scholarly notice; it became more difficult to point to any one version of Victorian Christianity and claim that it embodied the primitive ideal. The second was to open up for self-conscious reflection the problem of what it meant to argue historically about religion. Before Newman, many polemicists assumed that the historian could point to this or that version of the truth as logically and dispassionately inferred from scripture, on the basis of clearly specifiable evidence. Newman, however, had made historical interpretation not merely corroborative of past logical inferences, but inherent to determining what religion ought to be. For practical purposes, the distinction between the knower and the object of

religious knowledge was blurred by the contention that evolving history was a perennial point of contact between God and the frail human interpreter. This line of argument made Newman relatively more attractive to contemporary liberal thinkers than to traditionalist high churchmen or evangelicals. Early Victorian contact with German historical philosophy was a major element in producing this shift.

By historicising religious knowledge, liberals sought to construct the place of religion in the life and thought of the progressive individual, in order – it was hoped – to mark out the continued place of religion in modern society. Two broadly distinct views of how to accomplish this became visible in the public controversy immediately generated by Newman's *Essay*, and recurred, in different forms, throughout Victorian discussion of the history of religion. The first, advocated by the liberal Anglican Henry Hart Milman, tended towards a social and political history of early Christianity. It ascribed the changing dogmatic forms of the religion to variable external factors, and sought to play down their importance in favour of an historical and present-minded emphasis on the relations between religious ethics, society, and the state. A significantly different line of criticism, among the founders of which were Frederick Denison Maurice and Julius Hare, started neither from the external determinants of religious forms nor an assumption that doctrinal formularies were relatively unimportant. They instead proceeded from the view that doctrinal history had been propelled by the fuller apprehension over time of eternal truths, not rigidly separable from wider philosophical problems.

The chapter pursues these distinctive modes of understanding the development of the early church, as they were informed by particular understandings of the historian's office, by following the two distinguishable argumentative trajectories in the Victorian encounter with early Christianity after Newman. The two emphases – the one prioritising a speculative reinterpretation of how doctrine had come to be, and the other the concrete social experience

of religion – could lead to mutually antagonistic positions by the early decades of the twentieth century. These divergences mapped onto broader contemporary disagreements about the nature of history and the operation of providence within it. Beginning with the work and impact of the Prussian envoy and historian Christian von Bunsen, who was intimately linked to liberal Anglican intellectual and political circles, the fourth section focuses on why so many Victorian thinkers became interested in the history of Trinitarian doctrine and its relationship to the wider intellectual context in which it took shape. A chief focus of debates between deists and orthodox in the eighteenth century, the consubstantial relationship between Father, Son and Holy Ghost posited in the creeds since the Council of Nicaea became the subject of new kinds of argument in the nineteenth.[185] Not solely advanced thinkers such as Bunsen, but increasingly also high churchmen and some conservative Presbyterians, slowly came to see the interlocked histories of the Trinity and the Logos, the divine word connecting God and mankind, as the process by which human experience had come to unlock a rational framework for interpreting nature and history to an age of evolution.

No longer did these ideas seem quite the self-contained mysteries that earlier revivalists had made them out to be. The movement towards the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity instead became the final episode in the history of Greek philosophy.[186] Though many took

[185] On eighteenth-century Trinitarian disputes, see B.W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in eighteenth-century England. Theological debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998).
[186] The literature on nineteenth-century reception of Greek antiquity is large; important contributions include D. DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England* (Austin, 1969); R. Jenkyns, *The Victorians and ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1980); M. Beard, *The invention of Jane Harrison* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2000); S. Goldhill, *Victorian culture and classical antiquity: art, opera, fiction, and the proclamation of modernity* (Princeton, 2011); D.W. Bebbington, 'Gladstone and the classics', in L. Hardwick and C. Stray (eds), *A companion to classical receptions* (Malden and Oxford, 2008), pp. 86-97; C. Stray (ed.), *Classics in 19th and 20th-century Cambridge: curriculum, culture and community* (Cambridge, 1999); S. Evangelista, *British aestheticism and ancient Greece. Hellenism, reception, Gods in exile* (Basingstoke, 2009); L. Dowling, *Hellenism and homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca and London, 1994); S. Goldhill, *Who needs Greek? Contests in the cultural history of Hellenism* (Cambridge, 2002). These studies have not tended to explore Victorian modes of narrating and explaining the transition from antiquity to Christianity. But on contemporary literary characterisations of that transformation, which also stood for a present choice, see Goldhill, *Victorian culture*, pp. [153]-244.

'Hellenism' to be the highest expression of the human spirit, the relationship between Hellenism and Christianity was a hotly debated question which caused some to think that the nineteenth century was experiencing a cyclical repeat of the first three. For those who favoured idealising readings of the development of doctrine, Christianity co-opted and completed what was true and permanent in Greek thought. Whether and in what sense revelation was necessary to complete that history – and how far Christianity amounted to a rejection of classical culture - were, however, openly or implicitly disputed points. This new form of historical and metaphysical argument became an important means of replying to contemporary 'materialism' and determinist philosophy. It also provided a significant, and largely neglected, context for the late-century Incarnationalism familiar to historians of Victorian social and economic thought.[187]

The fifth section of the chapter considers how these new doctrinal preoccupations related to the argumentative concerns of historians who preferred to study the political and social history of early Christianity. It does so by focusing on the distinctive analytical approaches of two interconnected historians. Arthur Penhryn Stanley rather gently, and his admirer Edwin Hatch more systematically and unsettlingly, posed the question of how the doctrinal and social forms of Christianity had been influenced, even determined, by factors extrinsic to the religion itself. Their brand of liberalism was to play down the indispensability of orthodoxy in favour of ethical homiletics. Stanley, who by comparison with other liberal thinkers was relatively unmoved by German philosophical conceptions, preferred literary empathy as a way of softening the hard edges of traditional treatments of the early church. Edwin Hatch left emollient whiggism behind, in favour of 'scientific' rhetoric and a radical severance, connected to that wrought by Albrecht Ritschl, between the moral essence of Christianity and the critical history of religion. In so doing, Hatch detached the task of studying the history of

[187] Cf. Hilton, *Age of atonement*, pp. [298]-339.

Christianity from that of apologising for the course which that history had in fact taken. Stanley had neutralised doctrinal controversy by locating it at a past point in providentially-guided progress. Hatch, however, professedly excluded teleology from historical explanation, in a way that reinforced the sad picture of general corruption he presented in his studies of early Christian doctrinal and institutional history. The opposition Hatch encountered from both liberal and conservative opponents encapsulates the extent to which, by the early twentieth century, idealism had become an appealing prism through which to view early Christian religious experience. The meanings of liberalism and conservatism in religion had come to be defined and redefined through an historical medium that was itself unstable.

II) The patristic revival and rules of faith

'Sad rubbish': thus Thomas Gaisford, the anachronistically unenthusiastic Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, from 1831 to 1855, once dismissed the editions of the church fathers lining the shelves of the college library.[188] Increasing numbers of his contemporaries, not least in Oxford, thought otherwise. Tractarian lamentations that Enlightenment-era churchmen and religious speculators ignored or arrogantly scorned patristic writings in favour of cold and abstract reason were rhetorical and depended on a boldly selective reading both of Georgian churchmen and more subversive historians.[189] But if post-revolutionary high churchmen, and their eventual Tractarian wing, did not exactly unearth patristic texts which had lain dormant since 1688, they did seek to invest them with renewed religious authority, often in conscious

[188] T. Mozley, *Reminiscences chiefly of Oriel College and the Oxford Movement*, 2nd edn (2 vols, London, 1882), ii, 356.
[189] On eighteenth-century encounters with early church history, cf. J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and religion*, v; H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'From deism to history: Conyers Middleton', in his *History and the Enlightenment*, ed. J. Robertson (New Haven and London, 2010), pp. [71]-119; B.W. Young, 'John Jortin, ecclesiastical history, and the Christian republic of letters', *Historical Journal*, 55:4 (December, 2012), pp. 961-981.

contradistinction to the cavils of eighteenth-century authors. Thus the high church vision of the first Christian centuries, and not just that of card-carrying Tractarians, became one of those idealised pasts thrown up by the wider Romantic movement. The primitive era was seen as a time when heroic martyrs and almost inspired exegetes subdued the Roman world for an original deposit of faith now steadily cleared of heretical sophistry and confusion. A vision of pristine purity existing despite intense conflict, and yet also secured by it, appealed to high Anglicans, but not solely high Anglicans, during the stresses of the 1820s and 1830s. These portrayals, which were also ways of articulating self-images, went to the heart of questions over the importance to be attached to dogmatism, and how the relationship between the church and the world ought to be conceptualised.

Contemporary observers, not least critical ones, often spoke of a revival of interest in patristics and its central place in high church argument.[190] The primary reason for this intensification of interest lay in the Oxford Movement's renewed search for the origins of the Church of England which could be authoritatively asserted against Roman Catholic, dissenting and allegedly 'Erastian' Whig opponents. Peter Nockles has rightly observed that the differences between old high churchmen and Tractarians often followed the distinction between those who took a more corroborative, or alternatively a more dynamic view of early Christianity. All agreed that the rule of faith was to be the so-called 'Canon of Vincentius' - the idea that catholic truth was equivalent to what had been taught always, everywhere, and by all – but this was applied in distinctive ways. Pre-Tractarian high churchmen tended to value the fathers as interpreters of ambiguous points of scripture, and called them in as witnesses to the truth of the Thirty-Nine Articles and the standard sixteenth- and seventeenth-century divinity of the Church of England. Tractarians, on the other hand, romantically

[190] J.J. Blunt, *An introduction to a course of lectures on the early fathers, now in delivery in the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1840), p. 11; M. Pattison, *Memoirs of an Oxford don*, ed. V.H.H. Green (London, 1988), p. 95 (first edition 1885); Trevor-Roper, 'From deism to history', p. 119.

elevated patristic divinity to the status of an absolute judge, which might potentially overrule or imaginatively reinterpret established Anglican tenets and usages on points such as fasting, celibacy, and prayers for the dead.[191] The implications of this divergence were not immediately apparent, however. Before they were acutely exposed by Newman's conversion and his *Essay*, high churchmen of both kinds tended to share central assumptions concerning how to approach and use the fathers in argument. It was a conception of the relationship between religious truth, and its relation to the history of a particular period, that relied on what came to seem unsteady foundations.

High churchmen prioritised the early church for the answers it appeared to return to frequently controverted questions as to what constituted the saving doctrines of the faith once delivered to the saints, and which form of church polity guaranteed their safe transmission to future generations. They did not think that the doctrines they valued had 'developed', but instead assumed that there was an unchanging deposit of faith which had been handed down by the inspired apostles to their successors. Proof-texts, it was assumed, could be gathered from the chronologically-varied patristic statements of this deposit and made to yield reliable conclusions as to the canon, text and interpretation of scripture; the doctrine and discipline of the churches; the evidences for Christianity; and the nature of infidel objections to the religion.[192] The doctrinal definitions offered by general councils and pious fathers were merely restatements of or inferences from that shared substance, drawn out by heretical attacks. These definitions were the fruit not of historical development but of sound logic, which high churchmen might redeploy against more recent infidels without the hesitation later introduced by the belief that what the fathers had said had been shaped by their historical situation. The Cambridge-educated high churchman Hugh James Rose condemned

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[191] Nockles, *Oxford Movement in context*, pp. 104-145; Keble, *Primitive tradition*, pp. 21, 53; E.B. Pusey, *The rule of faith, as maintained by the fathers, and the Church of England* (Oxford, 1851), pp. 2-10.
[192] Blunt, *introduction*, p. 9; E. Burton, *Testimonies of the ante-Nicene fathers to the divinity of Christ*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1829), viii.

'the swarm of sects … which neither appeal to the church universal, to primitive antiquity, to fathers, to councils' nor heeded the Vicentian rule, in lectures before the newly-founded University of Durham in which he more than once returned to the image of 'the gates of hell' never prevailing against the church.[193]

This essentially dogmatic and deliberately controversial focus assumed and helped to reinforce an interdependent series of sharp antitheses: between the church and the world, the believer and the object of belief, salvific truth and damnable error. Because the church's beliefs were elaborated and guaranteed by logic led by fidelity, they were clearly separable from heresy, which was attributable to moral rebellion rather than historical situation. The thought that orthodoxy and heresy might share an historical context, and so be closer to one another than deduction might conclude, did not occur to such writers or, if it did, it did not affect their argument. 'Few things, perhaps, can more remarkably exemplify the tendency of the human heart to evil,' wrote the sometime Tractarian sympathiser, William Palmer of Worcester College, Oxford, 'than those subterfuges which it devises in order to avoid obedience to the will of a pure and all-wise God.'[194] High churchmen who thought in this way can be seen as in some ways representing an older tradition of religious controversialism, looking back to the challenges of the Enlightenment and the Counter-Reformation rather than to newer ones emerging from France and Germany. John James Blunt answered seventeenth-century Huguenots and the insinuations of Edward Gibbon; he also blamed the Great Rebellion on factious spirits such as Milton, who ignored the patristic stress on passive obedience.[195]

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[193] H.J. Rose, *An apology for the study of divinity* (London, 1834), p. 40; idem, *The study of church history recommended* (London, 1834), pp. 10-11, 26-27.
[194] W. Palmer, *A compendious ecclesiastical history, from the earliest period to the present time* (London, 1840), new vols, pp. 14-15.
[195] J.J. Blunt, *On the right use of the early fathers: two series of lectures, delivered in the University of Cambridge* (London, 1857), pp. 3-24; the lectures were delivered in 1845 and 1846.

These commentators were accordingly distant from, and often indeed resolutely opposed to, what soon became a trend among liberal historians and, later, even high churchmen: the merging of ecclesiastical and general history, and the blending of theology and philosophy. Conceptions of the historical enterprise, and the relationship between history and religion, were here inseparable from a religious point of view which posited an acute separation between God and the mundane. The belief that the church, invisible and visible, properly stood apart from and above the sinful world led Edward Burton, an anti-dissenting Bampton Lecturer who became Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford in 1829, to claim that 'the History of the Church is the history of truth'.[196] The analytical preoccupations of high church historians lay almost entirely in questions of doctrine, discipline, sacraments and liturgy.[197] The idea that early theologies and their historical development might be reinterpreted to provide a general philosophy of experience and history emerged only later.

The conviction against which that later fashion ran, that man was so wretchedly fallen as to be unable to trust his natural reason in matters of religion, caused several writers to emphasise the separation between the revelation wondrously given to mankind in history, the fortunes of which it was the duty of the church historian to record, and the capacity of the historically-situated human mind to fathom it. 'If the scheme of Christian redemption was not only revealed by God,' Burton continued, 'but every part of it was effected by the agency of God, without man knowing anything concerning it until it was thus effected and revealed, it seems impossible that such a system could be modified or improved by later and successive discoveries'.[198] Early conservatives thus stressed the transcendent mystery of the Trinity, and tended to regard it in Augustinian terms as an inscrutable set of relations among the divine

[196] E. Burton, *History of the Christian church; from the ascension of Jesus Christ, to the conversion of Constantine* (London, 1836), pp. 4-5.
[197] For example, W. Palmer, *A treatise on the church of Christ: designed chiefly for the use of students in theology*, 3rd edn (2 vols, London, 1842); first edition 1838.
[198] Burton, *History of the Christian church*, p. 9.

natures. 'It were vain to try amplification or ornament of such things as these', remarked the professor of moral philosophy at Trinity College, Dublin, William Archer Butler, in a sermon on the Incarnation.[199] Later historians were to emphasise the affinity between revelation and human reason much more boldly. Developmental accounts of early Christianity – tracing divine action alongside and involved in historical human growth – became an important means of attempting to effect that reconciliation. For many, historical explanation became indistinguishable from rational justification. Early Victorian high churchmen were a long way from that apologetic manoeuvre.

This stress on an unchanging and unitary primitive tradition ensured that antiquarianism became a standard charge made against high churchmen by liberal reviewers.[200] This antiquarianism was also said to be highly selective. An unsympathetic commentator would later say of Tractarians that 'while denouncing modern individualism, they had expected to be let pick and choose in the past'.[201] There was never full agreement as to when the authoritative period of antiquity, for practical purposes, had come to an end. All kept a special place for the period up to the Council of Nicaea in 325, which had condemned the Arian heresy and established Trinitarian orthodoxy on the basis of the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son.[202] But while many carried their accounts down to the fourth general council at Chalcedon in 451, which had confuted Nestorianism, others insisted that the fifth and sixth were also generally binding.[203] Within the period, or periods, the lines between superstition and fidelity were crossed confusingly often. An uncertain chronology of primitive antiquity, disturbingly exploited by Newman, was joined by a high church tendency

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[199] W.A. Butler, 'The mystery of the Holy Incarnation preached on Christmas Day', in his *Sermons, doctrinal and practical*, ed. T. Woodward, 2nd edn (Dublin, 1852), pp. 16-17; cf. E. Burton, 'Defence of the Athanasian creed', in his *Sermons, preached before the University of Oxford* (London, 1832), p. 279.

[200] Thought partly unfair by A.H. Sayce, 'Remains, literary and theological, of Connop Thirlwall', *The Academy*, 251 (24 February, 1877), pp. 155-156.

[201] A.W. Benn, *The history of English rationalism in the nineteenth century* (2 vols, London, 1906), i, 354.

[202] For example, Burton, *History of the Christian church.*

[203] W.A. Butler, *Letters on the development of Christian doctrine in reply to Mr. Newman's Essay*, ed. T. Woodward (Dublin, 1850), pp. 225-237; cf. Palmer, *Treatise on the church*, ii, 128-129.

to exclude speculative and doctrinally ambiguous early Christian writers from the authority they more unreservedly ascribed to Augustine or Athanasius. The third-century Alexandrian father, Origen, who had bridged Neoplatonist and Christian thought, was an object of suspicion.[204] William Conybeare, an old high churchman and geologist, warned in his Bampton Lectures 'that the Neological speculations of the nineteenth century are to the full as dangerous as the Alexandrian speculations of the third.'[205] Even Pope Gregory the Great was safer by comparison, and he featured in the *Library of the Fathers* begun by Pusey in 1838.[206] After 1850, liberal scholars would cast this Oxford Movement-era reticence towards speculative strands of Greek theology as a preference for dogmatic and restrictive Latinity over free and progressive Hellenism.[207] That early Christian Hellenism, as later Victorian generations would come to define it, appeared increasingly attractive not solely to liberal but also to a number of conservative religious thinkers.

While it was primarily high churchmen who made an interpretative authority out of patristic writings, the early church became a subject of interest for increasing numbers of strongly Protestant commentators who had not previously thought it relevant to look beyond the bible to help establish what ought and ought not to be believed. The change partly occurred because writers such as the layman Isaac Taylor and the London clergyman and evangelical stalwart William Goode found it necessary to confront the Tractarian danger on their own patristic terrain.[208] But refuting catholicising interpretations of antiquity was not the same as declaring the value of antiquity to be nugatory. Though it was taken to be invalid to try to confect a catholic consensus out of ancient writers, their study had a pragmatic value in

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[204] Burton, *History of the Christian church*, pp. 320-321.
[205] Conybeare, *Christian fathers*, p. 256.
[206] Gregory I, *Morals on the book of Job*, trans. C. Marriott and J. Bliss (3 vols, Oxford, 1844-1850).
[207] The idea that there was a fundamental distinction between Greek and Latin fathers had not yet become current in Newman's earlier period: King, *Alexandrian fathers*, pp. 21-22. On the Victorian notion of 'Latin Christianity', see chapter three below.
[208] I. Taylor, *Ancient Christianity and the doctrines of the Oxford Tracts for the Times* (2 vols, London, 1839-1842); W. Goode, *The divine rule of faith and practice* (2 vols, London, 1842).

witnessing to the original phase of the struggle for the victory of faith, and it carried timeless lessons. The evangelical Anglican leader, Edward Bickersteth, agreed with Milner that Protestants ought not to neglect the field, even while confessing that he did not know much about it.[209] On the difference between orthodoxy and heresy, and the distinction between the sacred and mysterious church of Christ and the profanity of the world, evangelical Protestants tended to be just as rigorist as the high churchmen they criticised for conflating the church of Christ and its external, institutional manifestations. The Free Churchman David Welsh, in keeping with the view that church history exclusively pertained to the fortunes of Christ's spiritual kingdom, offered a moral analysis of heresy as the fruit of 'a love of novelty, a spirit of enthusiasm, a passion for notoriety', and admired the work of the high Anglican Edward Burton.[210] Despite the great differences between high church 'patrolaters' and the growing number of Protestant writers who became interested in the subject, there were significant affinities between their main reasons for studying the early church, and what they believed to be important about it.

Much of the early Victorian argument discussed so far can be seen as strongly internalist. Theology, understood essentially as involving the correct ordering of human opinion in matters pertaining to the next world rather than this, was self-sufficient, requiring no justification beyond itself. When these ecclesiastics turned to the early church, whether for stridently Protestant or polemically Tractarian reasons, it was to help define fundamental doctrines such as the Trinity, to clarify the nature of sacraments, and to establish the indispensability or at least the legitimacy of given forms of ecclesiastical polity. The targets were adherents of other denominations, or eighteenth-century deists, or supposedly infidel political reformers. The aim was a return to or preservation of an exclusive, unchanging tradition. But the search for that unchanging tradition, through the new medium of history,

[209] E. Bickersteth, *Christian student*, pp. 214-218.
[210] Welsh, *Elements of church history*, pp. [1]-2, 28, 51.

acted subtly to change what it was understood to be. High churchmen sometimes became Tractarians; and Protestants began to think in new ways about the operation of providence in history after the death of the inspired apostles. The study of early church history started to lose something of its ecclesiasticism. Historians emerged who thought less of making logical inferences from a body of historically atomised if collectively privileged early Christian texts, but of what history itself could reveal about God's purposes, not solely in relation to the faithful individual or church, but in the world as a whole. That trend only strengthened as newer challenges to religious authority emerged, from agnosticism or scientific naturalism, which encouraged religious thinkers to invest the historical process, however defined, with a religious authority of its own. The first major intervention which acted to move debate in this direction came not from an Idealist or radical materialist thinker, but from the Tractarian convert to Rome, John Henry Newman.

III) Newman and liberal historicisms

The significance of Newman's 1845 *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, and the responses it generated, extended far beyond the Anglican patristic debates out of which they immediately arose. Newman's life's work consisted in opposition to liberalism and in defence of the role of objective authority in mediating an objective revelation. His *Essay* – at one level, an extended justification of his conversion to Roman Catholicism - showed how far this view relied on a particular assessment of the nature and meaning of Christian history which deliberately moved beyond traditional high church parameters. Newman's search for an infallible authority in the church, which from the 1820s had led him to beseech the witness

of the early fathers, always bore a relation to his abiding concern to establish the offices of reason and conscience in relation to authority.[211]

In thinking that history was the key to that relation, Newman came close to a number of liberal thinkers. A number of contemporary critics of the *Essay* agreed with Newman that the best guide to religious truth was not a stereotyped summary of a supposed patristic consensus. Rather, it was the privileging of conscience, both in the sense of the developing collective conscience which had yielded traditional doctrine, and of the historically-located, individual conscience in the present day through which tradition was to be approached and responded to. But while Newman came to believe that this position rightly led on to Roman Catholicism, his liberal critics used it to legitimise the rights of individuals and churches to criticise the past, or to read new meanings into tradition. These argumentative steps drew energy from new directions in German historical philosophy. They also established the conditions for later Victorian debates about the dynamics of early Christian history, and the extent to which the fruits of that history ought still to bind the nineteenth century.

Important lineaments of Newman's mature approach to patristic antiquity, and history as a whole, were already evident in his 1833 history of *The Arians of the Fourth Century*.[212] Newman tended to blend right belief with right moral disposition. He therefore explained the Arian heresy, which claimed that Christ was a created being, primarily as a moral failing, for it delved into the irreducible mystery of the Trinity with a disputatious and intellectualising Antiochene spirit.[213] *Arians* also pointed to Newman's dissatisfaction with the notion of scriptural self-sufficiency. He was led to study the history of doctrine partly by his belief that the biblical text was 'obscure'; its meaning was often best unlocked allegorically, as the

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[211] I. Ker, *John Henry Newman. A biography* (Oxford, 1988), pp. [257]-315.
[212] King, *Alexandrian fathers*, pp. [70]-126.
[213] J.H. Newman, *The Arians of the fourth century, their doctrine, temper, and conduct, chiefly as exhibited in the councils of the church between A.D. 325, & A.D. 381* (London, 1833), pp. [1]-42.

Alexandrians did.[214] One side of Newman favoured reserve in the communication of doctrine, and regretted the need for its fuller definition in the face of heresy on the grounds that this tended to cloud personal trust and invited excessive speculation.[215] Another welcomed dogmatic conflicts (against latitudinarian deprecations of them) as the means of making truth ‘pure’ before it could be ‘peaceable’.[216] Newman justified his own departure from the principle of reserve in offering a published account of *The Arians* by declaring that it was no essay in ‘controversy or proof’, but was instead ‘historical and explanatory’.[217] Thus Newman already preferred to reach beyond the proof-text methods of both contemporary evangelicals and fellow high churchmen, to grasp at moral principles and their expression in supposedly concrete and indisputable historical facts.

Newman’s 1845 *Essay* integrated his earlier moral philosophy of ecclesiastical history with a radical theory of historical dynamism. Newman had by then come to believe that the Church of Rome was a truer image of primitive Christianity than the Church of England. Such an argument had always been a staple of the Counter-Reformation; but Newman’s rendering of it in his *Essay* was new and, to some commentators, subversive. The radicalism lay in his acceptance that the modern Roman Catholic Church did not exactly resemble the church of the first age either, and, crucially, in his claim that its present doctrine and practice were nevertheless explicable and defensible on the basis of a theory of development. Historical facts in themselves did not suffice to produce any current form of Christianity. Conscience – always more real to Newman than old-fashioned arguments from evidences or reasonings upon proof-texts - had to vivify them by a theory, which historical data could illustrate but not provide. The old regulative principle of orthodox Anglicanism, the canon of Vincentius,

[214] Ibid., pp. 63-124.
[215] Ibid., p. 41.
[216] Ibid., p. 263.
[217] Ibid., p. 151.

no longer convinced Newman, or at least not in its conventional sense.[218] It could not accommodate the fact that the history of the church was one of constant growth, and even offended against that truth. It was impossible to point at a particular moment, as Protestants or high churchmen tried to do, and declare that true development had stopped there. For Newman, the incorporation of the idea of development was not so much a reluctant concession as a sign of life; indeed, it was an inherent feature of Christianity. The historic faithfulness of Rome to apostolic beginnings could, Newman felt, be discerned by the application of a series of tests, to distinguish true developments from corruptions.[219] His tests legitimised the monastic rule, cults of saints, and Marianism, among other traditions. Newman's *Essay* accordingly sought to give an account of how the hints and enticements of the early sources, scriptural and patristic, had grown into the fullness of Catholic practice and Roman authority, from admittedly slimmer origins.

> It is the peculiarity of the human mind, that it cannot take an object in, which is submitted to it, simply and integrally. It conceives by means of definition or description; whole objects do not create in the intellect whole ideas, but are, to use a mathematical phrase, thrown into series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other, and with more or less exactness approximating, as they accumulate, to a perfect image.[220]

These developments were not, Newman insisted, changes to revelation, or even a continuation of it. They were, in almost a Platonic sense, 'aspects' of an 'idea'. He often spoke of Christianity as an 'idea'. Newman found that his idea of the antecedent probability of developments mapped onto the actual course – the 'fact', another of his favourite words – of Catholic history, including an infallible church and the richness of its religious expression. Newman's doctrine of conscience – the centrality he ascribed to his own conscience, blended with a notion of the expansion of the collective Christian conscience in time – regulated what

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[218] Newman, *Essay*, pp. 7-9.
[219] These were 'preservation of idea'; 'continuity of principles'; 'power of assimilation'; 'early anticipation'; 'logical sequence'; 'chronic continuance'; 'preservative additions'. The tests are therefore sevenfold, a holy number surely not lost on their mystical inventor: ibid., pp. 57-93.
[220] Ibid., p. [94].

kind of external religious authority he was prepared to accept. Newman's search for universal authority, combined with his high sense of the importance of personal conscience, exemplified the contemporary ambivalence surrounding the proper basis for religious truth claims.[221] At the same time, the importance Newman ascribed to history, and his view that a theory of historical 'development' could serve as a shared intellectual basis for present-day religious commitment, offered him ways of overcoming allegedly destructive subjectivism. In this way, one of the most mystical and independent-minded of Victorians was also truly representative.

A fragmentary awareness of German historical philosophy appears to have helped to move Newman into more deliberate demarcation from his contemporaries' static conception of patristic authority. Newman remarked that the theory he offered 'I believe, has recently been illustrated by several distinguished writers of the continent,' among whom he listed Johann Adam Möhler, who had written of doctrine's subjective and historically dynamic dimensions.[222] While it would be going too far to say that Möhler and the Catholic Tübingen School directly influenced Newman's argument, the circle that had closed around Newman, who could not himself read German, were certainly reading Möhler in French translation.[223] Newman's conservative critics were not slow to accuse him of German 'rationalism'.

Much of the debate which Newman's *Essay* provoked in the periodical press centred on the propriety and implications of suggesting that doctrine and the church were the results of development. The argument between Newman and at least his more sophisticated contemporary Protestant and high church critics indeed concerned the rights and wrongs of Roman Catholicism, but that was a second-order question. The question was more fundamentally whether it was right to see an historical theory, of a human mind's deliberate

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[221] See chapter one above.
[222] Newman, *Essay*, p. 27; on Möhler, see chapter one above.
[223] Chadwick, *Bossuet to Newman*, pp. 96-119.

devising, as an appropriate way to interpret the oracles of God. The older conceptions of the historical office of the church outlined earlier rested on the assumption that the exercise of logic upon scripture and patristics was sufficient to arrive at objective truth – to draw inferences from a self-authenticating original deposit. Past figures were to be praised or blamed in accordance with their clarity or fidelity in respect of it. But Newman seemed to make truth, or what was understood to be truth, an outgrowth of the human mind in history – rather than a *deus ex machina* from without. To many, this seemed to make any attempt to establish positive doctrines on the basis of revelation, or even revelation itself, fundamentally untenable.

This anxiety permeated the reply to Newman put forward by William Archer Butler. Published posthumously in 1850, Butler's interrogation of Newman originally took the form of letters to the *Irish Ecclesiastical Journal* written between 1845 and 1847, during hours snatched from his work at famine relief. The 'Development-Hypothesis', Butler argued, was little more than a substitution of 'high-toned and elaborate descriptions of the course of mere *historical eventuation*, or little more than this, for the legitimate *logical connexion* of the disputes with admitted doctrines.' It could accordingly be turned to any use, rationalist or superstitious, according to taste. 'The *very same* developing process that led Kant, and his innumerable followers, to find at last Christianity complete "within the limits of the Pure Reason," has led Mr. Newman to find it complete only in Popery.'[224]

The very fact of thinking developmentally in the way Newman did was innately rationalistic, thought Butler, for it prioritised unaided human reason in establishing truths of religion.[225] What could ever impose a limit on the implications thus drawn, save for the author's private fancies? Butler called Newman's essay an 'intellectual romance' for this reason, a view

[224] Butler, *Letters*, pp. 85-88.
[225] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

shared by many others. William Palmer of Worcester accused Newman of reviving mysticism, for he made conscience the sole judge of religious truth to the exclusion of external evidences.[226] An anonymous critic in the moderately high church *English Review* thought it absurd to imagine that a lawgiver would ever couple his enactments with 'internal proofs of their truth'. For this was insensibly to shift the grounds of their enactment into 'the subject's own reason' – and so to encourage 'reason to imagine modifications, and evasions, and qualifications'.[227] While the Free Churchman William Cunningham could not repress a certain satisfaction that Newman had, in his view, exposed the traditional high Anglican position as untenable, he condemned him for making natural human reason overrule revelation in the same way as German neologians did.[228] To both high church and more Protestant conservatives, Newman seemed to be blending the knower and the object of knowledge. On Newman's account, the expanding feelings, intuitions and logical powers of historical man apparently conditioned what was taken to be revelation, in ways that brought him unacceptably close to advanced religious heterodoxy.[229]

Those opponents who greeted Newman somewhat less frostily tended to be religious liberals, who also believed that Christianity could best be characterised, defended or purified by treating it as subject to development in history. But they did not understand this development as having led the church, and as still leading the conscientious individual, towards Roman Catholicism. In the reviews Newman's *Essay* attracted, two alternative ways of understanding the development of the early church were visible, which also became ways of normalising and regulating development in the present. The first, proceeding from an

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[226] W. Palmer, *The doctrine of development and conscience considered in relation to the evidences of Christianity and of the Catholic system* (London, 1846), viii.
[227] 'Newman's Essay on Development', *ENR*, 4:8 (December, 1845), pp. 412-413.
[228] W. Cunningham, 'Romanist theory of development', in his *Discussions on church principles: popish, Erastian and Presbyterian* (Edinburgh, 1863), pp. 41-42, 53-57; the essay was reprinted from the *NBR* for August 1846.
[229] Palmer, *Doctrine of Development*, pp. 135-137, 148-149; Cunningham, 'Romanist theory of development', pp. 35-75.

elevation of conscience similar to Newman's, valued orthodoxy as the expression of the church's collective reason in time but saw historically-guided conscience as the medium of interpreting it to the modern intellect. In the hands of Frederick Denison Maurice, Julius Hare, and Connop Thirlwall, who argued along these lines, the theology of the early church was interpreted through and became part of a religiously-grounded philosophy of experience and history unconfined to any one ecclesiastical system or phase of past growth. The second, evident in Henry Hart Milman's review of Newman's *Essay*, focused not on the development of doctrine but on the relations between the church, politics, and society. While there was an overlap between Milman's simple gospel and the moral philosophy of Maurice and Hare, there was also a latent and, later, an explicit tension between the two approaches. Social histories of Christianity, and reinterpretations of Christian doctrinal history, were not always underpinned by a shared understanding of how best to sustain the religion's cultural authority.

Frederick Denison Maurice included a preface on Newman's theory in the published version of his Warburton Lectures on the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, which appeared in 1846. Maurice had been baptised into the Church of England in 1831, but his abiding interest in Coleridge and Platonic ontology encouraged him to interpret particular forms of polity and doctrine from the point of view of an ideal of Christian catholicity presumed in and discovered through history.[230] He broadened Newman's conception of religiously authoritative tradition beyond developing Catholicism, to incorporate all of mankind's spiritual history. Maurice agreed with Newman that there was an 'antecedent probability' that God should have placed 'a developing authority in the midst of all'. But that authority was not an infallible pope. If it was true, as Maurice believed, that the manifestation of divine power took place through the conscience of man, that authority instead lay in history and its heroes and crises, which might

[230] Morris, *Maurice*, pp. [55]-97.

be studied for signs of higher counsels. To separate the institutional church from that wider activity, as Newman did, was to commit the prevailing contemporary sin of mechanicalism.[231] Maurice's *Ecclesiastical History of the First and Second Centuries*, published in 1854, accordingly depicted the historical emergence of Trinitarianism in the subjective mind of the church as the necessary expression and guarantee of the transformed consciousness of ethical life, and its basis in the relationship between man and God, wrought by the Christian revelation.[232] Whereas Newman had made a similar stress on developing conscience end very differently, in the foreclosure of argument by papal authority, Maurice aimed to show that the origins of orthodoxy in moral and spiritual consciousness made orthodoxy, properly understood, the prism through which to view experience and the basis of ethical action.

Julius Hare combined strong opposition to Newman with deep admiration for Maurice. He commended Maurice's preface to the *Hebrews*, reflecting his own confidence in the internal capacities of the human mind to see religious truth and his admiration of the generative process by which that power had in the past expanded into the fullness of Christian doctrine.[233] He developed his own response to Catholic developmental theories, besides a host of other contemporary targets, in *The Mission of the Comforter*, published in 1846 and dedicated to Coleridge. This was a series of sermons preached before Cambridge University, together with a remarkable apparatus of scholarly notes, aimed at transcending 'mechanical' Tractarian and evangelical understandings of the Holy Spirit. Whereas these traditionalists posited that the development of truth had halted at particular historical moments such as the

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[231] F.D. Maurice, *The Epistle to the Hebrews; being the substance of three lectures delivered in the chapel of the honourable society of Lincoln's inn, on the foundation of Bishop Warburton. With a preface containing a review of Mr. Newman's theory of development* (London, 1846), xxxiv-xliii.
[232] Idem, *Lectures on the ecclesiastical history of the first and second centuries* (Cambridge, 1854), pp. [289]-308.
[233] J.C. Hare, *The contest with Rome: a charge to the clergy of the archdeaconry of Lewes, delivered at the ordinary visitation in 1851: with notes, especially in answer to Dr Newman's recent lectures* (London, 1852), p. 132.

Council of Nicaea, Hare conceived of the Holy Spirit as guiding the progressive development of Christian thought, the fruits of which could only be judged by the intrinsically poetic and religious faculty of historical criticism.

In *The Mission of the Comforter*, Hare noted that the idea of doctrinal development had been appropriated by Roman Catholic writers such as Newman. But Hare considered that it was impossible for a church which, in his view, had always aimed to repress the intellect now to deploy in its support a theory which depended on permitting the free growth of mind. The Catholic theorists had arbitrarily declared development over by the thirteenth or fourteenth century; but by their own reasoning, the Reformation was a marvellous example of it. Hare found it remarkable that a theory which had been 'baffled' in Germany itself was now counted the strongest bastion of English Romanism.[234] To accept development was, properly speaking, to legitimise critical inquiry and new perspectives in religion. In an earlier work, *Guesses at Truth*, Hare had summarised his own very different philosophy of development:

> Ghosts never work miracles: nor do they ever come to life again. When they appear, it is to beg to be buried, or to beg to be revenged; without which they cannot rest. Both ways their object is to lie in peace. This should be borne in mind by political and philosophical ghostseers, ghostlovers, and ghostmongers. The past is past, and must pass through the present, not hop over it, into the future.[235]

Hare's heavily Coleridgean views drew support from a conservative interpretation of developments in German historical philosophy.[236] These attitudes made Hare unsympathetic towards what he called Tractarian 'patrolaters'. The fathers, he argued, had no peculiarly privileged insight in matters of faith; such wisdom was confined to no period. The wonder

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[234] Idem, *The mission of the comforter and other sermons with notes* (2 vols, London, 1846), i, xi-xii, ii, 413-414, 425-432. Though clearly aware of Möhler, Hare did not name him, instead citing the writings of Anton Günther in support of his own position: A. Günther, *Vorschule zur speculativen Theologie des positive Christenthums. In Briefen*, 2nd edn (2 vols, Vienna, 1846-1848), ii, 278-281; H. Schwedt, 'Anton Günther', in W. Kasper et al. (eds), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edn (Freiburg, Basel, Rome and Vienna, 11 vols, 1993-2001), iv, 1106-1107. Hare's reference to the bafflement of developmental Catholic theology in Germany may have been prompted by its falling popularity after the rise of the Tübingen school, which suggested that it might be unsafe: Chadwick, *Bossuet to Newman*, pp. 110-111.
[235] [Hare and Hare], *Guesses at truth*, p. 184.
[236] See chapter one above.

was that so many of the fathers should have been great at all, 'living as they did among the falling and fallen leaves of the old world'.[237] But as Hare's respectful invocation of the death of an old amidst the birth of a new world implies, he was by no means indifferent to the monuments left by the young and growing new religion.[238] When it came to the particular application of this historical philosophy to the early creeds and the doctrines they expressed, Hare's conclusions were notably conservative. Rather than play down or dismiss historic orthodoxy, Hare, loyal to Coleridge, reinterpreted it as the fruit of the Reason rather than the Understanding. In a sermon preached at his Trinity contemporary Connop Thirlwall's consecration as bishop of St David's, who shared Hare's understanding of orthodoxy as the fruit of mental development, he argued that there could be no real conflict between the intellect and the religious conscience.[239] This was because the intellect could only truly operate in the light of the higher moral reason. Just as theology had risen to become the queen of sciences in the first age of Christendom, it could equally become so again.[240] This line of argument did not run on to jettisoning past growth. In a course of sermons directed against Newman's views of justification, yet rather as Newman was given to argue, Hare explained that the best way to refute anti-Trinitarian heresy was to explain the animating principles behind the doctrinal controversies leading up to the Council of Nicaea.[241] He also thought of doctrinal formularies as necessary to lead individuals to faith. 'One cannot spend a fortnight in the care of a parish', he told William Whewell in 1834, 'without finding that to talk about "the full consciousness of freedom" as necessary to religion is totally inapplicable to the present condition of mankind.'[242]

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[237] Hare, *Mission of the comforter*, ii, 702-710.
[238] On Liberal Anglican interest in national life-cycles, see Forbes, *Liberal Anglican idea*, pp. 12-62.
[239] C. Thirlwall, *The spirit of truth the Holy Spirit: a sermon, preached before the University of Cambridge, on Whitsunday, May 16, 1869* (London, Oxford and Cambridge, 1869), pp. 9-11, 13-15.
[240] J.C. Hare, 'The church the light of the world', in his *Mission of the comforter*, i, 195-208.
[241] Idem, 'Office and province of faith', in his *The victory of faith, and other sermons* (Cambridge, 1840), pp. 62-63.
[242] Trinity College, Cambridge, Add. MS. 206/162: J.C. Hare to W. Whewell, 1 June 1834.

Henry Hart Milman shared the view commonly held by Newman's critics that he had constructed an historical theory out of his own arbitrary fancies. Born in 1791, Milman had left Oxford for a clerical living in 1818 and always remained intellectually closer to the age of Gibbon than to that of Newman and Coleridge.[243] This idiosyncrasy was to shape his historical treatments of early Christian and medieval religion, and limited their appeal to younger, more anxious figures.[244] Assailing Newman in the *Quarterly Review* for 1846, Milman wrote that the *Essay* represented a 'transfiguration' of Newman's mind.[245] In Newman's tendency to equate Roman Catholic with fundamental Christian claims – that the canon of Scripture rested on ecclesiastical decisions of the fourth and fifth centuries, that the authority of Purgatory was bound up with that of the Psalms – 'the desperate apology is to his own conscience'.[246] In common with fellow liberals, Milman nevertheless agreed with Newman that beneficial development in Christian history had indeed taken place.[247] But in a form of words Hare or Maurice would not have chosen, Milman contrasted the study of Christianity as a phenomenon in history with 'the dry and barren sands of metaphysical or theologic discussion'.[248] The question that ought to guide the historian of the religion was '*what it was* in the ordinary life and in the bosom of Christian families'. Progress in religion meant the development 'of its morality, of its social influence, of its humanity'.[249] In support of his position, Milman quoted the anticlerical French political economist, Charles Dunoyer: 'It is often said that Christianity has civilised us. Perhaps it is not less just or less exact to say that civilisation has purified our Christianity.'[250] In drawing this connection, Milman showed himself to be relatively uninterested in philosophically recasting the development of doctrine,

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[243] H.C.G. Matthew, 'Milman, Henry Hart (1791-1868)', *ODNB*.
[244] On Milman's *HLC*, see chapter three below.
[245] [H.H. Milman], 'Newman *on the Development of Christian Doctrine*', *QR*, 77:154 (March, 1846), p. 405.
[246] Ibid., p. 412.
[247] Ibid., p. 420.
[248] Ibid., p. 434.
[249] Ibid., pp. 434-435, 459.
[250] Ibid., p. 459 and n. On Milman's contact with French liberalism, see chapter three below.

even if the idea of development itself held considerable apologetic potential. The distortions and triumphs of a simple ethical gospel in the social history of religion, which he was to study most systematically in his *HLC*, concerned him more.[251] This analytical tendency – shared by Stanley – initially overlapped with that represented by Maurice, Hare, and Thirlwall. But they subsequently informed different and ultimately even conflicting ways of assessing the place of the early church in religious history and its capacity to inform present-day progressivism.

Locating Newman's *Essay* in the context of how it was read and criticised by his liberal and traditionalist contemporaries reveals that his departure from older approaches to primitive antiquity alarmed or intrigued critics for reasons that went far beyond clashes between reviving Roman Catholicism, evangelical Protestantism, and Tractarianism. At least as important as these disagreements were tensions between different ways of understanding the historicity of religion, and what this implied for the authority of historic tradition over the individual. When Newman's conservative critics accused him of mysticism and rationalism, they were objecting to the way in which he made it seem as though revelation could not be approached save through the impression it made on human experience in time. This brought him close to liberal Anglican historians. But they differed from one another, as well as from Newman, in the implications they drew from this supposition.

Newman, in whose writings history merged with mysticism, treated what he identified as the authoritative moral sensibility in history, channelled through the institutional church, as self-sufficient; it was the point at which all criticism terminated. Newman's construction of an ancestry for the dictates of his own conscience, from the fathers to whom he was devoted, left him relatively indifferent to understanding their historical position beyond that argumentative requirement. His liberal critics were motivated to construct self-justifying traditions of their

[251] See chapter three below.

own, of course. But their mode of doing so led them beyond the dualistic ecclesiasticism Newman had subverted in order subtly to defend. For them, doctrinal history grew out of the point at which the Christian conscience and the political, social, and intellectual contexts for its expression met. Attention to the enriching dimensions of the contact between the mind of the church and the world could become one way of reinterpreting orthodox doctrine. It became possible, it was hoped, to win new acceptance for orthodoxy by giving it new meanings, or at least by recovering supposedly forgotten ones. From a different point of view, showing the dependence of the church on worldly movements could become a way of deprecating the importance of orthodox dogma for Christianity, or still further, of representing the emergence of dogmatism – and even of Christianity itself – as instances of decay. The externalist approach favoured by Stanley and Milman would come to hold a limited appeal to historical thinkers for whom the historical development of mind seemed a newly important point of connection between mankind and transcendent divinity. The second half of the chapter considers the development of these ultimately conflicting argumentative trajectories in the study of early church history in the decades after Newman.

IV) Hellenism, Trinitarianism, Incarnationalism

Newman's *Essay*, and the debate which it triggered, heralded a wider change in how Victorian thinkers understood the early development of orthodoxy. High churchmen who before Newman had not entertained the idea of doctrinal development, immediately after him insisted that any development which had taken place, such as the Nicene Creed, was in fact

only a logical elaboration, rather than a substantive change.[252] In the succeeding decades, among both liberal and more conservative figures, arguments over how orthodoxy had been yielded by logical inference staled as questions of its historical emergence became more vivid. Attending to how history had given life to doctrines in the past appeared to be one way of making doctrine a reasonable point of contact between man and God in the present. Even if scholars continued to conclude that conciliar orthodoxy was a true restatement of biblical revelation, more and more of them became interested in recovering how doctrine had grown amidst ancient Levantine metropolises and Greek philosophical schools. This interest in how doctrine had emerged from life and criticism, in which the decidedly advanced critic Christian von Bunsen was a pioneer, eventually worked to modify the argumentative emphases of even relatively conservative religious apologists.

Within a decade of the appearance of Newman's *Essay*, the Prussian envoy Christian von Bunsen generated considerable if short-lived excitement in the British press by publishing a four-volume work entitled *Hippolytus and his Age*.[253] Church history, as well as science, was capable of causing Victorian sensations.[254] Bunsen's work, which ranged across the bible, the papacy and Christianity's past and future, attracted extensive commentary in contemporary periodicals and book-length replies. William Gladstone and the legal philosopher John Austin were among its readers.[255] Representing a history of the primitive church, related through an analytical focus on a third-century Roman presbyter and the recently-discovered *Philosophumena* he was supposed to have written, Bunsen's *Hippolytus* appealed to the

[252] [J.B. Mozley], 'Newman on development', *CHR*, 13:55 (January, 1847), pp. 144-145, 167-170, 211-224; for attribution see Mozley, J. B., *Essays historical and theological*, 2nd edn (London, 1884), p. [451].
[253] Bunsen, *Hippolytus and his age* (1852); the German edition was published as *Hippolytus und seine Zeit. Anfänge und Ansichten des Christenthums und der Menschheit* (2 vols, Leipzig, 1852-1853). On Bunsen's personal connections, see chapter one above.
[254] cf. J.A. Secord, *Victorian sensation. The extraordinary publication, reception, and secret authorship of* Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (Chicago and London, 2000).
[255] M.R.D. Foot and H.C.G. Matthew (eds), *The Gladstone Diaries* (14 vols, Oxford, 1968-1994), iv, 463 (24 October, 1852); S. Austin to H. H. Milman, 21 January 1853, in A. Milman, *Milman*, p. 186.

intense contemporary fascination with Christian origins.[256] But it did so in a way quite unlike any ecclesiastical history previously written in English. Bunsen's text offered nothing less than a world-historical manifesto on the nature and prospects of the Christian religion. Bunsen imagined that the Christianity of Hippolytus' day was characterised, not by prelatical or conciliar compulsion, but by communal ethical life among substantially independent congregations. The growth of Christianity unlocked freedom, for it 'rested upon the idea of a community freely submitting to a divine order of society which calls mankind to freedom, and makes man free'.[257] A reinvigoration of this ideal in the present day, Bunsen argued, would involve the establishment of joint assemblies of clergy and laity in England and Germany, to appoint bishops and regulate church affairs, so that the church and the nations would ultimately be united.[258]

This view of the nature and ends of church organisation, on Bunsen's account, followed from the rational – and very German - theology he took the Hellenistic Hippolytus to have advanced. Hippolytus, he believed, saw the existence and operation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost not as sacred mysteries, but as inherent to human reason. In Bunsen's summary of the apostolic Christianity voiced by Hippolytus, the unity of God the father was fundamental to Christianity. Hippolytus' interlinked doctrines of the Trinity and the Logos amounted, in Bunsen's view, to a philosophy of world history, which Bunsen further expounded in a series of dense philosophical aphorisms. For Hippolytus, every believer was a Son by virtue of his participation in the divine mind, but only Christ was the incarnate Logos. The Spirit was both the universality of believers, or church, and also the spirit of God.[259] Historical generation was inherent to this Trinitarian relationship. The modern recommencement of the stunted

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[256] For the story of the discovery of the manuscript, see for example 'Bunsen's *Hippolytus and his Age*', *ER,* 97:197 (January, 1853), pp. [1]-4. Milman may have written this essay: S. Austin to H.H. Milman, 21 January 1853, in A. Milman, *Milman*, pp. 185-186.
[257] Bunsen, *Hippolytus and his age* (1852), iii, pp. 217-218, 225-226.
[258] Ibid., iii, 233-252.
[259] Ibid., ii, 46-47, 64.

progress of early Christianity towards an ethical, congregational and world-transforming religion such as Bunsen had sketched was truly a philosophical necessity, for the development of mankind was involved in the Trinitarian self-manifestation of the divine mind. Here Bunsen found a helpful support in Hippolytus' conception of the Logos as working itself out in three stages: as reason in the mind of God, as the act of creation, and as the Incarnation. Was this not, thought Bunsen, an early recognition of the operation of the perfectly rational divine spirit in human history?[260] Despite his Niebuhrian stress on the historical autonomy of the early church, in practice Bunsen made apostolic Christianity speak in terms inspired by Schelling and Schleiermacher.

Bunsen's British reviewers greeted his *Hippolytus* with a mixture of gratification and perplexity. 'Papal Aggression' was still a heated subject in 1852, and many eagerly seized upon Bunsen's work because of the anti-papal imputation which could be laid upon the *Philosophumena*'s portrayal of Pope Callistus.[261] It also provided reassuring evidence for an early dating of John's Gospel, against the radical Tübingen critics whose disturbing views were then becoming more widely known in Britain.[262] But Bunsen had viewed these issues as essentially subordinate to his presiding interest in the philosophy of history and its bearing on the religious consciousness; and on this question his readers were either uncomprehending or unpersuaded. A reviewer in the *Examiner* found Bunsen's philosophical aphorisms simply unintelligible.[263] Christopher Wordsworth, an old orthodox canon of Westminster and future

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[260] Bunsen made these points in obscure language in ibid., ii, 32-52. After criticism from reviewers he attempted to render his arguments more accessible in later editions: C.C.J. Bunsen, *Hippolytus and his age; or, the beginnings and prospects of Christianity*, 2nd edn (2 vols, London, 1854), i, 78-82; idem, *Christianity and mankind, their beginnings and prospects* (7 vols, London, 1854), iii, 3-32, iv, 157-165.

[261] On anti-Catholicism and the study of religious history, see chapter three below.

[262] For Bunsen's refutation of the Tübingen arguments, and appropriations of Bunsen on this point, see Bunsen, *Hippolytus and his age* (1852), i, 53, 86-88; [J. Tulloch], 'Hippolytus and his age', *NBR*, 19:37 (May, 1853), pp. 113-115; 'T.', 'Hippolytus and his age', *JSL*, 3:6 (January, 1853), pp. 461-477. For use of the *Philosophumena* against papal presumption, see Bunsen, *Hippolytus and his age* (1852), i, 125-136; *Times*, 18 May 1853, p. 7; W. Elfe Tayler, *Hippolytus, and the Christian church of the third century. With a copious analysis of the newly-discovered MS.; and a translation of all its important parts, from the original Greek* (London, 1853), pp. 200-208.

[263] *The Examiner*, 30 October 1852, pp. 691-692.

bishop of Lincoln, linked Bunsen's unsound views of development to Newman's. Bunsen's ascription of supposed doctrinal development to 'the Universal Conscience', Wordsworth argued, was simply a way of making private opinion infallible: a position Newman also took up, except that he made the infallible private opinion reside in the pope. Wordsworth preferred to rely on the existence of an unchanging system of doctrine, which he contended that Hippolytus, useful to Wordsworth for what could be read as his anti-papal flavour, substantially articulated.[264] This was not the transformation Bunsen had hoped to inaugurate. He tried in successive editions to make his philosophical claims more intelligible to British audiences, but without much success as the intense interest first generated by his writings faded away.[265]

It was the liberal Anglican historians, particularly those interested in the history of religious thought, who seem to have best grasped and sympathised with what Bunsen was trying to achieve. Julius Hare, the advertised addressee of Bunsen's first volume, told William Whewell that *Hippolytus* 'throws a great deal of new light on the early history of the church' and contained 'some beautiful specimens of Niebuhrian combinations'.[266] Connop Thirlwall, perhaps significantly for a prominent bishop, expressed his admiration privately rather than publicly. Following the publication of Frances Bunsen's *Memoirs* of her husband in 1868, Thirlwall reminisced in a letter to the bishop of Argyll about his privilege of knowing one who gave such comprehensive and timely warnings to the church.[267] He raised *Hippolytus and his Age*, by then generally ignored, in a letter to another correspondent in 1873.[268] Elsewhere Thirlwall had written to a friend that metaphysics remained the highest of all

[264] C. Wordsworth, *St. Hippolytus and the Church of Rome in the earlier part of the third century. From the newly-discovered Philosophumena* (London, 1853), pp. 179-194.
[265] See note 260 above; 'Bunsen's Christianity and Mankind', *JSL*, 1:1 (April, 1855), pp. 1-16; [C.W. Russell], 'Pope Callistus on the Trinity', *DR*, 39 (December, 1855), p. 384.
[266] Trinity College, Cambridge, Add. MS a 213/185: J.C. Hare to W. Whewell, 22 October 1851. Hare appears to have read Bunsen's work before it was published.
[267] C. Thirlwall to A. Ewing, 20 April 1868, in his *Letters literary and theological of Connop Thirlwall, late Lord Bishop of St. David's*, ed. J.J.S. Perowne and L. Stokes (London, 1881), pp. 282-284.
[268] C. Thirlwall to G. Clark, 26 March 1873, ibid., pp. 353-355.

problems, and considered that its cessation would imply a low state of intellectual culture.[269] The notably unspeculative Arthur Penrhyn Stanley contributed a preface to a posthumous edition of Bunsen's *God in History*. He acknowledged that 'it relates, in so large a measure, to philosophical and abstract questions on which I do not feel myself competent to enter'. But his works nevertheless stood as an enduring witness to 'the possibility of the influence of a Christian layman or statesman on the highest questions which can occupy the heart and mind of man'.[270]

The public incomprehension and private approval which had met Bunsen's philosophical emphases, in one respect a singular moment, in another belonged to a wider movement. In the following decades, doctrinal history ceased to be primarily a translated German subject and became naturalised in British academic discussion. The minute critical investigations into the history of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds which succeeded the suggestive generalisations of early Victorian liberal Anglicans tended to be less idiosyncratically speculative than Bunsen's writing. But these historians increasingly emphasised the subjective and spontaneous over the syllogistic aspects of creedal growth. This came to be a way of making orthodoxy seem the fruit of collective spirit, more than a set of inferences from a body of external data. Brooke Foss Westcott told a public audience in Peterborough that the Apostles' Creed was 'the spontaneous expression of the life, of the feeling, of the experience, of the Christian Society'.[271] Fenton Hort, who in 1852 had told a more sceptical Westcott how much he admired Newman, was pleased to conclude in his 1872 *Two Dissertations*, a treatise on creedal history, that what was popularly called the Nicene Creed was in fact no conciliar

[269] C. Thirlwall to unknown, 8 May 1871, in his *Letters to a friend*, pp. 265-266.
[270] A.P. Stanley, 'Preface' to C.C.J. Bunsen, *God in history or the progress of man's faith in the moral order of the world* (3 vols, London, 1868-1870), i, [v]-viii.
[271] B.F. Westcott, *The historic faith: short lectures on the Apostles' Creed* (London and Cambridge, 1883), p. 23.

construction at all, but was instead an ancient and popular creed of Jerusalem.[272] This fashion, in which echoes of Maurice can often be heard, was not solely an Anglican one. John Tulloch, in lectures to his St Andrews students in which he also discussed Coleridge and Schleiermacher, depicted early orthodoxy as the product of free growth, in common with all the religious thought he admired.[273] A new generation of critics assumed that it was easier to render orthodoxy acceptable to the autonomous individual, if it could be presented as the outcome of, or capable of being clarified by, free subjectivity in response to revelation.

The role of Greek thought in this newly attractive historical process became a major focal point of discussion, after Bunsen's early venture into the subject had been drowned out by what had then been louder anxieties over the papal revival and the scriptural canon. Like other Victorians, historians of the early church started from the assumption that the Hellenistic world prized reason above all things. The Greek and Latin focus of university curricula encouraged them to privilege the classical ideals of learning, philosophy and sophistication. At the same time, the religion they espoused had offered a radical affront to pride, worldliness and human self-sufficiency. This created a persistent tension in Victorian educated society: an iteration of an ambivalence stretching back to Paul and Justin Martyr.[274] But in the nineteenth century, history came to offer a possible solution to the problem rather than, as it had notably been during the eighteenth century, the preferred mode of stating it. Narrating the history of the transition from the classical to the Christian worlds, though it did not remove the antithesis between Hellenism and Christianity, did offer one way of arguing

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[272] F.J.A. Hort, *Two dissertations* (Cambridge and London, 1876), pp. 107-108; F.J.A. Hort to B.F. Westcott, 8 and 13 October 1852, in A.F. Hort, *Life and letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort D.D., D.C.L., LL.D., sometime Hulsean Professor and Lady Margaret's Reader in Divinity in the University of Cambridge* (2 vols, London, 1896), i, 231; in 1890, Hort told his wife that the two congratulatory letters he most prized in relation to his *Two Dissertations* came from Stanley and Newman: 24 August 1890, ibid., ii, 423-424; B.F. Westcott to M. Whittard, 4th Sunday after Trinity 1846, and B.F. Westcott to M. Whittard, 7 May 1850, in A. Westcott, *Life and letters of Brooke Foss Westcott D.D., D.C.L., Sometime bishop of London* (2 vols, London, 1903), i, 71, 163-164.

[273] Univ. of St Andrews spec. coll., James M'Turk Strachan notebooks: MS BT19.T8 (MS 4357), 51-78r, MS BT19.T8 (MS 4356), 1-6, MS BT19.T86 (MS 4358), 11-16. On Tulloch, see chapters four and five below.

[274] On literary explorations of this theme, see Goldhill, *Victorian culture*, pp. [193]-244; Pocock, *Barbarism and religion*, v, 23-38.

that orthodox doctrine had evolved in reasonable dialogue with Greek ideas in a way that proved serviceable to late-Victorian apologetics.

Much more so than late-Victorian critics, early revivalists had been given to emphasising the externality of revelation to reason, and the unutterable transcendence and mystery of the scheme of Christian redemption as expressed in the creeds. In the words of the high churchman, William Van Mildert, in his 1802-1805 Boyle Lectures, philosophy was 'the instrument, which of all others, the great Enemy of mankind has most frequently employed in his service' because it gratified 'men's vanity and self-importance'.[275] But for later thinkers, the integration of the history of early Christian doctrine with the history of preceding Greek philosophy, together with the Neoplatonism which had a history parallel and perhaps connected to the gradual triumph of orthodoxy, became a means of depicting Christianity as the last stage in a sequence of evolving rationality. By drawing attention to how Incarnationalist and Trinitarian theology grew out of, and answered, metaphysical and ethical problems long-debated in terms of natural reason, it seemed possible to present orthodoxy as completing and transmuting all that unaided reason was able to say about (particularly) the problem of evil and the relationship between the world and its creator. Critics now attuned themselves to Origen and the early Alexandrian fathers, who had generally been suspected by revivalists, with the notable exception of Newman. At the Idealist end of the spectrum, the place that many sought to retain for the historical gospel in overcoming the limits of Hellenism was quietly phased out in favour of historical dialectic. Yet the invigoration of Trinitarianism not solely as theology, but as historical and natural philosophy, by attention to its intellectual-historical context nevertheless created affinities between relatively liberal and relatively conservative thinkers in the later decades of the century. The world-historical

[275] W. Van Mildert, *An historical view of the rise and progress of infidelity, with a refutation of its principles and reasonings: in a series of sermons preached for the lecture founded by the Hon. Mr. Boyle, in the parish church of St. Mary le Bow, from the year 1802 to 1805* (2 vols, London, 1806), i, 300.

significance of the Incarnation took on its new aspect, familiar to historians of the Victorian period, amidst this rather less familiar preoccupation with the history of philosophy and metaphysics at the birth of the Christian era.

Aided by the steady percolation of German and French critical studies, as well as by native contributions, late-Victorian historians were increasingly aware that orthodoxy shared an historical context with a spectrum of Greek, Jewish and eastern sects and schools of thought. For thinkers concerned to reinvigorate orthodox doctrine as the outcome of the free growth of mind and, connectedly, as the key to ethical and metaphysical philosophy, it was the intersection between Christianity and developing Greek philosophy which appeared to hold the greatest apologetic promise. Scholars commonly sketched or assumed the existence of a broadly upwards, or even dialectical progression from Plato and Aristotle, to Stoicism, Epicureanism, and later Pythagoreanism, which ended in Christian truth.

After the coming of Christianity, but before the church had formalised its dogmas, this trajectory had terminated or dispersed, it was argued, into two supposed dead-ends. The first was Gnosticism. This was an umbrella term describing a diverse array of first- and second-century soteriologies mixing Christian, Platonic, Jewish and eastern beliefs, chiefly concerned with the origin of evil, the situation of man in the world, and the possibility of redemption.[276] The second was 'Neoplatonism'. This nineteenth-century coinage denoted a religious and philosophical system which emphasised the distinction between the eternal world of thought and the transitory world of sense, together with a mystical belief in the possibility of union with the transcendent One from whom reality was said to derive.[277] It was taken to have been first formally systematised by the third-century Alexandrian philosopher, Plotinus. Early Victorian revivalists had generally assumed a radical separation between

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[276] For a modern summary, see H.R. Drobner, *The fathers of the church. A comprehensive introduction*, trans. S.S. Schatzmann (Peabody, 2007), pp. 105-112.
[277] For a modern summary, see R.M. Berchman, 'Neoplatonism', in E. Ferguson (ed.), *Encylopedia of early Christianity*, 2nd edn (New York and London, 1998), pp. 801-803; 'Neoplatonism, n.', *OED*.

orthodox belief and these parallel intellectual phenomena, which had once seemed entirely spurious. Early in the century, the evangelical Anglican historian Joseph Milner had dismissed the Gnostic theories as 'scenes of nonsense'.[278] To the Free Churchman William Cunningham, they were 'very like the ravings of madmen'.[279] But as interest in doctrinal development spread, and as new philosophical challenges to religion were perceived to arise from agnosticism, scientific materialism, and Hegelian pantheism – which in their acute forms still lay in the future when Bunsen's *Hippolytus* appeared - the relations Christianity bore to these outworkings of the heathen mind attracted closer scrutiny.

For the late-Victorian revivers of interest in the Hellenistic Christianity which grew out of these encounters, the first argumentative step was to draw out the legitimacy and significance of the questions which earlier Greek philosophies had raised, in order to show that such philosophy alone was incapable of answering them. A former headmaster of Brighton College and, from 1901, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford, Charles Bigg, wrote a history of *Neoplatonism* which was published, tellingly, by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1895.[280] In common with many of his contemporaries, Bigg believed that Plato had introduced a dualism between the unchanging and the eternal, accessible by mind, and the transitory and inferior world of sense, existing only insofar as it participated in the life of thought. Heathen philosophy never escaped from it. The result was to render all subsequent attempts to explain the problem of evil, and the nature of absolute existence manifested in the relationship between God and man, essentially inadequate despite the nobility of the inquiry. For such attempts were incapable of giving an account of the rational unity which inhered, it was assumed, in the universe and man's experience of it. The Stoics failed, because their correct belief that happiness was to be found in the pursuit of moral

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[278] Milner, *History of the church of Christ*, i, 221.
[279] W. Cunningham, *Historical theology. A review of the principal doctrinal discussions in the Christian church since the apostolic age* (2 vols, London, 1960), i, 122; first edition 1862.
[280] C. Bigg, *Neoplatonism* (London, 1895); M.D.W. Jones, 'Bigg, Charles (1840-1908)', *ODNB*.

perfection, in accordance with natural law, could not truly follow from their pantheist assumption that God and the soul were material.[281] The Pythagoreans made the One God who was above all lower gods perfect, but shielded that perfection by making him cold, ineffable and in need of nothing.[282] The Neoplatonists of the second and third centuries A.D. preserved what was true in these earlier systems, whilst recognising that some point of unity between the mind and sense had to be sought in the One.[283] They therefore arrived at a more dynamic and reciprocal sense of divine activity and its relationship with the world; hence the Neoplatonist interest in intermediate beings between God and matter. But God, being the good, necessarily remained passive and cut off from creation in this scheme. Gnostic 'phantasmagoria', vainly seeking to explain how man might be redeemed within such a system, was the most extreme manifestation of a general problem in ancient thought.[284] Thus Bigg drew the incomplete reasonableness of Greek thought into the service of an historical justification of the Christian revelation.

The Idealist philosopher Edward Caird, then master of Balliol College, Oxford, presented a comparable, gently dialectical narrative in his Gifford Lectures – a foundation dedicated to natural theology – for 1900-1902 on *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*. Hegel's was a background voice in this text, as he was in Caird's wider oeuvre. Post-Hegelian historians of philosophy such as Clemens Baeumker and the sometime Tübingen theologian Eduard Zeller, who sought inner connections between historically-occurring ideas without equating historical causation with the rigid sequence of a logical dialectic, were more immediate points of contact.[285] Like many idealising thinkers of the day, Caird minimised the

[281] Bigg, *Neoplatonism*, pp. [9]-26.
[282] Ibid., pp. [27]-42.
[283] Ibid., p. 26.
[284] Ibid., pp. 26, [119]-127, 146-147.
[285] Caird, *Evolution of theology*, i, vii-ix; cf. C. Baeumker, *Das Problem der Materie in der griechischen Philosophie* (Münster, 1890), [v]-x. Caird did not cite Zeller, but did correspond with him: Tübingen Universitätsbibliothek, Md. 747.100: E. Caird to E. Zeller, 23 October 1877; E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 2nd edn (3 vols, Tübingen, 1856-1865), dedication, [v]-vi; G.

difference between theology and philosophy by defining theology as 'religion brought to self-consciousness'.[286] Caird then explained the stages in the growth of this self-consciousness, from the earliest spiritualisation of rude mythology in the Greek poets and tragedians to the speculation of the Neoplatonists.[287] The Neoplatonists, he argued, had realised that the consciousness of the reflective subject presupposed a unity underlying all things. This was the consciousness of God. But the Neoplatonists, especially Plotinus, held the doctrine in a negative, mystical way, being still detained by an insurmountable dualism which felt the impossibility of positively connecting the material and intelligible worlds.[288] Henry Melvill Gwatkin, the Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge who combined staunchly Protestant Anglicanism with Idealist inclinations, made a similar point in his 1904-1905 Gifford Lectures on *The Knowledge of God and its Historical Development*.[289] Greek thought had come to a stop, he argued, because it could not reconcile divine transcendence with divine activity.[290]

The second argumentative step, therefore, was to establish that Christianity had shown a reasonable way out of that tension. The Greek theologians, late Victorian doctrinal historians argued, had been able to overcome it by the Incarnation. Philosophically, this doctrine was expressed and rationalised in the prologue to John's gospel by the idea of the Logos or Word, which existed from eternity with God, created the world and man, and became incarnate in

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Hartung, 'Eine Schatzkammer des Wissens. Leben und Werk des Gelehrten Eduard Zeller', in idem (ed.), *Eduard Zeller. Philosophie- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin and New York, 2010), pp. [1]-18.

[286] Caird, *Evolution of theology*, i, 31. On the British Idealist philosophy of religion, see Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. [137]-180.

[287] Caird, *Evolution of theology*, i, 31-57.

[288] Ibid., ii, 162-183, 210-231, 282-284.

[289] H.M. Gwatkin, *The knowledge of God and its historical development* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1906). He apparently regarded this as his magnum opus. Gwatkin's correspondence makes several allusions to 'the great work', without specifying to which of his books it refers; for example, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Gwatkin papers, Letters/208, H.M. Gwatkin to M. Creighton, 15 September 1890. Louise Creighton's letter to Gwatkin after the appearance of *The knowledge of God* assumes that it represented the realisation of his ambitions: Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Gwatkin papers, Letters/214, L. Creighton to H.M. Gwatkin, 13 September 1906. Peter Slee characterises Gwatkin's works, rather summarily, as 'solid, if unexciting': P.R.H. Slee, 'Gwatkin, Henry Melvill (1844-1916)', *ODNB*.

[290] Gwatkin, *Knowledge of God*, ii, 74, 91-93.

Christ.[291] It was recognised that the term 'Logos' had had an ancestry in Stoic and Neoplatonist thought, but its meaning was said to have been transformed and made wholesome by its usage as part of an historical revelation. The Logos was no mere cosmological principle, Gwatkin argued, but the revealer of God and the teacher of men.[292] Westcott's introduction to his edition of John's gospel, though expressing a critical opinion that the apostle derived the term from a Palestinian rather than an Alexandrian source, nevertheless considered that its meaning was by no means determined by its origin. No Greek or Jewish thinker, he was confident, would have deduced that the word became flesh from his own principles.[293] The closeness of Origen and the Alexandrian theologians to this idea, which Westcott took to privilege the relationship between human and divine reason and to consecrate man's moral freedom, commended them to him.[294] Bigg argued along the same lines in his 1886 Bampton Lectures on *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*. According to Clement and Origen, he reported, every person was an image of the divine word.[295] Bigg suggested that in this they had understood true freedom, by joining 'the spontaneity of individualism with unity through the trained and sanctified intelligence'.[296] Edward Caird was unusual in declining to stress the need for the historical events recorded in the gospels to have produced this transition from Greek to Christian thought.[297]

The apologetic shift in favour of presenting the revelation in the Incarnation as answering a long-standing problem in ancient thought, as part of an argument conducted in the thought and experience of subjective historical actors, made the Trinity as it was defined in the early general councils seem newly reasonable. It was often stressed that the Trinitarian

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291 John I. 1-14.
292 Gwatkin, *Knowledge of God*, ii, 97.
293 B.F. Westcott, *The gospel according to St John: the authorised version with introduction and notes* (London, 1882), pp. xv-xviii; cf. Wheeler, *St John*, pp. 63-66.
294 B.F. Westcott, *Essays in the history of religious thought in the west* (London, 1891), pp. [194]-252.
295 C. Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria. Eight lectures preached before the University of Oxford in the year 1886* (Oxford, 1886), p. 297.
296 Ibid., p. 283.
297 Caird, *Evolution of theology*, ii, 347-372.

controversies were motivated by a desire to affirm the reality of the Incarnation. Bigg intoned in a sermon at the University Church in Oxford that the early councils were not comprised of philosophers, but of those concerned to safeguard their intuitions of a great personality.[298] The Trinity also came to appear, with an Idealist tinge, as the denotation of a distinctly historical process of divine self-realisation. John Caird, fellow-Idealist brother of Edward and, unlike Edward, in holy orders, argued the point in the Gifford Lectures on *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity* which he delivered in 1896 while principal of Glasgow University. One of those ideas was the Trinity, which, he regretted, was generally taken to be unintelligibly mysterious even by those who accepted it. It was not so. Just as the highest natures in the world were marked by internal differentiations – the living organism was above the stone – so too was the divine nature. By expressing the idea of God's pouring-forth by the Logos, and his reciprocal incorporation of all that was good in the world into himself, the one in three persons was 'the very essence of all intelligence'.[299] His brother, Edward, argued in his own Gifford Lectures that the Trinity was an early and imperfect formulation of the Christian insight into the absolute: the unity between God and the progress of the race.[300] The essential interrelations of eternal Father, historically-manifested Son, and abiding Spirit, on these readings, reflected and sustained evolution in the human and natural worlds.

The breadth and subdued polemicism of these inquiries were stimulated by the broader spread of idealist thought, and the apparent intensification of materialist dangers to Christianity, after 1870. Religious apologists often perceived and answered these threats through an historical medium. It was common for these thinkers to represent contemporary pantheism and materialism less as radically new threats than as radically old ones. And by claiming to find similarities between ancient heresies and modern theories, it became possible

[298] C. Bigg, 'The Good Shepherd', in his *The spirit of Christ in common life*, ed. T.B. Strong (London, 1909), pp. 140-144.
[299] J. Caird, *The fundamental ideas of Christianity* (2 vols, Glasgow, 1899), i, [55]-79, here at 79.
[300] Caird, *Evolution of theology*, ii, 358-367.

to argue, by prolepsis, that the Christianity which had answered earlier unbelief would in the course of time also rationally confute its modern restatements. Westcott likened the Gnosticism overborne by his favoured Alexandrians to 'the Transcendentalism of the last generation', in that it fixed attention on the great problems of life – such as the relationship between the absolute and the finite - while providing wildly speculative answers to them.[301] Gwatkin considered that the movement from Arianism to Nicene orthodoxy mirrored the transition from unimaginative, mechanistic deism to the immanent, progressive providence he postulated as an alternative.[302] The Free Church professor, Thomas Martin Lindsay, was by the early 1900s melancholically fond of comparing the present age of the world to the dissipated wane of antiquity. He thought that in the growing Christian Science movement, which equated disease with sin, he could catch a glimpse of the old gnostic speculations.[303] The occultism that bewitched so many at the outset of the twentieth century could only be met, as its ancient manifestations had been, by an anti-materialist and anti-mechanical Christianity.[304] Some contemporary critics of Christianity were even prompted to give a newly sympathetic hearing to its ancient opponents in this developing argumentative context. Thomas Whittaker, a future associate of the Rationalist Press Association, published a sympathetic history of Neoplatonism in 1901 which argued that it had been crushed, not lifted up, by dogmatic religion.[305] The history of unbelief and revival, it appeared, moved in cycles.

Henry Longueville Mansel used a similar argumentative device, though his aversion to philosophical Christianity marked him out as unusual among those who did. Mansel had made his lasting reputation with his 1858 Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious*

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[301] Westcott, *Religious thought*, p. 201.
[302] Gwatkin, *Knowledge of God*, ii, 106-111.
[303] T.M. Lindsay, 'Modern religious difficulties' (1907), in his *College addresses*, pp. 20-21.
[304] Lindsay, 'Occultism: ancient and modern' (1908), in his *College addresses*, pp. 34-38.
[305] T. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists: a study in the history of Hellenism* (Cambridge, 1901), viii; F.J. Gould, *The pioneers of Johnson's court. A history of the Rationalist Press Association*, 2nd edn (London, 1935), p. 54.

Thought as Waynflete reader, subsequently professor, in moral and metaphysical philosophy at Oxford.[306] He later enjoyed a brief and less-remembered period as Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the same university, the chief fruits of which were his lectures on *The Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries*. These were posthumously published, under Joseph Barber Lightfoot's editorship, in 1875.[307] Mansel's Bampton Lectures had made a provocative epistemological argument, derived from Kant, for accepting revelation on the grounds that natural human reason was inherently incapable of deciding in questions of absolute reality. He quietly wove the same argument into his history of Gnosticism. The rational search for an absolute first principle, he warned, almost inevitably ran on to a denial of the personality of God, and the redefinition of evil not as the product of sin but as the result of finite and relative existence. As it had once proved with fantastical Gnostic constructions of hierarchies of divine beings, so the same law had recently made itself known in Hegel's philosophy of religion.[308]

Among late-Victorian religious conservatives, Mansel's mode of separating the provinces of reason and faith, criticised by Edward Caird among others, attracted fewer followers than historically-grounded ways of bringing them together.[309] The sharp distinctions between conservative and 'broad church' thought visible in the 1830s and 1840s, in both England and Scotland, blurred markedly among those who liked to think of the historical development of orthodoxy as the free movement of thought to a higher level in response to the Christian revelation. This inclination cut across denominational and church party divisions. Mandell Creighton, Gwatkin's higher-church friend and predecessor as Dixie Professor, warmly

[306] H.L. Mansel, *The limits of religious thought examined: in eight lectures, preached before the University of Oxford, in the year M.DCCC.LVIII* (Oxford, 1858); B. Lightman, *The origins of agnosticism. Victorian unbelief and the limits of knowledge* (Baltimore, 1987), pp. 32-67.
[307] H.L. Mansel, *The gnostic heresies of the first and second centuries*, ed. J.B. Lightfoot (London, 1875).
[308] Ibid., pp. 11-15, 107-109.
[309] Caird, *Evolution of theology*, i, 10-11.

praised his *Studies of Arianism*.[310] A contributor to the critical and Incarnationalist high church essay collection, *Lux Mundi*, J. R. Illingworth, argued that the Trinity guaranteed both divine immanence in man and nature, and the divine transcendence which made Nicene orthodoxy authoritative.[311] He also regarded the fact that the Trinity had been formulated slowly, by fathers who drew terminology from Greek philosophical debate whilst also transforming it, as a testament to its evolutionary resilience. 'In biology we know that the nature of their environment modifies organisms', Illingworth wrote with notes of Lamarckianism, 'but it only does so by stimulating their internal energies to respond to itself.'[312] Charles Gore, editor of *Lux Mundi* and principal of Oxford's newly-established Pusey House, argued that the Trinity was the product of man's 'upward-soaring' reason in his 1891 Bampton Lectures on the Incarnation; Mansel was one of his targets. The only form of rational theism in a complex universe of relations and processes was not pantheism or deism, he argued, but the recognition of a threefold, personal distinction in the divine nature which preserved a loving God's active, transcendent and communicative attributes. Gore rounded off his arguments with allusions to Coleridge, Maurice and Hermann Lotze, a fashionable guru to late-century personal Idealists.[313]

By the early 1900s, the history of early Christian doctrine had developed an apologetic significance which it had not had sixty or seventy years previously. The recasting of the growth of creeds, and new renderings of the beliefs they expressed, came to play important parts in rebuttals of new forms of unbelief, and in constructions of Christianity which sought to integrate it with changing understandings of the natural and human worlds. The attraction

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[310] Emmanuel College, Cambridge (Gwatkin papers), Letters/203: M. Creighton to H.M. Gwatkin, 3 September 1884; H.M. Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism, chiefly referring to the character and chronology of the reaction which followed the Council of Nicaea* (Cambridge and London, 1882).
[311] J.R. Illingworth, *Divine transcendence and its reflection in religious authority* (London, 1911), pp. 5-47; C. Gore (ed.), *Lux mundi. A series of studies in the religion of the incarnation* (London, 1889).
[312] J.R. Illingworth, *The doctrine of the Trinity apologetically considered* (London, 1907), pp. 96-97, 124.
[313] C. Gore, *The incarnation of the Son of God, being the Bampton Lectures for the year 1891* (London, 1891), pp. 115-137; on Lotze, see Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 22-24.

of situating Christian thought as the completion or transformation of problems with which the Greeks had struggled was felt by relatively conservative as well as by radical figures. Depicting orthodoxy as the outcome of the free response of historical subjectivity, guided by faith, to revelation became an important means of uniting freedom with religious authority, and even of locating the origins of liberty in the transformation of the ancient world wrought by a new religion. The strand of thought examined here, running from Bunsen and his liberal Anglican admirers to encompass a much broader range of thinkers before the century had ended, resists classification as 'undogmatic' or indifferent to doctrine. It was much more marked by a deliberate commitment to make theology philosophical, by claiming that it first emerged in response to human problems and might still answer them in the light of more recent experience. A second kind of liberalising historical argument, however, ran in a very different direction. For a number of divines did not see much promise for future progress in doctrinal theology. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley and Edwin Hatch preferred instead to dwell on reciprocal interaction between the church and the world in social and political experience.

V) Progress and decay in church and society

Doctrinal history, insofar as it was conceived as gathering the fruit of collective Christian conscience or absolute reason, functioned as one way of answering epistemological and scientific challenges to the authority and credibility of orthodoxy. This process could not but modify what orthodoxy was understood to be, and what it was understood to rest on. But doctrinal history was not the preferred narrative medium for the significant group of liberal historians for whom early doctrinal controversies seemed inconsequential, or (very differently) as positively corrupting. It was instead the social and political history of early

Christianity, and what may be described as the external rather than the internal determinants of Christian teaching, which preoccupied Arthur Penrhyn Stanley and Edwin Hatch. These critics did not so much wish to inject new life into orthodox formulae, as to use history to convey their relative unimportance in comparison with the new moral life which Christianity had released into the past. The two emphases were not, at first, in open tension. Rather as Milman had done in his review of Newman, Stanley disclaimed the role of theologian, preferring instead to broaden charity by focusing on the generally progressive story of the transformation of richly varied societies by the simple gospel. Stanley and Hatch shared an inclination to blur the boundaries between church, state, and society, in the past as in the present. But Hatch, partly shaped by Ritschlian influences foreign to Stanley's more traditionally latitudinarian mind, integrated ecclesiastical into civil history as part of a 'science' defined so as to cast the institutional and dogmatic forms of Christianity as outright corruptions. In doing so, Hatch did not solely attract opposition from traditionalists. He also aggravated those whose preferred means of rescuing Christianity from endangerment was to re-read its doctrinal expressions ideally, as growing progressively out of the reflective mind.

In common with other liberal Anglicans, Stanley could see redeeming features in Newman's *Essay*, describing its ending as 'one of the most affecting passages ever written by an uninspired pen'.[314] But the concretely socio-political way in which he construed the importance of religious development brought him closer to Milman's historical approach than to Hare's. His *LEC*, delivered while he was Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford, speak to his wider commitment, inherited from his Whig ancestors and strengthened by his education at Thomas Arnold's Rugby, to ecclesiastical comprehensiveness.[315] They also point to the particular historical approach he favoured as his principal way of contending

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[314] Quoted in R.E Prothero and G.G. Bradley, *The life and correspondence of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D. Late Dean of Westminster* (2 vols, London, 1893), i, 345.
[315] *LEC*; Witheridge, *Excellent Dr Stanley*, pp. 28-30, [45]-67, 194.

for that position. Stanley argued for the full integration of ecclesiastical history and the history of civilisation. The movements of nations shaped movements of religion, and vice versa, in a series of transformations which showed the breadth of forms under which moralising Christianity could flourish.[316] Stanley's application of this principle, however, was not as inclusive as his rhetoric implied. Stanley's lectures on the Eastern Church aimed to present the general outlines of the history of what he grouped together as the present-day churches of the eastern peoples, stretching from Russia to Abyssinia. But he began by insisting that, in an important sense, they had no history – or at least, no modern history. 'It is a field rather of space than of time', he declared.[317] 'The nations which it embraces have been, for the most part, so stationary, and their life so monotonous, that they furnish few subjects of continuous narration'.[318] What was true of eastern societies, extended to their religion. The modern Greek church shared in this general immobility.[319] Western Christendom, first Catholic and Latin, then Protestant and Teutonic, had left it behind in the advance of Christian civilisation. The east had an historical, but not a living interest.[320] It is significant that Stanley should have foregrounded this conceptual scheme before entering into the history of the Council of Nicaea, which set the tone for the east's subsequent religious history.[321] For although the modern western churches continued to acknowledge the decrees of the early councils, these had arisen, in Stanley's view, in a period of antiquity so remote as to be more picturesque than authoritative. Stanley relegated doctrinal controversy to a deep past, lying far behind what the progressive Christian mind had subsequently attained.

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[316] See chapter one above.
[317] *LEC*, pp. 1-2. Stanley's case does not support Forbes' generalisation that a reaction against Europocentrism was a hallmark of liberal Anglican history: Forbes, *Liberal Anglican idea*, pp. 9-10. On the ambiguities of liberal Protestant approaches to other forms of contemporary Christianity, see chapter three below.
[318] *LEC*, pp. 1-2.
[319] Ibid., pp. 13-16.
[320] Ibid., pp. 42-50.
[321] Ibid., p. 18.

Stanley's history of the Council accordingly paid notably little attention to the conceptual debates which preceded or animated it. Stanley, a lover of Walter Scott, instead delighted in word-painting landscapes and character portraits.[322] The empathy generated by immersing his readers in a past place or occasion would, he hoped, produce indulgent charity towards transitory ancient opinions. Describing the opening of the Council, he called to mind not the Arian agitation, but 'the chestnut woods then as now green with the first burst of summer, the same sloping hills, the same tranquil lake, the same snow-capped Olympus from far brooding over the whole scene' of the Council.[323] He visualised the assembly-room itself, full of distinctive characters: the 'bright, serene countenance' of Athanasius; Arius, 'this strange, captivating, moon-struck giant'; 'scholars from the more civilised cities of Syria; wild ascetics from the remoter East'.[324] Stanley regarded what followed as a crucial precedent for his undogmatic vision of the state church. The Council was convoked by a prince, showing that there was no need to fear the involvement of secular authority in church affairs. Its deliberations were free, giving voice to 'the conscience of the whole Christian community'.[325] But he strongly implied that it was wrong to cut the Arians off from the church.[326] He alluded to subsequent textual variations in the creed decided at Nicaea between churches, to underscore the essential independence of the faith from creedal statements of it.[327] The whiggishly anti-clerical Stanley even wished that Constantine had imposed a scheme of comprehension on the church, instead of sanctioning persecution in its name.[328] For Stanley, to resummon the external contingency of politics and character underlying the formation of orthodoxy, within a context of the slow, reciprocal transformations of

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[322] Cf. A.P. Stanley, *Lectures on the history of the Church of Scotland. Delivered in Edinburgh in 1872* (London, 1872), pp. 165-166.
[323] *LEC*, p. 83.
[324] Ibid., pp. 97-112.
[325] Ibid., pp. 67-69.
[326] Ibid., p. 142.
[327] Ibid., p. 152.
[328] Ibid., pp. 196-197.

civilisation and religion over the centuries, was the historical legitimation of his assessment of the normative place of religion in national and European life. John Tulloch, reviewing Stanley's life and work after his death, spoke for a more epistemologically embattled generation of religious liberals when he accounted the 'absence of the speculative faculty … a certain weakness in his theology.'[329]

Stanley's mild and literary celebrations of changefulness, and latent contempt for doctrinal controversy, drew the attention of a younger scholar, Edwin Hatch. Hatch had been born into a family of Derby nonconformists. While being educated in Birmingham he joined the Church of England under the influence of John Cale Miller, an evangelical clergyman committed to philanthropic work alongside Jews and nonconformists.[330] His background therefore predisposed him towards that conception of the church as innately broad, and as a vehicle for social improvement and class conciliation, which he applied to his scholarship and ministerial career. After graduating from Oxford in 1857, he worked first in an East End parish, during which time he was ordained priest, before migrating to teach in Canada. In 1867 he returned to Oxford in the impoverished office of vice-principal of St Mary Hall. He was to remain in Oxford for the rest of his life, despite suffering financial and positional insecurity partly on account of his bold and original views.

Stanley was an early patron. In a letter to Hatch of 1865, Stanley fondly recalled how 'at one, perhaps critical, moment of your life I may have been able to help you'. Precisely which favour this statement referred to is unclear; but Hatch regarded whatever it was as substantial, for in the same letter Stanley accepted his request to stand as godfather to a son whom he had named after the then Dean of Westminster.[331] Stanley later praised Hatch for a paper in which he criticised synodical as opposed to parliamentary church government, on the grounds that

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[329] Tulloch, 'Dean Stanley as a spiritual teacher and theologian', p. 872.
[330] H.C.G. Matthew, 'Hatch, Edwin (1835-1889)', *ODNB*; A.F. Munden, 'Miller, John Cale (1814-1880)', *ODNB*.
[331] Lambeth Palace Library (Hatch papers), MS. 1467/84-85A, A.P. Stanley to E. Hatch, 12 November 1865.

the former severed the church from wider civilisation in favour of introspective clericalism.[332] Their sermons often addressed similar themes. The church, Hatch declared before the University of Oxford in 1881, was 'human society itself – ultimately the whole, at present a part of it'.[333] This was a conviction that equally informed the Arnoldian Stanley's political and theological preoccupations.[334]

From one point of view, therefore, Hatch belonged to an older, practically-minded and relatively unspeculative broad church tradition. But from another, he represented a marked radicalisation of it. Stanley looked indulgently on the results of early Christian political, social, and doctrinal development. The historical novelist in Stanley rendered him distant from absolute commitment to any one form of church polity or doctrinal formulation. But nor was his disposition conducive to radical critique. Stanley thought of providence as leading a slow and shaky but nevertheless unmistakable upwards ascent through successive forms of ecclesiastical and social polity. Hatch instead forensically and very secularly dissected the doctrinal and institutional legacies left by the early church in order to show how the roots of modern religious disorder lay in a set of wrong turnings taken at a very early point. His pioneering importation of metaphors drawn from natural science to explain the task of ecclesiastical history in his methodological lectures, hoping that 'the search for essences' would give way to contemplation of 'the operations of spiritual force', left very little scope

[332] Lambeth Palace Library (Hatch papers), MS. 1467/88-89, A.P. Stanley to E. Hatch, 26 June 1868. The paper is not explicitly named, but Stanley had probably seen a draft of E. Hatch, 'A Free Anglican Church', *MM*, 18 (October, 1868), pp. [449]-460. The paper mainly drew on Hatch's knowledge of Canadian ecclesiastical affairs, but was intended as a contribution to debates on Irish disestablishment.
[333] E. Hatch, 'Diversity in unity the law of spiritual life', in S. Hatch (ed.), *Memorials of Edwin Hatch, D.D. sometime reader in ecclesiastical history in the University of Oxford, and Rector of Purleigh* (London, 1890), p. 167.
[334] 'As, in answer to the question, 'What is the Tiers-Etat?' [sic] Sieyes [sic] replied, 'The nation, *minus* the clergy and the nobles;' so in answer to the question, 'What is the laity?' Arnold replied, 'The Church, *minus* the clergy.': A.P. Stanley, 'The connection of church and state', in his *Essays chiefly on questions of church and state from 1850 to 1870* (London, 1870), p. 349.

for invoking the power of providence, or individual and collective spirit, to explain doctrinal or institutional change in history.[335]

This inclination was strengthened by his respect for scholarship written under the impress of Ritschlianism, especially Adolf von Harnack's studies of church history, though Hatch appears to have formed his views independently of him at first.[336] Harnack, it will be recalled, united a belief in Christianity understood as an autonomous moral system with the view that the growth of dogmatic theology, overturned in principle at the Reformation, amounted to a secularising constriction of its essence. Hatch, who not coincidentally had a penchant for writing distinctly gloomy religious poetry, was drawn to the potential this held for making a systematic separation between the moral essence of Christianity and the historical forces that had shaped the religion's melancholy subsequent history.[337] In doing so, he went far beyond what any British clerical predecessor had argued. Although Harnack did not think of natural science as analogous to historical *Wissenschaft* in the way Hatch did, they knew one another personally and seem to have regarded themselves as kindred spirits.[338]

Hatch's 1880 Bampton Lectures on *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches* represented his first extended application of these methodological principles.[339] He chose as his subject the question of the origin of church institutions: the distinction between the clergy and the laity, the origins of episcopacy, and the growth of councils, among other connected problems. The Victorian period had witnessed a revival of the intense argument over these subjects first inflamed at the Reformation. Stanley and Milman, in one sense belonging to an

[335] Oriel College, Oxford: Orielensia H 50, Hatch's 1889 Lee Lecture on 'Modern Methods in Theology', given in St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh: press cutting from *The Scotsman*, 27 May 1889 (Unnumbered pages).
[336] On Harnack, see chapter one above.
[337] E. Hatch, *Towards fields of light, sacred poems* (London, 1890).
[338] Lambeth Palace Library (Hatch papers), MS 1467/34: A. Harnack to E. Hatch, 15 February 1885; Hatch, *Memorials of Edwin Hatch*, xxix-xxx; Nowak, 'Theologie, Philologie und Geschichte', pp. 209-210.
[339] E. Hatch, *The organization of the early Christian Churches. Eight lectures delivered before the University of Oxford, in the year 1880* (London, Oxford and Cambridge, 1881). There is an existing study of this text, primarily theological in character: N.F. Josaitis, *Edwin Hatch and early church order* (Gembloux, 1971).

older latitudinarian tradition and its particular reading of Richard Hooker, did not award the distinction between bishops, priests, and laity divine status; but they nevertheless accepted it on the practical grounds that it grew out of the historical needs of the early church.[340] Hatch's new departure was the way in which he applied the earlier liberal Anglican maxim that church history was part of general history. He did so in such a manner as to argue that church forms were wholly determined, and religious life largely suffocated, by the importation and subsequent petrification of alien forms from the secular world.[341]

Hatch started from the view that the church of the New Testament had consisted of free congregations, whose main function was the collection and disbursement of charitable gifts.[342] Totalising corruption set in very soon afterwards, and was complete by the fourth century. When Christian congregations came to model themselves on heathen associations, which often instituted presidents to handle administrative matters, seeds of future episcopal government were sown.[343] Church councils were not inherent to Christianity, but only became ordinary and binding as a result of imperial policy to encourage homogeneity in doctrine and practice.[344] The real origins of the clergy as a separate class lay not in any divine commission, but in the financial and judicial exemptions granted to Christian officers by imperial authority.[345] The organisation of many modern churches, Hatch believed, therefore amounted to the fossilised remains of a long-dead time. The church of the very earliest age, rooted in 'brotherhood' and 'democracy', was once again suited to become the ecclesiastical

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[340] H.H. Milman, *The history of Christianity, from the birth of Christ to the abolition of paganism in the Roman Empire* (3 vols, London, 1840), ii, 63-79; A.P. Stanley, *Sermons and essays on the apostolical age* (Oxford, 1847), pp. [46]-77.
[341] Hatch, *Organization*, pp. 208-209.
[342] Ibid., pp. [26]-54.
[343] Ibid., pp. [82]-110.
[344] Ibid., pp. 168-170.
[345] Ibid., pp. [140]-164.

form of the age of the industrial proletariat. With such a reform, he argued, the church would survive agnosticism just as it had once outlived Gnosticism.[346]

Hatch next applied the same treatment to the doctrinal history of the early church. He did so in his Hibbert Lectures of 1888, which were posthumously published under the title of *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*.[347] Hatch's Idealist and idealising contemporaries liked to render orthodox formulations acceptable by presenting them as the fruit of critical reflection. Stanley, rather differently, nodded his qualified approval before moving on to supposedly more concrete issues. Hatch, in contrast to both these approaches, instead sought to show that these doctrinal monuments had taken shape during a conceptually distant period, from which the present was entitled to depart. The problem, he explained, was to account for how the religion of the Sermon on the Mount could have been transmogrified into the metaphysical and dogmatic statements of the Nicene Creed within the space of three centuries. Whereas he had primarily blamed the development of church institutions on Roman imperial and cultural practices, he attributed the course of doctrinal history to the transference of Christianity from a Semitic to a Hellenic soil.[348]

The result was not the mastery of Greek universality by a Christian idea, but the practical neutralisation of the Christian idea by 'the whole mental attitude of that time'.[349] Hatch went on to argue that Christianity, after its first proclamation by Christ, had been everywhere corrupted by the social and intellectual culture of the Hellenistic world; it was impossible that, in such a society, a pure religion could have long survived. By the second and third centuries, the spread of Greek education around the eastern Mediterranean had fostered a professionalisation of philosophy, where sophists disputed the thoughts of others for money

[346] Ibid., pp. 208-216.
[347] E. Hatch, *The influence of Greek ideas and usages upon the Christian church*, ed. A.M. Fairbairn (London, 1890).
[348] Ibid., pp. 1-2.
[349] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

but offered no positive contribution of their own. The Greeks had grown accustomed to think in terms of artificial categories which compelled them to dispute points of Christianity rather than to accept it in its simplicity.[350] Christian dogma, itself an originally harmless Greek term for an affirmation of a personal belief, won a victory over Gnosticism, but it was a victory purchased at the price of engaging in religious controversy on philosophical Gnostic terms: 'the absorption was less of speculations than of the tendency to speculate'.[351] This latter argument bore marked similarities to that made by Harnack in his *Dogmengeschichte*, the first volume of which had appeared in 1886 and which Hatch extensively cited.[352] Hatch even used recent studies of religious anthropology provocatively to attribute the growth of sacraments to the practices of Near Eastern mystery cults.[353] He ended the work by raising the possibility, to which he did not definitely commit himself, that Christianity might shear itself of its Hellenism and return to the religion of the Beatitudes.[354]

The critical reception Hatch attracted exposed the extent to which a range of developing tensions among religious reformists had come to a head by the 1880s and 1890s. Among his most sympathetic hearers were nonconformists who saw this erstwhile dissenter as having critically vindicated their call to the simple gospel. The editor of his lectures on *Greek Ideas* was Andrew Martin Fairbairn, the first principal of Congregationalist Mansfield College, Oxford, at the opening of which in 1889 Hatch was an honoured guest.[355] Nonconformist and provincial papers reported on his sermons and were full of approbatory obituary notices after his premature death, apparently from overwork, in 1889.[356] This was in marked contrast to nonconformists' typical estimations of earlier liberal Anglicans such as Stanley and

[350] Ibid., pp. 25-49.
[351] Ibid., pp. 116-136, here at p. 133.
[352] Cited at for example ibid., pp. 130 n.1, 262 n.2; cf. Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, i, 45, 158-171.
[353] Hatch, *Greek ideas*, pp. 294-309.
[354] Ibid., pp. 350-352.
[355] Hatch, *Memorials of Edwin Hatch*, xxxiii-xxxv.
[356] The surviving Hatch papers contain approving clippings from, among other publications, the *Sheffield Independent*; the *Methodist Times*; the *Nonconformist*; the *Nottinghamshire Express*; the *Aberdeen Free Press,* and the *Methodist Recorder*: Edwin Hatch Papers, Oriel College, Oxford, Orielensia H50 (unnumbered pages).

Thirlwall, which often suggested that their acceptance of the historical relativity of the early creeds was incompatible with their comfortable belief that these formularies should continue to define the Church of England.[357]

Among the academic establishment, however, Hatch's radicalism – and especially his resolutely secular way of reading religious change – were not simply out of step with doctrinal conservatism. They also conflicted with the Idealist thrust of much late-century religious thought, both liberal and conservative, and even made Hatch an object of suspicion. This was notably not true in Germany, where Harnack translated his Bampton Lectures and contributed a *Nachwort* to the German edition of his *Greek Ideas*.[358] But Mark Pattison, who had long since come to regard early Christian thought as a corruption of Greek philosophy, remarked to Mrs Hatch after being impressed by her husband's Bampton Lectures that they would rule him out of promotion in Oxford.[359] The philologist Max Müller agreed.[360] Although Hatch was made university reader in ecclesiastical history in 1884, this was an impecunious position which he had to combine with other duties in order to make ends meet, and friends such as Fairbairn and T. H. Green thought the lack of security placed too great a strain upon him.[361] In what might complicate simplistic views of the impact of university reform on the religious character of the university, a number of Oxford dons, liberal as well as different shades of conservative, came out against Hatch and allied approaches. The study

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[357] For example, [Anon.], 'The Eastern Church: its past and future', *NR*, 13:25 (July, 1861), pp. 47-48; C. Beard, 'Bishop Thirlwall's Remains', *TR*, 15:61 (April, 1878), p. 226.

[358] E. Hatch, *Die Gesellschaftsverfassung der christlichen Kirche im Alterthum. Acht Vorlesungen*, trans. A. Harnack (Giessen, 1883); A. Harnack, 'Nachwort' to E. Hatch, *Griechentum und Christentum. Zwölf Hibbertsvorlesungen über den Einfluss griechischer Ideen und Gebräuche auf die christliche Kirche*, trans. E. Preuschen (Freiburg, 1892), pp. 263-268.

[359] Edwin Hatch Papers, Oriel College, Oxford, Orielensia H50, anonymous typescript (unnumbered pages); 'Barrow's sermon on the aversion of the Philosophers in the early centuries to Christianity – not well treated – gave the old solution – pride of human intellect – but suggested interesting thoughts': Bodleian Library, MS Pattison 129/100-101, M. Pattison diary entry for 10 April 1853.

[360] Oriel College, Oxford, Orielensia H50 (Hatch papers): M. Müller to E. Hatch, 5 February 1882 (unnumbered pages).

[361] Oriel College, Oxford, Orielensia H50 (Hatch papers): T.H. Green to E. Hatch, n.d. (unnumbered pages); Hatch, *Memorials of Edwin Hatch*, xxxviii-xliii.

of religious history was a field over which newly specialising scholars remained carefully watchful, out of essentially apologetic imperatives.[362]

It was not just unwelcome analytical findings to which Hatch's critics objected. They also disagreed with what they saw as his attempt to read Christian history from the outside, independently of commitment to or sympathy with the developing power of its leading ideas. Newman's blending of historical interpretation and moral intuition was echoed, in attenuated ways, by a spectrum of Hatch's later critics. Oxford high churchmen did not seek to rebut Hatch, as an earlier generation would have done, simply by claiming that he was at variance with a long list of early fathers. Their argumentative strategy had changed. Hatch, it was now argued, sought to overturn the fruits of the experience of the Christian community as it was expressed it universal forms of thought; and he misunderstood the nature of church institutions by deliberately excluding their leading idea from explanations of their historical development. The classical scholar and former fellow of Merton College, Oxford, Thomas Cruttwell, rejected Hatch's claim that Greek metaphysics overspread the faith with contaminating hyphae in his own rehabilitation of the Greek fathers. 'The intuitions of Revelation,' Cruttwell argued, 'to be presented to the universal consciousness, must needs be recast in the form of thought which nearest approaches universality.'[363] In his Bampton Lectures, Charles Gore answered Hatch's Hibbert Lectures by declaring that 'Christianity became metaphysical simply and only because man is rational.'[364] Gore had previously published a rebuttal of Hatch's account of the growth of church institutions. There he stated that his fundamental objection to Hatch's writing was that 'we are always on the outskirts of

[362] The sociologically-inflected view of Victorian university reform, in which professionalisation secularised learning by sweeping away the clerisy, is far too sweeping: cf. Heyck, *Transformation of intellectual life*, pp. 66-67, 181.
[363] T.C. Cruttwell, *A literary history of early Christianity, including the fathers and the chief heretical writers of the Ante-Nicene period* (2 vols, London, 1893), frontispiece, ix.
[364] Gore, *Incarnation*, pp. 20-21.

Christianity, dealing with its secondary objects, with its external resemblances'; he 'has read Church History without the sympathy of historic insight'.[365]

Those whose faith in the internal, assimilative power of Christian ideas led them not to deposit authoritative power in an evolving corporate church, but instead to privilege individual reflective discernment, delivered remarkably similar rejections of Hatch and the Ritschlian moment to which they understood him to belong. Charles Bigg, commenting on the recently-formed alliance between Hatch, Ritschlianism and nonconformity in his 1895 study of *Neoplatonism*, thought that Hatch entirely missed the extent to which Christian assumptions had overmastered Hellenism in the early church.[366] Edward Caird, preaching at Balliol, thought that at the relatively unreflective stage of world history attained in the fourth and fifth centuries, Augustine and Athanasius could bear the weight of conceptual struggles on behalf of others. The spiritual war was now individualised; but it could not jettison – only sublate – the philosophical results of those earlier struggles.[367] Caird accordingly expressed in a letter his dislike for the view of Ritschl or Harnack 'which takes Christianity as an eternal something which is debased or secularised by being brought into relation with Greek philosophy and Roman organisation, and which we have to free from philosophy and politics to get it pure'.[368] Divergent strands of religious liberalism had come to rely on essentially different readings of the presence and character of reason in history. And while Hatch in some ways anticipated twentieth-century approaches to the history of religion, he remained a

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[365] Idem, *The church and the ministry. A review of the Rev. E. Hatch's Bampton Lectures* (London and Oxford, 1882), pp. 65-66.
[366] Bigg, *Neoplatonism*, pp. [134]-144.
[367] E. Caird, 'The great decision', in his *Miscellaneous pamphlets, lay sermons and addresses, 1866-1907*, ed. C. Tyler (Bristol, 1999), pp. 195-196.
[368] E. Caird to M. Talbot, 14 January 1906, in Jones and Muirhead, *Edward Caird*, pp. 241-242; cf. Caird, *Evolution of theology*, ii, 359-360.

relatively isolated figure at a time when Idealism offered a powerfully convincing way to resist a secularised vision of human time.[369]

VI) Conclusion

In the name of dispassionate historical science, Hatch had radicalised an earlier broad church fashion for elevating the social and contextual over the conceptual and internal determinants of religious expression. This enterprise and the controversy it generated acutely exposed the markedly different paths taken by Victorian liberal thinkers concerned with the problem of how to cope with the newly-evident historicity of fundamental Christian doctrines and structures, especially as these had taken shape up to the Council of Nicaea. One path, promoted by Idealists and the conservative thinkers who found Idealism a helpful way of reaffirming tradition, sought to elide, by an historical method, an older distinction between mysterious, internalist theology and the wider philosophy of religion and experience. The delicate affinities evident between Newman's reading of orthodoxy as the expression of an 'idea' and contemporary liberal thinkers, and the confused reception given to Bunsen's *Hippolytus*, had given way to a marked intellectual fashion by 1900 for scholars to stress the free and spontaneous aspects of the development of orthodoxy, often with an idealist inflection. Though sometimes undogmatic, they were certainly not anti-doctrinal. Milman's and Stanley's relative distance from this tendency, and their desire to play down rather than reimagine early doctrinal history, partly reflected their own unmusicality in German historical philosophy. Hatch, by contrast open to Ritschlianism, was moved to place radical critique of doctrine at the heart of his own attempt to clear away obstacles to belief. Unlike Idealism, it

[369] One of the few contemporary British church historians who can be likened to Hatch was W.M. Ramsay, a professor of humanity at Aberdeen who believed that the application of Idealist motifs to church history was ahistorical: W.M. Ramsay, *The church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170* (London, 1893), pp. 187-189.

was not an approach which conservatives could easily appropriate for apologetic ends. For the growing number of critics who regarded early church history as witnessing to the growth of religious mind, working through the successive stages of doctrinal development could seem akin to following the sequence of an argument, rather than the growth of corruption. All liberal critics nevertheless agreed that history was properly a form of reasoning about religion. Now that Victorian orthodoxy was less and less enforced by external legal and ecclesiastical constraints, and increasingly by the conscientious self alone, reflection on subjective experience in time made early church history into a crucial locus of religious authority.

Chapter three. Latin Christianity

I) Medievalism and progress

Whereas previous accounts have tended to assume that Victorian medievalism was a broadly constant phenomenon, this chapter proposes that Victorian historical conceptions of medieval religion changed remarkably between the 1840s and the 1900s. It explores the implications of that transition for how historians understand Victorian engagement with Roman Catholicism, and with ideas of historical progress. At the start of the period, interest in the subject was controlled, though not exclusively, by the needs of romantic and religious polemic. Evangelical Protestants, where they did not avert their eyes from a popish age altogether, strongly denounced it; and they often did so in terms drawn from biblical prophecy. Old high churchmen mined the period for rather technical ecclesiological self-justification, while newer ones, like other contemporary social critics, exalted the middle ages as a time of piety, charity and order subsequently overthrown by commercialist sin. Such voices no longer made the running by 1900, though they had not died out. In a trend partly symbolised and partly inaugurated by Henry Hart Milman's *HLC*, the history of medieval religion, in which present-day Catholicism seemed rooted, was now construed as a stage in the progressive development of the world.[370] The urgency of anti-Catholicism declined as the desire to identify and define progressive continuities between Christian beginnings and Protestant modernity grew stronger. The ambiguities and wider importance of that transition are explored here.

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[370] *HLC*.

This discussion of Victorian engagement with medieval religious history proceeds from two starting-points. The first is that Victorian historical writings on the middle ages should be understood not solely as episodes in the history of historiography, but also as formative contributions to wider cultural debates about the place of 'medievalism' in modern society. History saturated Victorian political, social and religious rhetoric; and nowhere is this better illustrated than in the persistent and many-sided presence of conceptions of the medieval world in how contemporaries understood architectural style, the British constitution, ideals of masculinity and femininity, and the modern socio-economic order.[371] There was, however, another register in which Victorians discussed the medieval period, to which existing scholarship has not yet given adequate attention. This was the growing importance attached to the middle ages as a period of religious progress: progress that was deemed to have nurtured European civilisation, and which was conceptualised in ways that are highly significant for how historians understand what drove Victorian interest in the past.

The second starting-point, related to the first, is that when Victorians discussed medievalism, they were very often discussing the claims of Roman Catholicism to religious obedience, intellectual authority, and cultural power and acceptance. When Victorians cast their eyes back to the middle ages, they were immediately confronted by the growth and power of Catholic religion. The continuing, even growing strength of that religious system in the nineteenth century perplexed Protestant and liberal Victorians. It has continued to fascinate more recent historians. The reviving cultural, political and intellectual influence of Roman Catholicism, despite the papacy's Italian political reverses, today appears to be one of the most striking features of nineteenth-century European history, as does the opposition it

[371] A. Chandler, *A dream of order. The medieval ideal in nineteenth-century English literature* (London, 1971); R.J. Smith, *The Gothic bequest. Medieval institutions in British thought, 1688-1863* (Cambridge, 1987); C. Dellheim, *The face of the past. The preservation of the medieval inheritance in Victorian England* (Cambridge, 1982); J. Mordaunt Crook, *The dilemma of style. Architectural ideas from the picturesque to the post-modern* (London, 1987); J.W. Burrow, *A liberal descent*, pp. 97-228; M. Girouard, *The return to Camelot. Chivalry and the English gentleman* (New Haven and London, 1981); A. Dwight Culler, *The Victorian mirror of history* (New Haven and London, 1985), esp. pp. 152-184.

generated.[372] Britain's experience of these European forces was shaped by the peculiarities of her national and constitutional position. Fears for the nation's Protestant character intensified as Catholic Emancipation, evangelicalism, Irish immigration and the prospect of foreign, continental Ultramontanism came together in a heady combination; in this context, Protestant and liberal Victorians saw Tractarianism in the Church of England as a localised instance of a wider danger. Although the feverish atmosphere generated by the restoration of the English Roman Catholic hierarchy in the 'Papal Aggression' of 1850-1851 was not repeated, anti-Catholic feeling is seen as a consistently formative feature of Victorian culture.[373]

That sentiment was very often articulated in an historical language. The past furnished materials from which to construct binary opposites: Protestant and Catholic, liberal and Ultramontane, masculine and effeminate, rational and superstitious. Protestant and liberal Victorians would have added 'medieval' to the negative side of this list. The Free Church of Scotland polemicist James Aitken Wylie, writing at the time of the Papal Aggression, condemned 'Popery, and its modern Anglican form Puseyism' as 'mediaeval error'.[374] 'Medievalism has long been little more than a synonym for darkness', a reviewer disapprovingly remarked of Pope Leo XIII's commendation of scholastic philosophy in his 1879 encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*.[375] Historians have correctly noticed how such contemporary attempts to define Catholicism as part of the pre-modern world became important components of a broader struggle to characterise Catholicism as 'other' to rational or

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[372] See Clark and Kaiser, *Culture wars*; Blackbourn, *Marpingen*; Harris, *Lourdes*; Wolffe, *Protestant crusade*; Gross, *War against Catholicism*; S. Gilley, 'The papacy', in idem and Stanley, *World Christianities*, pp. 13-29; T. Verhoeven, *Transatlantic anti-Catholicism. France and the United States in the nineteenth century* (New York and Basingstoke, 2010); S.M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and nineteenth-century fiction* (Cambridge, 2004); D.L. Hoeveler, *The Gothic ideology. Religious hysteria and anti-Catholicism in British popular fiction 1780-1880* (Cardiff, 2014); D.G. Paz, *Dickens and Barnaby Rudge. Anti-Catholicism and Chartism* (Monmouth, 2006); idem, *Popular anti-Catholicism*; M. LaMonaca, *Masked atheism. Catholicism and the secular Victorian home* (Columbus, 2008).
[373] On this subject, see also Bentley, *Ritualism and politics*.
[374] J.A. Wylie, *The papacy: its history, dogmas, genius, and prospects: being the Evangelical Alliance first prize essay on popery* (Edinburgh, 1851), p. 402.
[375] [B. Maitland], 'Thomas Aquinas and the Vatican', *QR*, 152:303 (July, 1881), p. 106.

Protestant modernity.[376] But it is also true that Victorian liberals sought new ways of incorporating Catholicism into their accounts of how modern religion and society had emerged, without accepting it on its own terms. For a distinctive, striking and much less remarked-upon transformation was underway: many Victorian Britons became inclined to identify constructive aspects of the history of the religious medievalism which survived in their midst. As religiously liberal Victorians looked for ways to find intellectual and societal common ground with their Catholic contemporaries, and as the need to vindicate the fundamentally spiritual nature of the universe came to seem more pressing than the desire to resist Catholicism, the anti-Catholic and anti-papal themes which had once dominated the treatment of medieval religion in Protestant culture significantly faded. Those themes had drawn their energy from Catholicism's intellectual and moral challenge to Protestantism as much as from its political implications; and it is accordingly in changing intellectual and moral sensibilities, as much as in political developments, that the explanation for the decline of Victorian anti-Catholicism lies. Catholic history, over time, came to seem a progressive part of Protestants' own history. Protestant evangelicals and Anglican high churchmen were to be deeply affected by this changing intellectual context.

Beginning above all with Milman and his *HLC*, a fundamental change took place in the way in which Protestant historians generally regarded Catholic history. This chapter explores that transition, by focusing on the contexts, arguments and afterlives of Milman's great work. Where earlier writers had been drawn to the subject out of ecclesiological concerns, romanticism, and enmity to popery, Milman's interest in medieval religion, in which he was the heir to earlier scholarly developments, lay above all in its role as a creative phase of progress and development in European religion and society. Previously deprecated as superstition, Romanism and popery, with Milman medieval religion became 'Latin

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[376] M. Borutta, *Antikatholizismus. Deutschland und Italien im Zeitalter der europäischen Kulturkämpfe* (Göttingen, 2010), esp. pp. [269]-389; Wheeler, *The old enemies*, pp. 25-26.

Christianity'. It was now an autonomous epoch, immediate to God, which for a time encompassed the progressive movement of civilisation. This progress did not solely encompass the institutional church, but the entirety of the political, social, racial and cultural life of Western Europe. The history of the Catholic phase of religious experience, on this view, could not be repudiated or denounced. Instead it had to be appropriated and internalised.

The liberal historians who promoted that reorientation, of whom Milman was the most important, had two ends in mind when they did so. The most important of these was the rising conviction that history, after scripture, was both the best authority for discerning the purposes of God, and an obvious arena in which the reality of divine providence could be vindicated. Within this scheme, it became important to draw out the constructive and creative role played by the Catholic system in the centuries during which it had held sway in Europe. This disposition certainly conduced to richer, less censorious forms of historical study than had previously been common; but the new historicism which underpinned it was deeply theological, not secular.

The second liberal aim followed from this fundamental transition. Milman and his intellectual successors hoped that the history they wrote would undermine the reactionary medievalism which held up the middle ages as a social and religious ideal, at the same time as it would help to ameliorate the modern religious divisions sustained by theological and historical misunderstanding. By its nature, this enterprise was double-edged. Belief in the past progressiveness of Catholicism, as it spread, tended to fragment and soften the hard edges of Protestant anti-Catholicism. But Milman and his fellow-liberals were equally insistent that Catholicism's period of purposefulness now lay in the past, even if certain elements of what Latin Christianity had bequeathed to the west remained relevant. Though determined to remove sectarianism from British intellectual life, liberal critics remained convinced that the

further spread of liberal Protestantism was both the means and the desirable end of so doing. This rendered religious liberalism deeply ambiguous.

Debates about the proper way to interpret medieval religious history were therefore also debates about the role of religion in socio-political change, attitudes to religious difference, and the proper scope of historical explanation. These discussions did not essentially end with Milman, and were continued by new groupings of reforming moralists. Milman's idiosyncrasies – especially his inattentiveness to mind and inward spiritual conflict – often limited his appeal. As much a child of the eighteenth century as of the nineteenth, he sometimes seemed inadequate as a religious historian to more unmistakeably Victorian thinkers who found him too secular or too ironical to capture the full apologetic importance of the period during which Europe had received the gospel. William Lecky, Milman's still more secular-minded admirer, caused greater unease by his scientific and sociological rather than piously providential account of the formation of medieval Europe in his *History of European Morals* (*HEM*), a book that was also an Anglo-Irish comment on the progressiveness of modern-day ecclesiasticism.[377] With different ends in mind, a number of clerical historians came to prominence who, despite their differing denominational and ecclesiological starting-points, increasingly converged in understanding the development of medieval religion as a formative stage in the spiritual history of the world, the emergence of races, and, in some cases, as a living presence in modern culture. The Anglicans Charles Merivale and Richard William Church, the Idealist Presbyterian George Matheson, and the Methodist Herbert Brook Workman, gave new kinds of attention to medieval religion which may be seen as representative of the changing environment. By the later part of the century, secularity seemed to be a closer presence than it had once done, and history an increasingly important means of resisting it. These discussions drew in such energy because they belonged

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[377] *HEM*.

to broader debates about the roles of history, and religion, in any enduring philosophy of human experience and of the origins and ends of freedom.

II) Revival and Romanism

Medieval history had become a crucial medium for discussing the rights and wrongs of Catholicism long before the first three volumes of Milman's *HLC*, which broke through many previously-established lines of discussion, reached the booksellers in 1854. In those early decades, different species of ancestral British hostility to popery and the register of its misdoings were joined by alarms to the unconverted from post-revolutionary millenarians, together with newer, wistful exaltations of a lost world of medieval religious and social cohesion from the pens of social critics. The latter, which expanded the scope of historical vision to encompass religion as a social force as well as an institutional or individual phenomenon, significantly overlapped with the emergence of Tractarianism in the 1830s. Yet the persistence of Enlightenment-era approaches to the history of clericalism showed that religiously polemical modes of treating medieval church history did not exclusively hold the field. So too did the appearance of histories of the papacy which tried, with only partial success, to spurn polemical intent, though their narratives still kept closely to the history of the institutional church. These newer historians nevertheless assumed and complained that their early Victorian contemporaries typically saw the history of Catholicism as nothing more than a mine for confessional diatribe.[378] However, a new and influential way of understanding the period, seeking to understand the Catholic past as an integrated whole as

[378] E.J. Shepherd, *The history of the Church of Rome, to the episcopate of Damasus, A.D. 384* (London, 1851); T. Greenwood, *Cathedra Petri: a political history of the Great Latin Patriarchate* (6 vols, London, 1856-1872).

well as devolving religious authority onto a progressive reading of history, was not to appear in English before Milman.

Evangelical historians painted the centuries of popery in dark colours, so as to enhance the pure light of the gospel and the blessings of the Reformation which had reignited it. At the same time, they had to show the perseverance of the church of Christ even in times of its greatest tribulation. Christ's promise, 'I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world', was one they took seriously.[379] Joseph Milner's *History of the Church of Christ* - in Julius Hare's words, 'the main, if not the sole, source from which a large portion of our Church derive their notions of ecclesiastical history' – was typical.[380] Milner deplored the creation of an allegedly dictatorial papacy and, above all, the pace at which idolatrous masses and prayers flooded into the medieval church. The Roman system eventually showed itself to be the work of Antichrist, radically separate from real Christianity. Milner notably did not press the idea as severely as some did after him, and he ascribed a comparatively late date to the emergence of the papal Antichrist.[381] It was only beginning with the eighth-century Pope Gregory II that the scriptural reader, thought Milner, would find 'the MAN OF SIN matured in all his gigantic horrors', a reference to the premillennial rise of an antichristian power prophesied by St Paul.[382]

Milner's treatment of the middle ages, despite his criticisms of them, was marked by his desire to show the abiding presence of the evangelical spirit in the visible church, even at the darkest of times. Because Milner wished above all to exhibit true religion in his *History*, rather than perversions of it, this became the dominant motif in his treatment of the period. Milner accordingly sought to rescue the 'piety, integrity, and humility' of Gregory the Great

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[379] Matthew 28:20.
[380] J.D. Walsh, 'Joseph Milner's evangelical church history', p. 174.
[381] Idem, 'Joseph Milner's evangelical church history: a biography' (MS), p. 29; I am grateful to John Walsh for permitting me to cite from his illuminating and as yet unpublished essay.
[382] Milner, *History of the church of Christ*, i, xviii, ii, 445-466.

from the imprecations of the disaffected Hanoverian ex-Jesuit Archibald Bower's *History of the Popes*, a text often cited by subsequent anti-Catholic polemicists.[383] Milner's Tory evangelical Anglican hostility to dissent contributed to his reluctance to denigrate an established and institutional church without qualification. He showed limited sympathy for sects on the fringes of the church such as the Paulicians, whose scriptural and godly religion showed the continuing operation of divine grace in Asia Minor from the seventh century until the ninth, when they rebelled against the established government.[384] Later, the Waldensians had kept the gospel alive in the valleys of Piedmont at a time when there was scarcely 'a visible Church of Christ to be found'; but even then, from the twelfth century to the Reformation, there were 'some "individual souls in Babylon," who loved the Lord,' and whom Milner was gratified to identify.[385]

Though he did not depart from a strictly Reformed view of the papacy, Milner's relatively indulgent view of the kinds of religiosity Romanism had historically fostered did register attitudes which distinctly belonged to the eighteenth century. Milner did not feel acutely threatened by the papacy, and it was unnecessary to sound the alarm about a danger that was not perceived to be there. The onset of an age of revolutions, and of Catholic revival brought too close for comfort by Catholic Emancipation and the Oxford Movement, fed a newly intense kind of anti-Catholicism which inspired a new generation of evangelical historians. This anti-Catholicism often became bound up with a shift, also rooted in the shocks of the new century, towards historicist premillennialism as the favoured world-historical paradigm of Anglican (though not exclusively Anglican) evangelicals between roughly 1820 and 1860. The change was from an eighteenth-century Protestant expectation that Christ would return at

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[383] Ibid., ii, 373-374 and 374 n.; A. Bower, *The History of the Popes, from the foundation of the See of Rome, to the present time* (7 vols, London, 1748-1766). For a scurrilous use of Bower, see T. Stephen, *The Spirit of the Church of Rome, its principles and practices, as exhibited in history* (London, 1840), p. 57 and n.
[384] Milner, *History of the church of Christ*, ii, 491-499; Walsh, 'Milner's Evangelical Church History', pp. 183-184.
[385] Milner, *History of the church of Christ*, iii, [92]-206.

the end of the millennial age of the worldwide spread of the gospel, to a more urgently dramatic – but not necessarily pessimistic - expectation that the second coming was imminent.[386] The new apocalypticism took root in a newly historicist culture. Emerging evangelical historians, seeing the history of Europe foretold in the mysterious pages of scriptural prophecy, now keenly stressed the actively Antichristian role of Rome in salvation history.[387]

In this new environment, even Milner's approach could seem to concede too much to Rome's historical pretensions. Robert Benton Seeley, father of the more heterodox John Robert Seeley, articulated a dark vision of the history of the Roman religion which involved direct repudiation of Milner's *History*: a text to the close knowledge of which he was brought by his family's major role in evangelical publishing.[388] An author in his own right, R. B. Seeley published a study of *The Church of Christ in the Middle Ages* in 1845 in 'the Christian's family library', a series edited by the premillennialist evangelical Anglican leader, Edward Bickersteth.[389] Seeley believed that Milner had missed the fact that a '*total change*' had swept over the church in the sixth or seventh century. At that point, Seeley argued, the 'western Antichrist' showed her face, and the prophecies of St John became the historian's only correct methodological tool for construing the subsequent history of the western church. Popes and councils thereafter belonged to 'the Apostacy' that grew drunk on the blood of the saints. These witnesses in the wilderness were the Waldenses in the west and the Paulicians in the east, in respect of whom Milner's broadly positive attitude had been tempered by

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386 Spence, 'Time and eternity'; idem, 'The renewal of time and space: the missing element of discussions about nineteenth-century premillennialism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 63:1 (2012), pp. 81-101; D.W. Bebbington, *The dominance of evangelicalism. The age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester, 2005), pp. 179-184.
387 Spence, 'Time and eternity', pp. 36-40.
388 L. Howsam, 'Seeley, Robert Benton (1798-1886)', *ODNB*; [R.B. Seeley], *The church of Christ in the middle ages. An historical sketch compiled from various authors* (London, 1845), [v].
389 Spence, 'Time and eternity', pp. 42-43; L. Howsam, 'Seeley, Robert Benton (1798-1886)', *ODNB*.

doctrinal and political reservations.[390] The eight hundred years between the rise of the papacy and the Reformation, Seeley believed, had left 'literally *nothing*' of religious worth besides proto-Protestant devotional writings.[391] Outside Anglican evangelicalism, the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* also published characterisations of the Church of Rome as a prophesied enemy of the faithful, both along the lines of the older Protestant exegesis familiar to Milner and those of the modern historicist variety.[392] James Aitken Wylie, a popular Scottish writer and minister who followed the Original Secession Church into union with the Free Church in 1852, won the Evangelical Alliance's competition for a prize essay on 'popery', set in 1850, with a history of the papacy interwoven with allusions to prophecy. Wylie, for whom the papacy was, next to Christianity, 'the great FACT of the modern world' and worse than paganism, likened the papal tiara to the crown of thorns which had mocked Christ, and ended by looking forward to its imminent destruction with a shower of exclamation marks.[393] Denunciations of the history of the Church of Rome grew more intense as the threat it seemed to pose increased. Liberal historians of Catholicism would hope to lessen this astringency, though they quietly established a new kind of Protestant-Catholic division by the way in which they did so.

High Anglicans looked at the rise and progress of popery more with indignation than with fear and outrage. William Palmer of Worcester College, Oxford, the old high churchman who turned away from Tractarianism when its 'restorative' character became unacceptably innovative, wrote an influential *Treatise on the Church* which, typically for non-Tractarian high church writings, saw examination of the middle ages chiefly as a way of confirming

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[390] [Seeley], *Church of Christ*, [v]-vii, 186-236; Milner, *History of the church of Christ*, ii, 491-499, iii, 99-155; Walsh, 'Joseph Milner's evangelical church history: a biography' (MS), pp. 34-39.
[391] [Seeley], *Church of Christ*, pp. 471-472.
[392] See for example the republication of a tract by the eighteenth-century Presbyterian divine, George Benson: 'the Man of Sin: a Dissertation', *WMM*, 18 (February, 1839), pp. 98-111; a more historicist reading, connecting the prophecies to a succession of ecclesiastical-historical events, was offered in a letter by W.H. Rule, 'Humiliation of the Pope', *WMM*, 4 (Oct 1848): 1089-1092.
[393] Wylie, *Papacy*, pp. [1], 8, 55-56, 548-552; L.A. Ritchie, 'Wylie, James Aitken (1808-1890)', *ODNB*.

Anglican ecclesiology.[394] This was newly important at a time when the church seemed increasingly threatened by Nonconformity, Romanism and reforming government ministers. Palmer's treatise was therefore organised, not as a narrative, but around controversial theses and propositions in support of which he deployed proof-texts from scripture, patristics and the Church of England's standard divines.[395] As part of Palmer's contention for the validity of the Church of England and its sister communions in the British Isles as branches of the catholic church, it was necessary for him to deprecate Roman innovations whilst also emphasising the continuing presence of the holy spirit in the institutional church, even at its lowest points, more than evangelical or nonconformist writers tended to do. Palmer argued that the fact that the Roman church continued to baptise and ordain through the centuries down to the Reformation helped to mark it out as a true church, even though it contained errors and heresies. He did not take Rome to be an heretical church, because the erroneous belief 'that the Roman pontiff *was the divinely-appointed centre of unity*' arose from a legend of 'long standing' rather than from '*obstinately pertinacious*' denial of the truth.[396] In the third edition of the *Treatise*, Palmer added to his rejection of strongly Protestant approaches to the Latin and Greek churches by including a supplement answering the objections from prophecy which had been raised after the appearance of the first edition in 1838, chiefly by R. B. Seeley.[397]

Tractarians deepened this technical, ecclesiological approach to medieval history by holding up a picture of the middle ages as a social and religious ideal, to the reproach of their own time, which they supposed to have been corrupted by commercialism and Protestantism.

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[394] Palmer, *Treatise on the church*.
[395] See for example ibid., i, 71-101.
[396] Ibid., i, 213-221.
[397] Ibid., ii, [452]-461. Palmer refers at the beginning of the passage to the objection levelled against his treatise in *Essays on the Church*, whose author he does not give, but which was certainly R.B. Seeley: ibid., ii, [452] and n.; [R.B. Seeley], *Essays on the Church, by a layman*, new edn (London, 1838), 350-356. Seeley published successive editions of this work to keep up with the distressing path of the Oxford Movement, with which Seeley, like most commentators, associated Palmer.

Many Tractarians insisted on the modern applicability of the monastic principle and holy days.[398] John Henry Newman, in his sermon on the re-establishment of the Roman hierarchy, romanticised Anglo-Saxon England, with its receptivity to Catholicism, as a time when 'boys came forth in white, swinging censers, and the fragrant cloud arose'.[399] Mark Pattison dreamt of writing medieval history to the glory of the Catholic Church during his period of close association with Edward Bouverie Pusey and Newman in the 1830s and early 1840s, and contributed two *Lives of the Saints* to Newman's series on the subject.[400] Staying with Newman at Littlemore in 1843, while undertaking part of that research, Pattison noted in his journal the assembled company's dinner-table talk of wonderful monastic abstinences. 'S. Godric stood all night in the river up to his neck - & frozen.'[401] Milman and his intellectual sympathisers were to be as distant from this brand of anti-modernism as they were from evangelical anti-Catholicism.

As accounts of medieval religion which took their cue from different kinds of religious conservatism became both louder and more common, signs of dissatisfaction with them also surfaced. The whiggish Henry Hallam's often-reprinted *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages*, first published in 1818, kept a late-Enlightenment conception of medieval church history before Victorian audiences, organised around rising clerical usurpations of legal powers properly belonging to the civil government.[402] The advanced theist Francis Newman praised Hallam's work in 1848 as pleasingly out-of-step with the contemporary vogue for medievalism in religion and politics.[403] Nineteenth-century religio-historical polemic had not yet assumed its standard forms at the time Hallam was first writing, and so

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[398] Skinner, *Tractarians*, pp. 203-213.
[399] Mockingly quoted in Hare, *The contest with Rome*, p. 88.
[400] Pattison, *Memoirs*, pp. 100-101.
[401] Bodleian Library, MS Pattison 128, M. Pattison diary entry for 10 October 1843, p. 20.
[402] H. Hallam, *View of the state of Europe during the middle ages*, 4th edn (3 vols, London, 1826), ii, 198-373; first edition 1818. T. Lang, 'Hallam, Henry (1777-1859)', *ODNB*.
[403] [F. Newman], 'Hallam's Supplemental Notes', *PR*, 15 (October, 1848), p. 521. Hallam's *View of the state of Europe* appeared in 14 editions through to 1878.

he did not denounce it. But the atmosphere had changed by the 1850s, at which point a new genre of ecclesiastical-historical writing began to appear. Protestant historians wearied by the new wave of evangelical invective unleashed during the Papal Aggression, whilst still resistant or even hostile to the papacy's claims to an historical mandate, began to think it desirable to make and stress a distinction between the unchallengeable authority of historical fact, and the false pretensions of theology to determine historical interpretation. Whilst this manoeuvre marked a significant departure from the modes of approaching papal history that had taken shape during the early Victorian period, it did not itself amount to the alternative philosophy of medieval Catholicism which many Victorian readers credited Milman with developing.

Factualist rhetoric, and a lingering inclination to believe that writing Catholic history required a moral that was primarily anti-papal, were especially visible in two works that took shape in this context. Edward Shepherd, rector of Luddesdown in Kent, began his 1851 *History of the Church of Rome* by stating that he was 'not aware that there is any account of the Church of Rome, framed on the simple and obvious principle of merely collecting and arranging the testimony of History with regard to facts'.[404] Shepherd's history, which focused closely on the individual popes, nevertheless amounted to a Protestant Pyrrhonist reply to Roman Catholic revival. By a close examination of the 'facts' relating to the popes from the first century to the end of the fourth, he concluded that, in truth, very few facts were ascertainable. It followed that the papal claims were unsupportable. 'Truth has recorded nothing of Rome's earlier centuries', thought Shepherd, beyond materials for unflattering conjectures about the pontiffs.[405] The writings of Thomas Greenwood, a barrister and reader and fellow in history and polite literature at the University of Durham, showed the longevity of this paradigm. In composing his monumental *Cathedra Petri*, published in six volumes between 1856 and

[404] Shepherd, *Church of Rome*, [iii].
[405] Ibid., pp. 71, 93-94.

1872, Greenwood sought to take refuge from 'any theological position whatever' by compiling a minute political history of the papacy from its earliest days to the death of Innocent III.[406] A political rather than a theological focus, which he hoped would guarantee his historical impartiality, still led him to become more strongly convinced than he had been at the outset that the history of the papacy showed civil liberty to be incompatible with religious servitude.[407] Thus even while Shepherd and Greenwood distanced themselves from revivalist agendas, their starting-points still led them to dwell on the ills created by the papacy and the institutionalised clerical caste. A historically, and theologically, influential account of the progressive and constructive relationship between those forces and wider civilisation was to come from an historian with a more imaginative and wider-ranging frame of reference.

III) Milman's *History of Latin Christianity*

Henry Hart Milman's *HLC*, published in two instalments of three volumes between 1854 and 1855, was the last major component of the history of the Judaeo-Christian dispensation since Abraham that he made his life's work. His 1829 *History of the Jews*, with its scandalous description of Abraham as a 'sheikh', was the first extended exhibition of Milman's generational, physical and intellectual distance from Victorian revivalism.[408] His 1840 *History of Christianity*, a heavily socio-political study of the first three Christian centuries, deployed Gibbonian irony to marginalise the importance of dogmatic theology where Stanley

[406] Greenwood, *Cathedra Petri*, i, [iii]-v; E.I. Carlyle, rev. M. Lloyd, 'Greenwood, T. (1790-1871)', *ODNB*.
[407] Ibid., v, [iii]-iv.
[408] H.H. Milman, *The history of the Jews* (3 vols, London, 1829).

had used literary word-painting.[409] Milman never outwardly dissented from orthodox doctrine. But he always treated doctrinalism as though it were no real part of the essence of the Christian religion, and did not join idealist attempts to reinvigorate it. Milman's peculiar combination of moralised, secular-sounding Christianity with ironical detachment from theological enthusiasm showed the strong impress which the eighteenth century exerted upon him, to an extent which made him unique among Victorian clerical historians. His romantic poetical sensibility, and his early openness to continental scholarship concerning the bible and ecclesiastical history, nevertheless confirm his son Arthur's claim that his father's books exemplified the change which came across 'the proper methods of dealing with religious history' during his lifetime.[410] Nowhere was this truer, nor Milman's influence more widely felt, than in his account of *Latin Christianity*, the work which his contemporaries regarded as his *magnum opus*.

The ways in which Milman departed from earlier understandings of the medieval church, and the reasons why he attracted admiration for doing so, lay in two things. First, his interest in medieval religion was governed by his desire to establish how it had lain at the centre of a past epoch of the world's growth. Milman accordingly removed the study of medieval Christianity from confessional polemicism by positing an idea of its cultural unity, and to some extent historical autonomy, that was virtually indifferent to traditional concerns with papal usurpation and apostasy, and which was still less sympathetic to the current vogue for medievalism. Milman did not, like earlier historians, confine his attention to popes or persecuted heretics, but conceived of Latin Christianity as both formed by and permeating language, literature, law and society. In the view of his admirers, these interpretative actions were equivalent to separating history from theology. It appeared that Milman's approach to Catholicism could help to take some of the venom out of confessional controversy, and it also

[409] Idem, *History of Christianity*.
[410] A. Milman, *Milman*, p. 2; Forbes, *Liberal Anglican idea*, p. 2.

promised to liberate historical inquiry from the demands of religious polemic. But Milman's progressive interpretation of the significance of the medieval period nevertheless remained religiously grounded. In what is only superficially a paradox, the second element of Milman's appeal was a theological one. From the point of view of many liberals, he made critical history religiously meaningful by turning it into a viable substitute for traditionally scholastic ways of thinking about what was true and important in the Christian dispensation. Milman's was a liberal vision of Catholic history which left conventional anti-Catholic stereotypes behind; yet his brand of historical impartiality proceeded not from relativist inclusivism, but from the assumption that liberal Protestantism should be, and in fact increasingly was, the normative state of the modern mind.

Milman's peculiar intellectual disposition, forming something of a bridge between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, left him unusually free from the anti-Catholic and anti-papal religious anxieties of the evangelical age. Historical agendas which proceeded from evangelical trembling before the impending Second Advent, or high church searching for legal precedent and Catholic social ideals, simply did not trouble him – though Milman, as will be seen, was to trouble them. He had long left Oxford by the time of the Oxford Movement and the common-room ascendancy of the alluring personalities through whom it spread. The Catholic revival left him rather amused than alarmed. 'After the drama,' Milman would say dismissively of the transition from Tractarianism to Ritualism, 'the melodrama!'[411] He was also a world away from the Protestant cries of 'no-popery' seldom dormant at that time. Writing to the American historian W. H. Prescott in November 1850, he condemned the 'Papal Aggression' because of the affront it offered to 'the long years during which so many wise and good persons have been endeavouring to allay religious animosities, to soften religious asperities, and to enable us to live, if not in mutual respect, yet without violent

[411] [W.E.H. Lecky], 'Dean Milman', *ER*, 191:392 (April, 1900), p. 525.

collision'.[412] He hoped that his own historical writing would aid in that work of cultural integration, as did a number of historians who followed him.

Over those late-Hanoverian and early-Victorian decades, Milman's reading and intellectual connections were furnishing him with the ingredients of an eventual assessment of Catholic history that was to take points of departure altogether different from those favoured by religious alarmists. The reviews and letters he wrote during the 1830s and 1840s show him moving towards a conception of the medieval period's importance that lay not in its apostasy, usurpation or beatific felicity, but in its progressive importance in the history of religion and civilisation. In common with Gibbon, of whose writings he was unusually fond, Milman was more open than many of his contemporaries to continental intellectual breezes, and turned to face them instead of heading into the storms besetting his former university. As part of his editorial interest in the *Decline and Fall*, he published an essay on François Guizot's edition in 1834 which identified the liberal scholar and statesman as a fellow-spirit in the necessary work of absorbing Gibbon's accuracy and candour into a genuinely Christian interpretation of European history.[413] Guizot's own extended foray in this direction was his lecture course delivered before the University of Paris in 1828, and published as the *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe*. Guizot, a Protestant, argued that the Catholic Church had given human experience a depth previously unknown. But its vices, he averred, had been to separate its hierarchy from the people and alternately to support theocracy or empire when, in truth, society could only be truly Christianised when individuals were free from compulsion.[414] This was an approach with which Milman could sympathise. On one occasion

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[412] A. Milman, *Milman*, pp. 177-178.
[413] [H.H. Milman], 'Guizot's *Edition of Gibbon*', *QR*, 50:100 (January, 1834), p. 292; E. Gibbon, *The life of Edward Gibbon [by himself], with selections from his correspondence*, ed. H.H. Milman (London, 1839); E. Gibbon, *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. H.H. Milman (12 vols, London, 1838-1839).
[414] M. Guizot, *Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe depuis la chute de l'empire romain jusqu'à la révolution française*, 4th edn (Paris, 1840), pp. 163-196; see also his preface to the sixth edition (1855), printed

he asked the writer and sometime Benthamite Sarah Austin, who kept Milman abreast of developments in Parisian intellectual society during her residence there in the 1840s, to give his 'homage' to Guizot.[415]

Together with liberal French assessments of Catholicism that were *laïque* but not *athée*, the Berlin historian Leopold von Ranke's original approach to the history of the post-Reformation papacy was attractive to Milman (as it was to Austin) for its separation of historical explanation from confessional imperatives. Milman never took to the speculative or subjectivist German approaches to religious history, like those of Schelling or Neander, which became attractive to other early Victorian liberals. But he was early in introducing Ranke's political and yet providential approach to the *History of the Popes* to a British audience, even if his indifference to philosophical readings of history caused him to glide over the interpretative depths of Ranke's work.[416] Before the appearance of Sarah Austin's translation in 1840, which made the work more accessible to English speakers, Milman wrote two long reviews of Ranke's history of the pontiffs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They appeared in the *Quarterly Review* in 1836 and 1837.[417] Milman opened his first essay by contrasting the 'dispassionate and philosophical serenity' of 'the German historian' with 'the still-reviving, and, it is almost to be feared, unextinguishable animosity between conflicting religious parties' which marred British writing on the subject.[418] In both essays, Milman voiced his appreciation for how Ranke had made possible an understanding of papal

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in idem, *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe depuis la chute de l'empire romain jusqu'à la révolution française*, 8th edn (Paris, 1866), (xi)-xiv, where he replies to Catholic critics of the lectures.

[415] A. Milman, *Milman*, p. 159.

[416] L. Ranke, *Die römischen Päpste: ihre Kirche und ihr Staat im sechszehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, 2nd edn (3 vols, 1838-1839): first edition 1834-1836.

[417] [H.H. Milman], 'The popes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *QR*, 55:110 (February, 1836), pp. [287]-323; [idem], 'Ranke *on the popes of Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*', *QR*, 58:116 (April, 1837), pp. 371-406; L. Ranke, *The ecclesiastical and political history of the popes of Rome during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, trans. S. Austin (3 vols, London, 1840). It was mainly as a result of Milman's articles that Austin decided to translate Ranke's work into English: H.H. Milman, 'Preface to the fourth edition', L. Ranke, *The popes of Rome: their ecclesiastical and political history during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, trans. S. Austin, 4th edn (3 vols, London, 1866), i, vi.

[418] [Milman], 'The popes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', p. [287].

history which both recognised its once-purposive function in taming and organising the barbarian peoples, and its capacity for spiritual regeneration. 'The Papacy, during the dark ages, notwithstanding its presumptuous and insulting domination over the authority of kings and the rights of nations, was a great instrument in the hand of Divine Providence'.[419]

Milman's view, like Ranke's, represented a considerable affront to the conventional evangelical assumptions of the 1830s. He was also unusual in being able to read Ranke's work in the original language, and he juxtaposed its scholarly standards and historical perspectives to insular and crabbier British writing. But he unselfconsciously omitted those epistemological features of Ranke's account which originated in German philosophical debates, and which were the most foreign to English minds. Where Ranke had refrained from making moral judgements out of his belief in the sovereignty of history, in these essays Milman actively deplored papal baseness where he saw it. Nor did Milman discern, or take an interest in, the dialectical interaction between the real and the ideal in history that was as Fichtean magma to the external surface of Ranke's text.[420] This unspeculative bent was to limit Milman's appeal to more anxious and younger thinkers.

The nature of Milman's interest in Gibbon, Ranke and French liberal thought makes clear that his developing interest in Catholic history was leading him towards an interpretation of its progressive effects as lying on a concretely socio-political rather than a speculative plane, albeit one contained within a theologically-rooted historical scheme. This disposition had already been evident in his *History of Christianity*.[421] His receptivity to the critical perspectives made available by German scholarship, yet his deafness to the hidden or overt faith in *Geist* which animated so much of it, were part of his wider self-distancing from

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[419] Ibid., p. 292.

[420] P. Bahners, ''A place among the English classics'. Ranke's *History of the Popes* and its British readers', in Stuchtey and Wende, *British and German historiography*, pp. [123]-157; On Ranke's early contact with Fichte, see F. Tessitore, 'Rankes "Lutherfragment" und die Idee der Universalgeschichte', in Mommsen, *Leopold von Ranke*, pp. 7-36.

[421] Milman, *History of Christianity*, i, v-x.

readings of history which proceeded from avowedly philosophical bases. He was disappointed to find that Christoph Friedrich Ammon's *Fortbildung des Christenthums zur Weltreligion* was not an historical account of the past 'change of Christianity into the religion of the world', but that the advanced Lutheran professor had instead offered a prospective, Lessing-like call for the reconciliation of Christianity and reason out of his disenchantment with the Augsburg Confession.[422]

Milman was more open to sociological approaches to history than he was to such transcendental theorising. He told Austin of his admiration for the liberal political economist Charles Dunoyer, whose argument that civilisation could purify Christianity, as well as Christianity purify civilisation, he had deployed against John Henry Newman's *Essay on Development*.[423] As in Macaulay, whom his friend Milman was inclined to present as a religiously as well as a politically sensible figure, traces of Enlightenment conjectural history occasionally surfaced in his writings.[424] Though no apologist for the court of Leo X, the pope who excommunicated Luther, Milman made a slightly *démodé* implicit defence of papal luxury in his 1836 essay on Ranke's *History of the Popes*.[425] The differing economic fortunes of Italy and South America during the period of the Counter-Reformation also prompted a telling observation. 'How singular the contrast between the Campagna of Rome and the *haciendas* of Rome's faithful servants in South America!' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he exclaimed by way of conclusion to his 1837 essay. 'Here, is Romanism subduing ferocious or indolent savages to the arts and the happiness of civilised life … there, close at home, turning a paradise into a desert! - so completely does even the same form of

[422] A. Milman, *Milman*, p. 153; C.F. v. Ammon, *Die Fortbildung des Christenthums zur Weltreligion in kirchlicher Rücksicht* (4 vols, Leipzig, 1836-1840); F. Lau, 'Ammon, Christoph Friedrich', in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 1 (1953), p. 253 f. [online edition] (last accessed 4 May 2015).
[423] A. Milman, *Milman*, p. 157; on Milman and Newman, see chapter two above. Dunoyer was more anticlerical than Milman himself: C. Dunoyer, *De la liberté du travail ou simple exposé des conditions dans lesquelles les forces humaines s'exercent avec le plus de puissance* (3 vols, Paris, 1845), i, 223-224.
[424] H.H. Milman, *A memoir of Lord Macaulay*, 2nd edn (London, 1862), pp. 14-15.
[425] [Idem], 'The popes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', pp. 298-299.

Christianity differ in its effects, according to the circumstances of time and place, and the state of society.'[426] Milman was at this point giving expression to an eighteenth-century kind of accommodation theory, by which certain forms of religion were thought appropriate to particular stages of society, but not to others. He would make a significantly modified version of the idea central to his *HLC*.

Encouraged by the discovery of the *Philosophumena* and the light it threw on an 'extremely dark' period in Roman affairs, Milman finished writing his *History*, in gestation for some years, after his appointment as dean of St Paul's in 1849.[427] The completed text, though indebted at many points to earlier scholarship and historical revision, offered a boldly original scheme for interpreting the history of medieval Christianity. Its organising principle was not the delineation of apostasy, impudence, or superstition, but the belief that 'Latin Christianity' had been a purposeful and formative stage in the organic, spiritual development of the world: development in which Milman made religion, after God, the prime mover. Milman's starting assumption that there was such a thing as Latin Christianity, preceded by Greek and giving way to Teutonic Christianity, and that all were legitimate forms of religion in relation to the times and places in which they took root, was predicated on a broad conception of the church that was to prove controversial. 'As an historian I can disenfranchise none who claim, even on the slightest grounds, the privileges and hopes of Christianity'.[428]

Central to Milman's account of Christianity's Latin form was the idea that it possessed 'a remarkable historic unity'.[429] Taking root not in luxurious, late-imperial Rome, but in the sun-bleached and stony ground of North Africa, the Latin-speaking church fathers Tertullian,

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[426] [Idem], 'Ranke *on the popes*', p.406. Not every liberal Anglican historian was as uniformly hostile to conjectural history as Forbes supposes: *Liberal Anglican idea*, p. 7.
[427] A. Milman, *Milman*, p. 223; *HLC*, i, [iii]; on the *Philosophumena*, see chapter two above.
[428] *HLC*, i, 9.
[429] Ibid., i, [iii].

Jerome and Augustine quintessentially expressed its hard and forceful characteristics.[430] Latin Christianity was despotic, imperious, superstitious, fanatical, practical, and rigid, with none of the subtle intellectualism and soft humanism which Milman supposed to inhere to Greek Christianity and the language which sustained it. The Latin system – which to Milman was always a cultural whole rather than simply an institutional hierarchy – had limitations which became manifest at a later stage of historical development. But it was, for a time, the indispensable precondition for the conversion and elevation of the western European barbarians, without which the Christian nations and Teutonic Christianity of modern Europe could not have been formed, and by which conventional Christianity was itself purified.[431]

In order to present Latin Christianity as a phase of progress, rather than as aberration or decay, Milman's earlier claim that different religious types complemented different social forms now became the more spiritualised and organic idea that history was purposefully growing from childhood to manhood. Whereas the Greek world, and the theology it inspired, were close to expiration in the early middle ages, 'Latin Christianity … seemed endowed with an inexhaustible principle of expanding life.'[432] Humanity, in this account, had a soul; and its training to maturity demanded the application of successive educational dispensations. 'Human thought is almost compelled to assert, and cannot help asserting, its original freedom', but discipline and Christian ethics were the necessary preconditions of its productive exercise, and hence of the progress compassed in divine counsels.[433] These starting-points guided how Milman conceptualised the process which lay at the heart of his six volumes: the reception of Christianity by the new, Teutonic peoples who settled amidst the ruins of the Roman Empire, and their growth towards national, intellectual and spiritual maturity through the tutelage of religious Latinity. Under the influence of a hard and

[430] Ibid., i, 29-30, 74, 115.
[431] Ibid., i, [1]-10.
[432] Ibid., i, 5.
[433] Ibid., i, 10.

inflexible religious system which Milman was given to treating in a personified way, as though it were a kind of schoolmaster, and helped on by the native vigour and independent-mindedness of the Teutonic races, 'mankind might seem renewing its youth' as one leafed through the pages of medieval history.[434] Thus Milman, a poet of some celebrity before he applied himself to history, created a purposeful role for medieval Catholicism within a world-historical drama. Many of his readers welcomed this as an advance on sectarian or impious historiography, even while they disagreed with particular details of Milman's plot. Later accounts of medieval religion which omitted its role in the divine government of the world, such as William Lecky's, were capable of provoking considerable anxiety among those more in sympathy with Milman's approach.

The way in which Milman accounted for the development of the medieval religious system placed him at variance with accounts which attributed it to papal ambition or to the original tendency of the human heart to sin. Ecclesiastical power was more the expression, than the cause, of the specifically Latin form of Christianity, which assimilated to itself the governing assumptions of the Roman polity; the unifying potential of the Latin language; and the affective power of popular superstition. Institutionally, the Latin Church 'was the Roman empire, again extended over Europe' by a universal code and a hierarchy of 'religious praetors or proconsuls', extending from the meanest ranks of society up to a 'spiritual Caesar'; Milman attributed the power vested in the clergy by canon law to the Roman political tradition of arbitrary power.[435] But such a church could not have flourished but for its harmony with a whole society. Jerome's Vulgate bible, Milman reflected, helped to establish Latin as the language of the church, 'and still tends to maintain the unity with Rome of all nations whose languages have been chiefly formed from the Latin.' In one of his many

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[434] Ibid,, vi, 400. Examples of Milman's personifications of the Latin system include: 'Latin Christianity contemplated with almost equal indifference Nestorianism … Eutychianism, Monophysitism, Monothelitism': ibid., i, 137-138.
[435] Ibid., i, 8, 399-408.

offences to current Protestant pieties, he called this 'a wonderful work … even more, perhaps, than the Papal power the foundation of Latin Christianity'.[436] Milman, a reader of German scholars of folklore and pagan belief, did not scorn the proclivities of earlier societies for legend and myth.[437] The 'Christian mythology' of the Virgin Mary and the saints, more than 'speculative and dogmatic theology', was for a time the agent of that 'popular, vital, active Christianity' by which religion penetrated to the heart of man and society. This popular belief was neither 'fraud' nor philosophical 'folly', but the parent of art and poetry, and hence of that educative mental quickening eventually given mature expression at the Reformation.[438] The secret to the growing papal power lay in 'Rome's complete impregnation with the spirit of the age; and this lasted, almost unbroken, till the Reformation'. This was neither 'worldly policy', nor dishonesty, but the unity of the ecclesiastical system with 'the general mind of Christianity'.[439] Milman's account of historical origins controversially posited that there had been a time when Romanism was the sole normative expression of mankind's religious spirit.

Milman constantly stressed the purposive direction of that phase of world history. Pregnant remarks and constructions betrayed his belief, suffusing the text, that historical development was rooted in something beyond human agency alone. The papacy 'must be a counterbalance to barbaric force'; 'Latin Christianity had yet to discharge some part of its mission'.[440] Within this broad scheme, the chief advance made by Latin Christianity on its Greek predecessor lay in its intensely practical character. The Greek Church 'had almost ceased to be aggressive or creative' by the time of the conversion of the empire; unable to win new converts, and promoting a form of monasticism that withdrew energetic citizens from active life, the Greek

[436] Ibid., i, 70-74.
[437] Milman frequently referred to Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* (Göttingen, 1835): *HLC*, i, 259 note b, vi, 408 note r.
[438] Ibid., i, 465-476.
[439] Ibid., i, 121.
[440] Ibid., i, 430, vi, 332-333.

patriarchs 'sank into administrators of a tolerated religion under Mohammedan dominion' and 'yielded to that worst barbarism – a worn out civilisation'.[441] Nor did Milman sympathise with the eastern predilection for doctrinal theology. 'Early Christianity, it may be observed, cannot be justly estimated from its writers', Milman curtly declared in one of the semi-Gibbonian footnotes he occasionally introduced so as quietly to dismiss the importance of theological controversy.[442]

Milman did not apply this assessment, which had strong notes of Gibbon about it, to western religion, which progressively guided occidental youth while the Christian orient sank into decrepit old age. Western monasticism, Milman wrote with a hint of Enlightenment historical thought, had beneficent unintended consequences. Whereas eastern anchorites self-macerated on the tops of pillars, Benedictines – obliged to employ time not spent in study or worship by useful work – cultivated wildernesses, and extended arts and husbandry to barbarous regions.[443] Though Milman did not set himself above noticing the material side-effects of medieval religion, societal moral elevation was more fundamental to his account of the historical role played by external and repressive ecclesiasticism. It had been, Milman believed, the only means by which Christianity could take hold of innumerable individuals since lost to history amidst the barbarous conditions of medieval Europe. The development of ecclesiastical law, which brought every moral and religious act within its purview under the ultimate sentence of excommunication, was 'a moral and religious discipline'.[444] The controlling impulses of domineering popes – especially Gregory the Great and Hildebrand – won new nations for Christ, stopped the church from becoming a mere feudal patrimony, and checked the buccaneering instincts of medieval monarchs.[445] Milman certainly objected to

[441] Ibid., i, 4-5.
[442] Ibid., i, 58 n.
[443] Ibid., i, 409-422.
[444] Ibid., i, 404-408.
[445] Ibid., i, 430-466, iii, 97-109.

how the Latin system, especially as distilled by Augustine, treated the church of God as coterminous with an external, sacerdotal order.[446] He also wrote with Enlightened frankness and sarcasm about the Latin Church's horror of sexuality.[447] But Latin Christianity nevertheless implanted humane feelings previously unknown or else only coldly commanded by mere philosophy; it gave ideas of innate human dignity to a Roman world that had known only despotism; it sacralised the marriage bed.[448] It was the system over which the popes had presided, according to Milman, which had first given western civilisation its creative and ethical character.

That development was only made possible, however, by the nature of the ore on which Latin Christianity worked its impress. Milman presented the latent religious sensibility, and social and political characteristics, of the Teutonic peoples who succeeded Roman hegemony in the west as conditioning the effects of Latin Christianity quite as much as the inherent tendencies of Latin Christianity itself. Latinity, left to its own devices, tended to force and uniformity; it did not itself contain the elements necessary for the ultimate supersession of the papal despotism.[449] In the mob violence which broke out in fourth-century Rome over the succession to Pope Liberius, Milman thought he saw a reanimation of the spirit of ancient Rome, so long crushed under despotism. 'The Roman populace appears quickened by a new principle of freedom', deriving from their conversion to Christianity, though it remained as yet a chaotic freedom marked by 'blind partisanship' and 'headstrong and stubborn ferocity'.[450]

The Teutons, in Milman's account, possessed qualities which eventually returned Christianity and Christian liberty to their true natures. The Greek had been drawn to Christianity by the

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[446] Ibid., i, 115-117.
[447] Ibid., i, 117-121.
[448] Ibid., i, 24-25.
[449] Ibid., i, 159.
[450] Ibid., i, 67.

void in his religion and by the incongruity between his poetic anthropomorphism and 'the progress of his discursive reason'; the Roman by his historic uprightness and vigour. But for Christianity to be accommodated to their native dispositions, it had to be ritualised and intellectualised to the detriment of its original simplicity. The Teutons, however, already possessed an illimitable and mysterious sense of deity, which conduced to a subjective and democratic more than an objective and hierarchical form of religion.[451] Their priesthood was not a separate caste, but a judging and disciplining elite: hence the ultimately fateful tendency of Teutonic societies to resist clerical aggrandisement. The Teutons' respect for women prepared them for Christian purity.[452] Milman admitted that it was Teutonic, not Christian, usage which reduced the application of the death penalty in barbarian law codes.[453] Thus the kernels were formed of the northern European nations, in particular England and Germany, which, partly through interaction with papal politics, grew to maturity over the medieval centuries: a process aided by the growth of vernacular languages.[454] The independence, individuality and self-control of the Teutonic peoples were Christianised by the Latin Church, but survived to undo papal corruption once that church's allotted time had passed. Milman's incorporation of localised, racial factors into ecclesiastical history was not to pass without critical comment; but it was soon to become conventional, as ideas of what constituted the boundaries of the church, and so of church history, became more blurred at the edges.

Milman's treatment of the Teutons signalled that the ground of his complaint against the survival of Latin Christianity into the nineteenth century was not that it was evil, but that it no longer synchronised with the higher authority of teleological historical development, the providential ends of which Milman felt able to discern. Milman was given to emphasising the

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[451] Ibid., vi, 629-632.
[452] Ibid., i, 255-290.
[453] Ibid., i, 395.
[454] Ibid., iv, 246-247, v, passim, vi, 391-393. Milman regretted the effective supersession of the Teutonic element in the French nation by the Latin in the years after Charlemagne: ibid., vi, 520-521.

supposedly anachronistic qualities of medieval reform movements and intellectual innovations in explaining their failures, whilst weaving intimations of future developments into his account of them. The official iconoclasm sponsored by eighth-century Byzantine emperors, imposed by rulers instead of rising up from the people, failed, in his view, because there was as yet no intense inner spiritual life which could support religion in the absence of images. 'It was a premature Rationalism, enforced upon an unreasoning age'.[455] At a slightly later period, Milman alternated between scorning scholasticism, in an Enlightenment register, as pyramidal in its uselessness, and giving voice to a newer fashion for seeing it as the premature, half-formed expression of the western mind's yearning for freedom from external authority.[456] The text's ambivalence on this point can be understood as the result of a natively sceptical, sometimes Lockean Milman coming into intellectual contact with nineteenth-century histories of scholastic philosophy which, under the influence of German Idealism and the eclectic philosophy of Victor Cousin, sought to disinter a subject which the Enlightenment had buried alive.[457]

If proto-Protestantism had been out of step with the world's movement before the Reformation, Catholicism had ceased to fulfil a progressive function after it. Latin Christianity, Milman conceded, 'may point to still surviving Foundations for the good – the temporal, the intellectual good – of mankind; her Hospitals and her Brotherhoods, her

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[455] Ibid., ii, 146-147.
[456] Ibid., iii, 346-377, vi, 449.
[457] For example: H. Ritter, *Geschichte der Christlichen Philosophie* (8 vols, Hamburg, 1841-1853), i, 5-52, iii, 119-127. Milman quoted Ritter's remark at *Christlichen Philosophie*, iii, 37 that 'the philosophy of the middle ages was not of the times when the German element ruled; it was of primarily Latin nature': *HLC*, vi, 436 note b; B. Hauréau, *De la philosophie scolastique* (2 vols, Paris, 1850), i, [1]-6, ii, 497-525. Milman cited Hauréau to illustrate his observation that while the scholastic philosophers had not solved any of the great problems of human existence, neither had they shown them to be insoluble: 'Il est donc bien difficile aux philosophes d'avouer que la philosophie consiste plutôt à reconnaître la limite naturelle de l'intelligence humaine qu'à faire de puérils efforts pour reculer cette limite. – Haureau [sic], ii. p. 45, quoting Locke, whose whole, wise, but strangely misrepresented work is a comment on that great axiom.' *HLC*, vi, 452 note y. On Cousin's significance in the history of intellectual history, see D.R. Kelley, *The descent of ideas* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 9-29.

Universities and her schools, her Churches and her Missions'.[458] But the synchronised, purposive movement of the modern period towards individuality and subjectivism rendered it obsolete, just as western medievalism had previously displaced the eastern Christianity that lingered on, uncreatively, in Russia, the Levant and the farther east. Latin Christianity, in the form of modern papalism, was today more of a danger to religion than its support, Milman argued. 'A religion of outward form' could today only appeal to 'more religious minds' unable or unwilling to think, and to women; but to seek to impose it on the generality of mankind would only drive them away from Christianity.[459] Though Milman hesitated to foretell the future of Christianity, he believed its ideal future development lay in Teutonic, Protestant Christianity and the supposed compatibility of its subjective, internal character with the advance of knowledge and society. 'I have no more faith in the mathematical millennium of M. Comte (at all events we have centuries enough to wait for it) than in the religious millennium of some Judaising Christians', Milman claimed.[460] But the self-guided and intelligent nature of Teutonic Christianity would, he ended by hoping, lead Christianity to approximate more and more to 'the absolute and perfect faith of Christ'; to 'discover and establish the sublime unison of religion and reason'; to 'assert its own full freedom, know the bounds of that freedom, respect the freedom of others'. 'Christianity may yet have to exercise a far wider, even if more silent and untraceable influence, through its primary, all-penetrating, all-pervading principles, on the civilisation of mankind.'[461] This reading of the present-day relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism was to become a hallmark of religiously liberal thought in the following years.

By the wide and original argumentation of his six volumes, Milman lessened the attraction of many of the earlier vantage-points from which historians had perceived Catholicism. Though

[458] *HLC*, vi, 383.
[459] Ibid., vi, 628-629.
[460] Ibid., vi, 627-628.
[461] Ibid., vi, 633-634.

the *HLC* could not have taken the form it did without Milman's familiarity with French and German scholarship, in Britain it marked a new phase of debate. Milman by no means swept those accounts of Catholic history that were conditioned by Protestant evangelicalism and high church Anglicanism to one side. But he provocatively synthesised many of those intellectual developments which tended to separate the discussion of religious medievalism from the immediate requirements of Biblicist and confessional polemic. Latin Christianity was now presented as a phase of political, social, cultural and above all religious history, of which popes and councils were more the expressions than the controllers. Created by history, it was by history that it now stood condemned; Milman's eirenicism was always double-edged. His intellectual manoeuvre was itself underpinned by a theology of history which lay not far beneath the surface of his text. His conception of ecclesiastical history sacralised the socio-political changes wrought by language, race, and the free individual. The historical progress discernible by the historian was equivalent to the action of God within mankind. The rights and wrongs of Catholicism, in this scheme, became a much less significant question than that of the place of Catholicism in the divinely-guided movement of history, in relation to which Catholics, Protestants and unbelievers alike ought properly to estimate themselves. The changed understanding of the relationship between revelation, man and time upon which Milman's historical philosophy relied was to spread widely in the succeeding decades; and it animated much of the controversy which the *HLC* generated on its first appearance.

IV) Milman's readers

Milman's work was generally regarded as answering the reproach that England had produced no ecclesiastical history worth reading since Gibbon. After his first three volumes appeared in

1854, Macaulay wrote to tell him that it was his best work, destined for ‘a high and permanent place in literature’.[462] Stanley publicly hailed the *HLC* as ‘what may fairly be called the most important work on ecclesiastical history that the English language has produced’.[463] James Anthony Froude, in a letter to Milman, went still further: ‘what can I say, except that you have written the finest historical work in the English language?’[464] After his retirement, Lord John Russell expressed his gratification that such a performance should have come from one whom he had nominated to the deanery of St Paul’s.[465] In the country at large, congregations presented copies of Milman’s work to favoured ministers.[466] Not all readers were so complimentary. But they generally agreed that Milman’s history offered, for better or worse, no conventional account of its subject. Whether a Protestant historian of Catholicism was under an obligation to see himself as an anti-Catholic paladin provoked contention. Milman’s text achieved such resonance, however, partly because it struck at a newer issue, which was coming to seem more fundamental than sectarian division. Milman’s characteristic positions – liberal Protestant impartiality, topicality and religious breadth, a certain doctrinal indifference - added fuel to a growing contemporary debate about how the history of religion should be read, and how the relationship between religion and historical progress should be conceptualised. Arthur Milman, at the beginning of the twentieth century, would complain that some of the criticisms aimed at his father’s great work had depended on ‘some confusion between the respective provinces of the theologian and of the historian.’[467] Milman had himself richly interwoven those provinces in his own writing, in ways that invited subtly differing shades of appreciation and repudiation from other historical thinkers.

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[462] T. Pinney (ed.), *The letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay* (6 vols, Cambridge, 1974-1981), v, 484.
[463] [A.P. Stanley], ‘Latin Christianity’, *QR*, 95:189 (June, 1854), p. 38.
[464] Quoted in A. Milman, *Milman*, pp. 224-225.
[465] J. Russell, *Essays on the rise and progress of the Christian religion from the reign of Tiberius to the end of the Council of Trent* (London, 1873), xi.
[466] *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 2 January 1862, p. 3; *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, 2 March 1867, p. 7.
[467] A. Milman, *Milman*, p. 227.

Although it was to become a commonplace later in the century, Milman's effort to normalise the notion that Christianity could be divided up into 'Greek', 'Latin' and 'Teutonic' historical forms – each the holistic religious expression of a particular historical context, and none representing wilful apostasy from a shared religion – still appeared new and even subversive in the 1850s. Roman Catholic critics, and some conservative Protestants, resisted Milman's assessment of 'Latin Christianity', out of reluctance to accept the relativizing or conciliatory implications of positing that no one form of Christianity was necessarily true for all time. Charles William Russell, professor of ecclesiastical history at St Patrick's College, Maynooth and president of the college from 1857, treated Milman's idea of 'Latin Christianity' as a polemical attack on the antiquity of the papal claims.[468] In one of his two rather straitjacketed lunges at Milman in the *Dublin Review*¸ Russell even called him 'Dr Milner' in a revealing slip of the pen.[469] From the opposite end of the ecclesiastical spectrum, a staunchly Protestant writer in the *Dublin University Magazine* thought that he saw something dangerous in Milman's confusing attempt to render the history of 'Latin Christianity' as something other than the history of an iniquitous papacy. 'We cannot but think Mr. Milman's language unguarded; and that there is an implied approval of the Papacy in this mode of viewing the history of Christianity'.[470]

A wide range of readers were receptive to Milman's historical scheme on its own terms, however. They welcomed Milman's argument that Latin Christianity had been an engine of European historical progress, and lauded its potential both to separate historical explanation from Protestant polemic, and to soften anti-Catholic sentiment. The *Morning Chronicle* spoke for many when it regretted England's long indifference to the history of the pre-Reformation church. Hallam, Guizot and now supremely Milman had rightly 'familiarised the minds of all

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[468] [C.W. Russell], 'Milman's History of Latin Christianity', *DR*, 37:74 (December, 1854), pp. 404-449.
[469] [Idem], 'Milman's Latin Christianity', *DR*, 40:80 (June, 1856), p. 292.
[470] 'Milman's Latin Christianity', *DUM*, 44:262 (October, 1854), p. 498.

educated Protestants with a truer estimate of the high genius and eminent goodness displayed in the prominent representatives of Latin Christianity, and have implanted a keen sense of gratitude to a Church which was at one period the great instrument in making modern society free, honourable, and courteous'.[471] The progressively-inclined *Fraser's Magazine* greeted Milman's work as the latest and most comprehensive English contribution to 'historical *narrative*' in ecclesiastical history, as opposed to the scattered 'treatises, disputations, attacks, replies, rejoinders' which had traditionally dominated the field at home.[472] Addressing himself to a more confessionally Protestant audience, an anonymous writer in the *Journal of Sacred Literature* welcomed Milman's *History* as the best antidote to that fashionable millenarianism which falsely supposed that some 'master spirit … in the fourth and fifth centuries threw its prophetic glance upon the future, and then laid out a plan of aggrandizement which after-ages were to work out and complete'.[473] The breadth of Milman's conception of what an historian of Christianity could take his subject to encompass was itself a rebuke to bigotry, he continued.[474] These views were compatible with the reviewer's conservative evangelicalism. He took comfort from the hope that the Roman Catholic Church might change in the future, just as Milman had shown that it had changed in the past, as bible societies spread the Word of God on the continent. Being in accordance with the development of modern societies, it was scriptural evangelism, not apocalyptic denunciation, which appeared to be the best way to save Roman Catholic souls.[475] Milman's *HLC* was widely read as an eirenical text, which yet did not necessarily abnegate distinctively Protestant intellectual commitment.

[471] 'History of Latin Christianity', *Morning Chronicle*, 19 April 1854, p. 7.
[472] 'Milman's Latin Christianity', *FM*, 50:298 (October, 1854), p. 430.
[473] 'Milman's history of Latin Christianity', *JSL*, 7:13 (October, 1854), pp. 3, 21.
[474] Ibid., p. 14.
[475] Ibid., pp. 22-24.

Milman's belief that religion was an essential determinant of historical change was widely shared. The way in which he applied this idea, by treating the historical significance of religious change as coterminous with its racial, social and political causes and effects, was more contentious, but it also found numerous supporters. The moderately conservative *Saturday Review*, whose editor John Douglas Cook tried to keep the journal out of theological controversy, carried reviews which looked favourably on Milman's socio-political understanding of the beneficial effects of Latin Christianity on European development.[476] Stanley, writing in the thoughtfully conservative *Quarterly Review*, presented a comparable and more religiously pointed analysis. He began his essay with a characteristically picturesque invocation of those worthies who had, in the past, flourished in the environs of St Paul's: Colet and Donne, Wren and Butler. How congruous it was, he thought, that Milman, who combined 'poetic temperament' with 'energy and experience', should now have made such a contribution to the intellectual life of the nation.[477] The rendition of Milman's *History* which followed exhibited Stanley's classically broad church desire to lessen religious divisions by setting them in historical perspective, whilst also insisting that a clear division existed between progressive and regressive modern-day religious types. Stanley connected Milman's enterprise to Neander's, for Milman had shown, like Neander, how much common Christianity thrived across each of the religion's several forms. Stanley considered that it was 'useful to trace how large a share in our ecclesiastical diversities is to be ascribed, not to theological or religious causes, but to the more innocent, and, in one sense, more inevitable influences of nation, of climate, of race, of the general stream of human history.'[478]

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[476] 'Milman's Latin Christianity', *SR*, 1:15 (9 February, 1856), pp. 277-278; 'Milman's Latin Christianity', *SR*, 1:17 (23 February, 1856), pp. 324-325.
[477] [Stanley], 'Latin Christianity', p. 38.
[478] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

Stanley added that the general stream of history had watered younger regions, while leaving older provinces to wither. He agreed with Milman's division of the major Christian alignments into a tripartite hierarchy of present vigour and future promise. The Greek Church – as he was to go on to argue in his professorial lectures at Oxford – shared in 'that singular immobility which doubtless is in great part to be traced to its Oriental origin'.[479] Though the Latin Church was superstitious and fanatical in comparison with reformed denominations, it was instructive for Protestants to recognise that 'in comparison of the Greek Church it is enlightened, progressive, in one word, Protestant'.[480] The Latin Church, unlike the Eastern, kept its monks in contact with the world, and deferred the administration of confirmation and communion to reasonable youth from unconscious infancy.[481] And in the centuries of barbarism, Latin Christianity 'stood in the vanguard of civilization, while it represented the unborn Protestantism of Europe'. It fell to modern Protestantism to absorb its parent and grandparent communions into some higher unity. The Teutonic religious era was itself a providential moment, with ultimate results that were as yet unknown.[482] Deprecating Romanism appeared less important to Stanley than integrating it within a narrative of Europe's progressive march towards Protestant modernity: a narrative from which eastern Christians were excluded, and which was taken to prove that Latin Christianity, though not evil, no longer served any useful purpose. Stanley's sympathy with the distinctions Milman made between the active west and the stationary east, in which the opposition established was not between Christian and non-Christian peoples but between nations shaped by alternately practical and ascetic forms of Christianity, also led him to share the ambiguities of Milman's form of religious inclusivism. Well might he have agreed with the *Athenaeum*'s deployment of Milman in refutation of modern religious enthusiasm for the dark ages. 'Happy will it be

[479] Ibid., p. 50.
[480] Ibid., p. 56.
[481] Ibid., p. 57.
[482] Ibid., pp. 69-70.

for the future if, under the influence of such principles, the bigotry which would trammel thought by the chains of authority may yield to the gentler teaching of the charity which is not merely the bond of peace, but, from its inseparable connexion with energetic working, is alone able to combat the evils of society.'[483]

Milman's *History* evidently encouraged mid-Victorian Protestants to think that Latin Christianity was not straightforwardly an anti-type of themselves, but had in fact formed a constructive part of their own history. Its present-day manifestations might be outdated; but they stemmed from a common root, towards which Protestant historians could safely become more curious, and even indulgent, than they had once been. The reflection on Catholicism which Milman's text invited proved to be inseparable from a further question. This was the issue of whether, and in what ways, an historian of religion ought properly to be a religious interpreter. Milman's readers, of whatever denomination, generally agreed that history should be more than a field for partisan or scholastic polemic. They found the suggestion that the historian should seek to trace continuous historical progress, over a broad narrative sweep, much more congenial. The question of the stance from which he should reconstruct and evaluate that progress was a more contentious one, to which no universally compelling answer was returned. Beneath the ascription of a historically creative role to Catholicism commonly lay an affirmation, which could not have been present in the same way twenty or thirty years earlier, of the importance of historical interpretation as a form of religious apologetic. Milman and his readers belonged to a shared intellectual space in this respect. But what it was that gave history its ultimate significance was a more divisive subject. The strongest admirers of the *HLC*, such as Stanley, thought that the sheer fact of the congregational, social and political life which Christianity had underpinned down the centuries were intrinsically strong evidence of the truth of the religion. Others, though open

[483] *Athenaeum*, 1517, 22 November, 1856, pp. 1430-1432.

to developmental views of history, criticised Milman for neglecting the inward spiritual and intellectual sides of religious growth: which was to say, the religious dimension of religion. The debate which opened up in the periodical press on this question of the religious implications of historical interpretation was to rumble on until the turn of the century.

Milman's conservative Protestant critics did not doubt that historical interpretation should serve a religiously didactic purpose, but they were hotly suspicious of any suggestion that the religious outgrowths of human historical experience could rightly clarify, or temporarily modify, the clear truths of the bible. The Methodist *London Quarterly Review* blackened Milman, and his developmental theorising, by associating him with Bunsen and Newman. 'There is an awkwardness in even seeming to supplement that which is divine, by human additions'. Myth, the essayist argued, was no 'amusement' but instead dangerous fiction and dishonesty.[484] W. E. Rawstorne, writing in the Free Church-aligned *North British Review*, suggested that Milman had not taken the bearing of ecclesiastical history 'on our own trial with respect to truth' sufficiently seriously. Newman's *Essay* had thrown down a challenge to Protestant historians to come to a right understanding of Christian history, to which Milman – though undoubtedly a scholar of the first rank - had responded only defectively.[485] For Milman seemed to judge history from a position curiously detached from positive doctrinal commitment. He appeared indifferent to theology, and hence inclined to avoid questions of what was right and true, seeming 'too apt to judge both with reference rather to the effect that they have produced on the world, than to the relation which they bear to abstract truth and right'. Milman was too ready to let history, populated after all by the children of wrath, stand as its own justification.[486]

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[484] 'Latin Christianity', *LQR*, 4:7 (April, 1855), pp. 146-149.
[485] [W.E. Rawstorne], 'Milman's *History of Latin Christianity*', *NBR*, 22:43 (November, 1854), p. 86 and n.
[486] Ibid., pp. 111-112.

A number of Milman's readers were closer to his own view that it was not impious to treat history itself as a kind of supplement to Holy Scripture. Milman's *History*, it could appear, vindicated the benignly providential character of what had once seemed the most benighted of historical eras. 'The course of the Christian religion, in spite of all the impediments it has encountered,' ran the final moral of Stanley's essay, 'has always moved onwards, and from that onward movement derived its main strength.'[487] 'Amidst the turmoil of human passions, the acrimony of contending sects, their sanguinary strifes and mutual cruelties, the interminable discords within, and the deadly assaults from without, under which any merely human institution must have perished utterly, Christianity itself has ever stood forth in unsullied purity and dignity, laying its foundations yet deeper and deeper,' another reviewer reflected.[488] Milman made tangible the activity of the divine in human time.

Whilst liberal commentators typically agreed that Milman's subject held the potential to add another buttress to the edifice of Christian credibility, greater doubt existed as to whether he had gone about this work in the right way. For certain liberal commentators, without maintaining that religious history should be structurally determined by dogmatic prepossessions, came close to the opinion once voiced by Newman that Milman looked on religious experience in a manner akin to how an external observer would view some natural fact.[489] Religious history was in truth the reverse of inanimate: being a moral and at least partly transcendental phenomenon, it could not be written without moral and transcendental commitment. Christianity involved, after all, belief in the reality of a spiritual world. But Milman had persistently baulked, or else smiled with Gibbon, at the history of the intellectual and doctrinal formulations by which past minds had sought to articulate the implications of that conviction. Race, law, language and nation, though historically important, might seem

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[487] [Stanley], 'Latin Christianity', p. 70.
[488] 'History of Latin Christianity', *NQR*, 3:11 (July, 1854), p. 315.
[489] See chapter two above.

religiously epiphenomenal. John Tulloch, who developed a high view of the importance of the history of thought in his own struggles against materialism, criticised Milman for his lack of attention to the history of doctrines.[490] In a comparable vein, the *Westminster Review* thought Milman had offered a history of the church rather than a history of Christianity; and the ‘progressive revelation of the Central Mind of the universe’ spoke more through the latter than the former.[491] John James Tayler, a Unitarian minister and historian, disapprovingly placed Milman in the ‘philosophic’ tradition of Hume and Hallam rather than alongside the more religiously ‘poetic’ Carlyle.[492] ‘He has so closely bound up the history of Christianity with that of civilisation, that we are often at a loss to know what is due to each’.[493] The essence of Christianity, the wellspring of its heroism and self-sacrifice, was indeed to be found in history, and not in Strauss; it would be part of the religious philosophy of the future. But Milman’s critical eye was of little use to Tayler in discerning what this was.[494] Viewed in this light, Milman’s Enlightened self-distancing from directly theological or philosophical discussion, in some ways redolent of an eighteenth-century world, may betray a degree of assumed confidence in the basic premises and historical foundations of Christianity increasingly unusual among its liberal and even conservative apologists.

There was a sense in which Milman was the last of a line. Obituarising Milman after his death in September 1868, the *Pall Mall Gazette* lamented that ‘he was, we fear, almost the last member of one of the most useful and characteristic classes of English society.’ The church no longer produced men who combined ‘learning, genius, and piety’ in the same degree, as they had so often done in the eighteenth century.[495] In another respect, however, Milman’s *HLC* marked the beginning of a new phase. The public responses to Milman’s

[490] [J. Tulloch], ‘Stanley’s *Eastern Church*’, *NBR*, 35:69 (August, 1861), p. 85.
[491] ‘The fact and principle of Christianity’, *WR*, 62:121 (July, 1854), pp. 202, 218.
[492] [J.J. Tayler], ‘History of Latin Christianity’, *PR*, 39 (July, 1854), p. 314.
[493] Ibid., pp. 319-320.
[494] Ibid., pp. 319-325.
[495] ‘The late Dean Milman’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 September, 1868, p. 10.

work, which reflected the complex and intersecting layers of his argument, pointed to a changing intellectual climate. Milman's text generated such controversy in no small measure because it assembled in a symmetrical and compelling form ideas and arguments which were already playing on mid-Victorian minds. Revivalist writers, suspicious of the worldly and doctrinally insouciant progressivism they seemed to see in Milman, did not disappear in the succeeding years. But the belief that the Catholic centuries of religious history had not been squandered centuries would more and more spread beyond the liberal circles which had first promoted it, as the notion that history was central to religious apologetic won wider acceptance.

V) Progress and providence in medieval religion

After Milman, the different kinds of anti-Catholic imperative which had once determined Protestant responses to the medieval period continued to attenuate as it became more desirable to demonstrate that the long centuries of papal dominion had formed part of a progressive continuity. The period was more widely felt to have left beneficial legacies to the present. The fact that the Catholic period of history now seemed constructive created new points of Protestant sympathy towards Catholicism. Although this was not taken to justify the survival of pickled religious Latinity into the modern age, it often came to appear as though Latin Christianity had fastened on points of religious and ethical truth with which a larger-minded Protestantism could not afford to dispense. Beneath these reappraisals of Latin Christianity frequently lay the belief – a disputed one - that the benefits it conferred had not come about as the result of some historical accident, but by the purposeful counsels of providence. Milman remained a significant intellectual presence in these debates until late in

the century.[496] One of Milman's sympathisers, Charles Merivale, sought with Milman to cast the history of the medieval church as a period of training for a higher stage of European religious and social life. Another admirer, the Anglo-Irish historian and man of letters, William Lecky, was notably and controversially untouched by that rising fashion. Preferring sociological to spiritually metaphorical accounts of historical development, and reluctant by virtue of his social and political position to celebrate the creative capacities of Catholicism, Lecky's 1869 *HEM* exposed the potential conflicts latent within progressive approaches to the medieval period and medievalism. In a context where the fundamentally providential character of history was becoming unsettlingly debatable, originally liberal interpretations of Catholic history increasingly persuaded conservative Protestants for whom it became more pressing to vindicate the spiritual reality underpinning religious history, than to attack Catholic error. Nor were high churchmen, once inclined either to exalt the middle ages or to project a technical ecclesiology onto them, unaffected by the new climate. Richard William Church, ecclesiologically predisposed to stress the modern period's rightful continuity with the medieval past, construed that continuity in a sense notably distinct from the stern ecclesiasticism of the older Oxford fathers. In his writings, the period of Latin Christianity became part of a humanising evolution towards modernity – and remained an abiding influence on modern individuality - rather than a lost ideal with which to reproach contemporary civilisation. The change was not total. But late-Victorian historians were generally dedicated to seeing the history of medieval religion as, in some way, a history of progress, which they often deliberately divinised.

The unease occasioned by Lecky's *HEM* illustrates how closely debate over the history of medieval religion and society had become entwined with the issue of whether historical interpretation ought properly to have a religiously apologetic dimension. A liberal Protestant

[496] The fourth edition, which was to be the last, was published in 1883.

man of letters who had declined to pursue ordination in the Church of Ireland after leaving Trinity College, Dublin, Lecky's natively anti-clerical and anti-dogmatic dispositions were strengthened by his regret for the constraints which he believed Catholicism imposed on Ireland's political and social development.[497] He had written his 1861 *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland* in the hope of encouraging secular Irish national feeling, which would check clerical influences and encourage Ireland's gradual mental coalescence with England.[498] He was to become steadily more pessimistic about the prospects for the fulfilment of his hopes. A supporter of Irish disestablishment in 1869, and with greater reservations the 1870 Irish Land Act, Lecky opposed most subsequent concessions to Irish nationalists, becoming the Liberal Unionist Member of Parliament for Dublin University, and an outspoken parliamentary defender of Irish landlords, in 1895. Stronger impediments to regarding Catholicism as in any sense progressive therefore remained in his own mind, than in those of his English and even Scottish liberal contemporaries. The companion volume to his earlier *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (*HRE*), Lecky wrote his *HEM* after settling in London in 1866. There he was elected to the Athenaeum in 1867, and came into contact with the lights of London literary and political society, including Milman and Russell.[499] Impressed, though not overawed, by Buckle and Comte, Lecky applied himself, in both works, to understanding the growth and decay of theological opinions, 'and the degrees and ways in which they benefited or injured mankind'.[500]

Lecky's professedly detached and sociological treatment of religious history therefore always tended to the discredit of theological opinions, especially as entrenched and monopolised by

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[497] D. McCartney, *W. E. H. Lecky. Historian and politician 1838 – 1903* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 4-18; J. Spence, 'Lecky, (William) Edward Hartpole (1838-1903)', *ODNB*.
[498] W.E.H. Lecky, *The leaders of public opinion in Ireland* (London, 1861).
[499] E. Lecky, *A memoir of the Right Hon. William Edward Hartpole Lecky. M.P., O.M., LL.D., D.C.L., LITT. D. Member of the French Institute and of the British Academy* (London, 1909), p. [50].
[500] Ibid., pp. 59-60. On Lecky's engagement with Buckle and Comte, see chapter five below.

clerical elites. This did not make him a polemical secularist. He identified with the Christian rationalism of Joseph Butler and Richard Whately, and he placed himself in intellectual descent from Milman.[501] In an early essay on 'formative influences', he remarked on how 'the great predicted apostasy, the mystery of iniquity' he had been taught about in his youth, by which he meant the Catholic Church, became much less of a mystery under the later 'influence of the historic method'; and Milman was to offer him a model for how that method should be applied.[502] Lecky opened his *HEM* with a preface concluding with an encomium to the recently-deceased dean, whose researches he had used extensively, and whose devotion to that department of history 'which more than any other has been distorted by ignorance, puerility, and dishonesty' Lecky accounted 'one of the happiest facts in English literature'.[503] In 1900, in an affectionate essay prompted by the publication of Arthur Milman's memoir of his father, Lecky still thought of the *HLC* as the finest ecclesiastical history in English. It was representative of that 'broad stream of English thought', visible in Macaulay, Mill, Buckle, Eliot and others, in relation to which Newman and the Oxford Movement were as passing disturbances.[504]

The way Lecky chose to write the *HEM*, however, laid himself open to the charge of vaporising the truth of Christianity by making it irrelevant to the explanation of its historical success. The way to avoid partisanship, Lecky intoned, was to exclude 'all considerations of a purely theological or controversial character' and simply to assess the role of the church as 'a moral agent', in the same way as an historian would assess the moral influence of the Stoic or Epicurean philosophies on pre-Christian societies.[505] Milman had made a comparable deprecation of theology. But Lecky did not share his compensatory proclivity to personify

[501] W.E.H. Lecky, 'Formative influences', in his *Historical and Political Essays*, ed. E. Lecky (London, 1908), pp. [90]-103.
[502] Ibid., p. 98.
[503] *HEM*, ix-x.
[504] [Lecky], 'Dean Milman', pp. 510-512.
[505] *HEM*, i, vii.

and sacralise historical development. Lecky instead proceeded from a theory of intuitive morals, the anti-materialist significance of which will be discussed in chapter five. Here it must be noted that it led him both to insist that all societies were comprised of morally sentient beings, possessed of the idea that there was a distinction between humanity and cruelty, and yet that the precise contents of moral sentiments varied with the often ambivalent influences operative at different stages of society.[506] Lecky's *HEM* accordingly treated Christianity as though it were one influence among many on the morals of societies, and as though its historical success could be explained by the external circumstances of the era of its propagation.

Lecky explained the success of Christianity, not by making a judgement over its innate validity or otherwise, but by examining its relation to 'the general tendencies of the age'. The explanation he offered for the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity was accordingly rather dispassionate, even secular. In a great metropolis at the centre of the world and open to its movements, he argued, there was space for a new religion with a broader popular appeal than frigid Stoicism or educated criticism. Christianity came to fill the gap – where Judaism, Mithraism or the Egyptian deities did not – because it was favoured by a powerful structure, the absence of local ties, noble ethics, and the great credulity of the age towards signs and wonders.[507] When it came to the benefits Christianity had conferred on medieval society, Lecky did not write of a slow training or a moral transformation, but instead neutrally assembled the advantages alongside the disadvantages of conversion for social ethics. Christian compassion softened, even feminised ethical habits; but modern political economy showed how the praise of mendicancy and institutional support for idleness were socially counter-productive.[508] The new religion cultivated purity; but its medieval

[506] Ibid., i, [1]-158.
[507] Ibid., i, 357-498.
[508] Ibid., ii, 96-106.

ascetic form caused undue revulsion from sensuality.[509] Christianity exalted the feminine virtues of gentleness and humility, and the Catholic reverence for the Virgin improved the ideal of womanhood; but asceticism degraded women by blaming them for all ills, and by insisting on mystical lifelong matrimony, Christianity obscured the advantages of other forms of union.[510] Lecky's notion that Christianity, and to an extent its Catholic form, had helped to import a salutary degree of femininity into social habits in one respect brought him close to thinkers who argued that feminine Catholicism and masculine Protestantism were complementary historical forces. But his adherence to classical political economy, of the kind promoted in Ireland by Whately and increasingly falling out of favour among contemporary Irish critics, contributed to his broader frustration with Catholicism and separated him still further from insurgent intellectual trends in his home country.[511] Although Lecky allowed that there were exceptions to Catholicism's generally deadening historical effects, he never tried to divinise them.

Lecky did not argue that early medieval Europe represented a degeneration from heathenism.[512] Christianity had sacralised human life and brotherhood; if this did not prevent inquisitorial killings or abolish slavery, it at least established a new ideal, and dignity for the servile classes.[513] But he maintained that Christianity could not realise its inherent potential to regenerate the world until the sixteenth century, when theologians' rule over the human mind came to an end. Here Lecky was not so much extolling the benefits of Reformed theology, as those of industrial habits, and the rediscovery of pagan literature alongside 'the

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[509] Ibid., ii, 107-148.
[510] Ibid., ii, 292-392.
[511] T.A. Boylan and T.P. Foley, *Political economy and colonial Ireland: the propagation and ideological function of economic discourse in the nineteenth century* (London, 1992), esp. pp. 116-160; on Whately and Irish political economy, see C. Boylan, 'Ireland, religion and reform: Archbishop Richard Whately, 1831-63', (Oxford Univ. Dphil thesis, 2008).
[512] Jeffrey Paul von Arx characterises the *HEM* as 'about historical retrogression', seemingly because he conflates Lecky's dim view of theology with his estimation of Christianity: *Progress and pessimism*, pp. 93-101.
[513] *HEM*, ii, 19-91.

Mohammedan schools of science'.[514] Lecky, the patriotic but pessimistic Anglo-Irishman, explained how the age of Catholic theology, still continuing in some parts of the world, had repressed society as much as it had advanced it.[515]

Lecky's clerical readers, both liberal and more conservative, were dissatisfied with his detached treatment of the history of early medieval Europe as a kind of laboratory in which the effects of dogmatic theology and clerical power on society could be tested. Lecky explained that his analysis was compatible with the view that providence used natural influences in spreading moral causes, and later expressed satisfaction when he learned that a speaker had used his *History* to rout an atheist lecturer at a public debate in London.[516] But to some, it sounded as though Lecky was attributing the Christianisation of the world to chance, and regarded it as a process affected more by the vagaries of social circumstance than the internal power of the faith. Charles Merivale, brother of the political economist, Herman, and a notable historian of the period covered by Lecky, was one such critic. From 1863 to 1869 he was chaplain to the House of Commons, before accepting the deanery of Ely from Gladstone after turning down the offer of the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge.[517] Though disinclined to identify with any church party, Merivale had been among the mourners behind the coffin at Milman's funeral in St Paul's, and he approached ecclesiastical history on lines more similar to those of his friend than Lecky did.[518] He insisted that no historical explanation of Christianity's success could be adequate which did not assume, indeed declare, its intrinsic truth.

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[514] Ibid., ii, 18-19.
[515] Ibid., ii, 219-220.
[516] Lecky, *Memoir*, p. 79.
[517] J.M. Rigg, rev. J.D. Pickles, 'Merivale, Charles (1808-1893)', *ODNB*.
[518] 'Funeral of the Dean of St Paul's', *Standard*, 2 October, 1868, p. 6. The correspondent gave his name as 'the Rev. Herman Merivale, chaplain of the House of Commons'; but Herman Merivale was certainly not the clergyman out of the two brothers.

Writing in the *North British Review* for 1869 – by which time the journal had shed its earlier Free Church leanings in favour of a religiously broader outlook - Merivale connected Lecky's *HEM* to his earlier attempt in the *HRE* 'to trace our modern discoveries in moral truth to the defeat and discomfiture of all ideas founded upon the belief in the supernatural'.[519] Lecky's book conjured eighteenth-century spectres. He was a 'philosophical' historian, at pains to show 'the sufficiency of strictly natural causes' for the success of Christianity. Merivale distanced himself from 'the ecclesiastical writers of a former generation' who attributed it 'to a continuous miracle': the true focus of the divine counsels lay in 'the preparation of the world for Christianity', readying it for revealed teaching. Yet Christianity was not merely continuous with the paganism of the ancient world: 'we must insist strongly on the scandal of the Cross of Christ', so unlike anything in the heathenism it ultimately overcame.[520] There were failures in the working out of Christian ethics, in the past as in the present, but the Gospel did not undertake to make the world righteous: it was given primarily to reconcile God to man.[521]

Merivale's own interpretation of the period covered by Lecky, expounded in his 1864 and 1865 Boyle Lectures given in the Chapel Royal in Whitehall, ran in a very different direction. These addresses, examining the conversions of the Roman Empire and of 'the northern nations', were sermons as much as they were historical lectures. Merivale described his audience as his 'congregation', and used a scriptural passage for the heading of each address.[522] The primary aim of both series, he explained, was 'to impress upon the hearer or reader the conviction' that there had always been a 'gradual and constant preparation of mankind' under providence 'for the full development of religious life under the revelation of

[519] [C. Merivale], 'History of European Morals', *NBR*, 50:100 (July, 1869), p. 383.
[520] Ibid., p. 390.
[521] Ibid., pp. 404-405.
[522] C. Merivale, *The conversion of the Roman Empire. The Boyle Lectures for the year 1864 delivered at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall* (London, 1864), [vii]-viii.

Jesus Christ.'[523] Merivale treated the religion's development over time, and its slow permeation of European societies, in the personalised, soulful terms of the ages of man which Milman had used, but which Lecky had left to one side. Thus he took as his theme for his lecture on the 'expansion of Heathen belief by the ideas of Roman jurisprudence' the Arnoldian moral of Galatians 3:24: 'the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.'[524] Conversion to Catholicism laid the foundations of Protestant moral responsibility amongst the Teutonic races. With more of the religious liberalism of Frederick Temple than that of Matthew Arnold, Merivale challenged modern philosophers, with their 'natural filiation from the sceptics of Greece and Rome', to give a biological account of the spiritual movements of history.[525] Merivale was led to his rebuttal of Lecky by his conviction that the history of religion belied, and might actively refute, materialism.

The belief that it was important to vindicate the spiritually-progressive nature of the middle ages, and to affirm that the restraints and dogmatism of medievalism had beneficently and ineradicably shaped modern selfhood, was spreading beyond liberals of Milman's type at this time. Something deeper was afoot than a high churchman attacking broad churchmen when Richard William Church insisted, as his Tractarian forebears emphatically would not have done, that the historian of Christianity had to join together the relative claims of divinely-authored secular civilisation and absolute religion in an imaginative unity.[526] Church had been an undergraduate at Oriel College, Oxford, in the 1830s, at roughly the same time as Mark Pattison, and, like Pattison, he fell under Newman's spell. Unlike Pattison's, however, Church's Tractarianism was to be lifelong, though it was rendered somewhat less monastic

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[523] Idem, *The conversion of the northern nations. The Boyle Lectures for the year 1865 delivered at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall* (London, 1866), x.
[524] Idem, *Roman Empire*, viii-xv, p. 64.
[525] Idem, *Northern nations*, pp. 56-73, 75-92, 118-137, 141-158, here at pp. 86-87; Temple, 'The education of the world'.
[526] R.W. Church, 'Carlyle's Cromwell', in his *Occasional papers selected from the Guardian, the Times, and the Saturday Review 1846-1890*, ed. M.C. Church (London, 1897), pp. [1]-3; R.W. Church, *Civilization and Religion. A sermon preached before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's Church, on the Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 29, 1868* (Oxford and London, 1868).

and mortifying than that of the Oxford fathers by his upbringing in Florence as the son of a wine merchant. His interests were cosmopolitan; he was a co-founder of the *Guardian* newspaper in 1846, and reviewed prolifically for this and other organs throughout his life.[527] Lecky's *HEM* appeared while Church was a parish priest in Somerset, and he dispatched a review to *Macmillan's Magazine* – which, at that time, was one of the leading periodicals for general literature alongside *Blackwood's* and the *Cornhill*.

The essay distilled the leading features of Church's historical thought. The fundamental inadequacy of the historical evaluation Lecky pursued on the basis of his theory of intuitive morals, Church argued, lay in his procedural equivocation as to whether Christianity was true or false. 'A man can hardly write very surely and firmly about the influence of Christianity, who has not yet made up his mind whether it is the most awful of truths or the most colossal or delusions, or a *tertium quid*, made up of high truth and base imposture, which has never yet been explained.'[528] By his avoidance of this point, Church continued, Lecky was unable convincingly to explain what it was in the first eight centuries of the Christian era that turned 'materials as wild and apparently untameable as Arabs and Afghans' into that civilisation which had made Europe and North America 'appear almost a different creature from the rest of the human race'.[529] The leading truth about medieval Europe – that it was a self-reforming, self-renovating period of law that necessarily preceded freedom – was absent from Lecky's pages.[530] Unlike a number of liberal figures, Church made it clear in his essays and occasional pieces that he believed Stanley and Milman to suffer from something of the same

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[527] G. Martin Murphy, 'Church, Richard William (1815-1890)', *ODNB*.
[528] [R.W. Church], 'Lecky's "History of European Morals"', *MM*, 20:115 (May, 1869), p. 78.
[529] Ibid., p. 82.
[530] Ibid., p. 87.

externality – that cool indifference to the inward and intellectual power of historic Christianity – which desiccated Lecky's writing.[531]

Church himself, on the other hand, applied himself to offering what he regarded as a more deliberately Christianised interpretation of the spiritual and worldly forces which had first entwined civilisation and Christianity together during the conversion of Europe. Ancient Rome, he reflected in a lecture, built up an admirable ethical and political character under its own unaided auspices, but once that tradition decayed – being solely a human tradition – there was no eternal spring of renewal to save it from scepticism and eastern religion.[532] Christianity was to be that morally renovating element which Rome lacked. Its introduction was what separated the ancient from the modern world.

In 1877, while dean of St Paul's, Church published a study of *The Beginning of the Middle Ages* which instructed his readers in precisely what Christianity had added to the raw materials of European history in order to turn secular facts into earthly footstools of the heavenly kingdom. Playing down the deterministic importance some ascribed to race, Church thought of the Latins and Teutons more as soils than as active powers. The life-giving seed, an immortal principle of renewal amidst degeneration, was really the Cross: giving 'infinite seriousness', 'infinite value and dignity' and 'purity' to human life.[533] To the warlike Teutons the church taught the value of persuasion and hope in place of the brute force to which they were accustomed, although the barbarians lowered the standard and learning of the clergy.[534] The conversion of the Latins to the religion of the Beatitudes, he told an audience in St Paul's, softened their old hardness. It explained why Italy became the spring of art and

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[531] R.W. Church, 'Stanley on the study of ecclesiastical history', and 'Dean Milman's essays', in his *Occasional papers*, pp. [66]-73, pp. [155]-165.

[532] Idem, 'Civilisation before and after Christianity. Two lectures delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral, at the Tuesday evening services, January 23rd & 30th, 1872', in his *The gifts of civilisation and other sermons and lectures delivered at Oxford and at St Paul's*, new edn (London, 1880), pp. 152-175.

[533] Idem, 'Civilisation before and after Christianity', pp. 180-190.

[534] Idem, *The beginning of the middle ages* (London, 1895), pp. 56-63. (First edition 1877.)

poetry. The transition, as Church made use of Matthew Arnold to explain, was symbolised by the difference between the repressed religious emotion of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and Augustine's *Confessions*, where feelings for the divine had learned to pour out their fullness.[535] Latin Christianity was no less a purposeful and educative force in Church's account than in Milman's. But for the urbane Tractarian, its relevance to modern individuality had not yet receded into the past.

High church Anglicans, always institutionally committed to upholding their direct descent from the Middle Ages, were by the later Victorian period coming to understand that descent in a sense that reached beyond ecclesiology or Romantic polemicism. It now involved a newer affirmation of the providentially progressive character of history. In this they were not so distant from a new generation of more Protestant historians, for whom the spectre of unbelief, rather than those of popery and Puseyism, were the most frightening apparitions which pre-Reformation religious history had to dispel. George Matheson, the Church of Scotland minister whose faith had been saved by Hegel, preserved his trust in the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' by making it encompass all history.[536] He developed the point in his 1877 *Growth of the Spirit of Christianity*, a two-volume speculative history published by T. & T. Clark. The Ultramontane, Matheson argued, erred by seeking to return the world to a fixed point. The mistake of the extreme Protestant, on the other hand, was to seek to cut the world off from its past, and, with Milner, to treat the water of life as nothing grander than 'a little stream' amidst putrefaction. 'The development of history and the unity of the human race alike forbid us thus to narrow the limits of the mind of man'.[537] Exultantly appropriating the metaphor favoured by those who sought to present history as a teleological spiritual unity, Matheson posited that Christian history was in fact composed of 'the

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[535] Idem, 'Christianity and the Latin races', in his *Gifts of civilisation*, pp. [254]-299.
[536] Macmillan, *George Matheson*, p. 128; the allusion is to Revelation XIII. 8.
[537] Matheson, *Spirit of Christianity*, i, 2; the publisher was T. & T. Clark.

progressive stages of an ever-growing life'.[538] Within this scheme, medieval religion became, in succession to the first impressions of childhood, the school-life of the youth, in which Christianity slowly discovered the full sense of its own power.[539] The papacy, Matheson argued, nurtured Europe's liberty by acting as a barrier to the secular power. He wrote of the complementarity of Catholicism and Protestantism in gendered terms. The Teutons who broke into the empire braced and invigorated the sensuous Christianity they found; but they in turn took needful femininity from its art and poetry.[540] Matheson's enthusiasm for educational metaphors led him to expend much energy on scholasticism, which made the collective Christian mind restless of its traditional restraints.[541] The movement of progress in the Middle Ages, as at all times, was towards 'mind over matter', 'intellect over force', 'human liberty over the chains of slavery'.[542] The *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* found Matheson's presiding metaphor fanciful; but still took his text as representing a significant step towards 'a true Philosophy of Church History during the first fifteen centuries of our era'.[543]

Even among conservative Protestants, especially younger ones, the increasing weight of studies on the subject – and the growing wish to prove God's continuous historical activity - operated to complicate or even dislodge old assumptions about the historical position of Latin Christianity. There remained many historians, such as the Free Churchman James Aitken Wylie or the Belfast Presbyterian William Dool Killen, for whom corruption rather than progressive continuity remained the relevant fact about Catholic history.[544] But a deep-seated

[538] Ibid., i, 4.
[539] Ibid., i, 289.
[540] Ibid., i, 268-279.
[541] Ibid., ii, 272-275.
[542] Ibid., ii, 394.
[543] 'Select literary notices', *WMM*, 2 (October, 1878), pp. 797-798.
[544] J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism* (3 vols, London, Paris and New York, 1874), i, 22-23; W.D. Killen, *The Old Catholic Church: or the history, doctrine, worship, and polity of the Christians traced from the apostolic age to the establishment of the Pope as temporal sovereign, A.D. 755* (Edinburgh, 1871), p. 394 and n. Cf. Daniel 7:20-22.

change was taking place when, lecturing to his students at the Free Church's Glasgow theological college in 1875, Thomas Martin Lindsay intoned that the medieval centuries, miscalled 'the Dark Ages' by the eighteenth century, in fact glowed with light to any with the eyes to discern it. 'For a century to come I venture to say that part of the battle between Christianity and the unchristian spirit will be fought out on the field of mediaeval history.'[545]

Herbert Brook Workman, principal of the Methodist Westminster Training College and the denomination's first distinguished historian, tellingly specialised in medieval church history. His *Church of the West in the Middle Ages* certainly depicted the descent of the papacy into corruption in the ninth and tenth centuries in dark terms. There was a note of the old evangelical concern for the true church in exile when he called the period 'an age of Egyptian darkness, of unclean spirits like frogs'.[546] But Workman never invoked Daniel or Revelation to give prophetic meaning to dramatic fallings-away and apostasy. Life was instead a spiritual whole. 'All breaks are unreal', as Freeman had truly said; 'progress involves the continuity of the one life of the Spirit manifesting Himself in different ways in different ages.'[547] Medieval Christians were too often charged with formalism: but, he asked, were not nominal Christians the norm in every age? Invoking the common metaphor among those who wanted to see purposeful unity in history, Workman believed that the child first had to learn obedience before the youth could start to learn the higher growths of the soul.[548] Hildebrand, scholasticism and monasticism all prepared the ground for a new civilisation.[549] The authorities Workman commended reflected this outlook. He pointed his readers towards Carlyle's *Past and Present* and R. W. Church, among others, on monasticism.[550] The best general authority on the medieval church remained Milman, though by then much in need of

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[545] T.M. Lindsay, 'The study of church history', p. 97.
[546] H.B. Workman, *The church of the west in the middle ages* (2 vols, London, 1898), i, 60.
[547] Ibid., ii, vi.
[548] Ibid., i, 91-94.
[549] Ibid., i, 148, [203]-204, 246-247.
[550] Ibid., ii, 246.

correction; but he was inattentive to the development of thought, in which Workman recommended that he ought to be supplemented by Neander, 'who is also always faithful to the continuity of life.'[551] Slightly later, Workman came to advocate a vision of spiritual history in which Catholicism here, Methodism there, became but transient phases of faith in the steady movement of the world towards some unseen goal.[552] Anti-Catholicism, in Workman as in so many others, had faded away as a distinctive intellectual position as Catholicism, as well as their own churches, came to seem as moments in the progressively-unfolding mind of God.

VI) Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, history first came to seem essential to understanding and replying to Catholicism, and thereafter steadily transformed how Protestant critics typically understood what was important about it. Medieval religion was consistently both a provocative phenomenon in the past, and an unwelcome element in the present. But that which Victorian critics saw when they studied it changed. The lingering Enlightenment criticism and the heightened evangelical and high church agitation of the early Victorian years variously impugned and extolled medieval religion, treating it as a proxy for present-day Catholicism and the intellectual and societal attitudes it supposedly represented. These fashions, already at variance with European intellectual developments, were disturbed and significantly eroded by Milman's *HLC* and the new kind of historicism it powerfully expressed. In Milman's text, and more and more after him, opposition to or support for

[551] Ibid., ii, ix.
[552] H.B. Workman, *The place of Methodism in the catholic church*, new edn (London, 1921); the piece had first appeared in 1909 as the introduction to W.B. Townsend, G. Eayrs and H.B. Workman (eds), *A new history of Methodism* (2 vols, London, 1909), i, 3-73.

doctrinal Catholicism no longer determined the intellectual shape of reflection on the role of religion in the middle ages. It instead widely came to be interpreted, by liberals, high churchmen and conservative Protestants alike, as a phase in the divine education of the world. William Lecky's rationalistic deprecations of Catholicism's function in social evolution, which he was careful to distinguish from that of ethicised Christianity, were at variance with his contemporaries' changing attitudes. Those newer inclinations led them to see what was once taken to be a benighted period as providentially if temporarily constructive, and even as bequeathing certain feminine and expressive elements to western culture that seemed at once modern and rooted in religion. The growing apologetic importance of the belief that no formative historical period had been a mistake, and the assumption that a progressive society could not safely cast aside its religious inheritances, were also to shape how Victorian moralists understood their Protestant ancestry.

Chapter four. Reformation Protestantism

I) Introduction

> All which Protestantism was to itself clearly conscious of, all which it succeeded in clearly setting forth in words, had the characters of Hebraism rather than of Hellenism.[553]

Matthew Arnold's limpid deconstructions of his countrymen's supposedly Philistine narrowness, developed and sharpened by controversy with his opponents in the periodical reviews and on the public lecture circuit from his emergence as a cultural critic in the 1860s to his death in 1888, typically treated intellectual phases or historical moments as active agents in a fragmented present. He hoped that the oppositions he established between active, Biblicist 'Hebraism' and reflective, humane 'Hellenism' would encourage his contemporaries to sweeten and lighten the overbearing puritanism he thought to be stifling culture, which was properly the study of perfection, by rediscovering the principles prized by Greece and the Renaissance. Arnold, son of the Broad Church patriarch Thomas Arnold and votary of the *Bildungsstaat*, deployed these motifs to idealise a national church that would do homage to poetry and eloquence, and a national education system capable of making 'reason and the will of God prevail'.[554] Arnold's characteristic positions made him a decidedly advanced thinker. His assumption that Protestantism was a pervasive relevant fact about English culture, and his use of an historical rhetoric to discuss its limitations, had nevertheless already become familiar features of British public language by the time the first book edition of *Culture and Anarchy* appeared in 1869.

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[553] M. Arnold, *Culture and anarchy*, ed. J. Garnett (Oxford, 2006), p. 103; first book edition 1869.
[554] Ibid., p. 34.

Arnold's essayistic swipes can be understood as instances, albeit especially formative and influential ones, of a longer-term debate concerning the effects of historic Protestantism on British intellectual, religious and social life, and how the recovery of elements or ideals in European history might loosen or strengthen Protestantism's hold on modern culture. More so than when Victorian critics thought about the early church or medieval religion, Protestantism was immediately their own. This chapter considers how liberal thinkers responded to the era in which Protestantism held supreme intellectual and social sway in Britain and 'progressive' Europe, one generally understood by Victorians to have run from the Reformation to the later seventeenth century, and the legacies it was believed to have left in the present. The Reformation and post-Reformation periods were first pressed on Victorian public attention in the context of the evangelical revival. But it became increasingly important to Victorian religious liberals that they should be interpreted as part of a general progression towards modernity, yet one that was still understood within a basically theological framework. That enterprise encountered considerable resistance. On the one hand, volubly secularising historians extolled the Renaissance, expressive of an historical moment at which natural man recovered his alienated legitimacy, as an alternative root of modern culture. On the other, evangelicals worried that what was distinctive about Protestantism would be lost in apologetic attempts to equate it with the general advance of civilisation.

By focusing on liberal reinterpretations of the religious dimensions of Reformation and post-Reformation history, in their intersections with revivalist idealisations of the Reformation and secularising deprecations of it, this chapter draws out unfamiliar patterns in Victorian engagement with the Protestant past. Though historians since the 1980s have recognised the importance of ideas of Protestant history to Victorian religious and cultural perception, it is only relatively recently that the ways in which they permeated Victorian discourse beyond a

series of canonical historical texts have drawn systematic attention.[555] The tensions of the evangelical revival, it is now clear, led exultant Protestant and critical Anglo- or Roman Catholic actors to argue over Reformation history in fields as superficially separate as evangelical commemorations, political argument, book history, literature and music.[556] The growing political power and social influence of nonconformity; the new urgency of anti-Catholicism in evangelical circles; and the subsuming of constitutionalist Whig history into inclusive narratives of national progress converted a central protagonist of the seventeenth century, Oliver Cromwell, from tyrant to talisman.[557] So too did Thomas Carlyle's lionisation of Cromwell's Puritan anti-flunkeyism in his rendition of *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*.[558] This text energised and appealed to the growing, quintessentially mid-Victorian enthusiasm for rehabilitated puritanism both as an earnest, trans-historical force for democracy and high moral seriousness in public life and as an ideal, often gendered, for personal conduct.[559] The ways in which the religious history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries coursed through the Victorian body politic, nourishing national, ecclesiastical and individual energies, are becoming vividly apparent.

What has not been addressed, perhaps curiously, has been the question of how liberal re-readings of Protestant history, from both theologically apologetic and consciously

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[555] R. O'Day, *The debate on the English Reformation*, 2nd edn (Manchester and New York, 2014), first edition 1986; Dickens and Tonkin, *Reformation in historical thought*, pp. 150-197.
[556] Nockles and Westbrook (eds), *Reformation revised?*; Wheeler, *The old enemies*; J.M.R. Bennett, 'The British Luther commemoration of 1883-1884 in European context', *Historical Journal* 58:2 (2015), pp. 543-564.
[557] B. Troeger, 'A Protestant hero: religious aspects of Oliver Cromwell's Victorian reputation', in R. Crone, D. Gange and K. Jones (eds), *New perspectives in British cultural history* (Newcastle, 2007), pp. 62-77; B. Worden, 'The Victorians and Oliver Cromwell', in S. Collini, R. Whatmore and B. Young (eds), *History, religion and culture. British intellectual history 1750-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 112-135. On Victorian historians and the socio-political legacies of seventeenth-century conflict, see T. Lang, *The Victorians and the Stuart heritage: interpretations of a discordant past* (Cambridge, 1995); Bennett, *Victorian high church*.
[558] T. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's letters and speeches, with elucidations by T. Carlyle*, 2nd edn (3 vols, London, 1846); B. Worden, 'Thomas Carlyle and Oliver Cromwell', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 105 (2000), pp. 131-170.
[559] R. Samuel, 'The discovery of Puritanism, 1820-1914: a preliminary sketch', reprinted in his *Island stories: unravelling Britain. Theatres of memory, Volume II*, ed. A. Light, S. Alexander and G. Stedman Jones (London and New York, 1998), pp. 276-322. 'Puritanism' kept its positive connotations, at least in influential sections of English society, until the 1960s: M. Grimley, 'The religion of Englishness: Puritanism, providentialism and "national character," 1918-1945', *Journal of British Studies*, 46:4 (2007), pp. 884-906.

secularising points of view, amounted to ways of discussing whether, and in what sense, Protestantism was true or not; and what the consequences of this were for Victorian sources of value. Existing studies of the Protestant past in the Victorian imagination have tended to treat the significant transformation in Victorian engagement with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as lying in a movement from sectarian and evangelical pictures of the Reformation and puritanism in the early Victorian period, to secular and liberal nationalist ones by the end of the century. This idea has informed several of the contributions to a recent collection of essays edited by Peter Nockles and Vivienne Westbrook, entitled *The Reformation Revised?*, and subtitled 'the contested reception of the English Reformation in nineteenth-century Protestantism'. In this imaginative volume, Gareth Atkins takes Thomas Cranmer's evolving reputation to exemplify Victorians' increasing inclination to approach the Reformation as a moment of national intellectual and political liberation, rather than as one at which particular confessions had acquired their theological title-deeds.[560] Richard Rex remarks that it was partly the era's susceptibility to a Whig political interpretation that 'saved the Reformation for Victorian and modern British culture'.[561] In the same spirit, Peter Nockles writes that 'secular or secularizing Protestant rather than evangelical Protestant readings of the Reformation appeared to have triumphed' by the late-Victorian period. 'The opposing forces in the Reformation struggle were increasingly presented as not so much between Christ and Antichrist but as priestcraft and supernaturalism pitted against rationalism and modernity.'[562] Thus the volume depicts a process by which evangelical Protestant readings of the Reformation lost traction as secularised, culturally Protestant interpretations gained it.

[560] G. Atkins, 'Truth at stake? The posthumous reputation of Archbishop Cranmer', in Nockles and Westbrook, *Reformation revised?*, pp. [257]-286.
[561] R. Rex, 'Introduction. The morning star or the sunset of the Reformation?', in Nockles and Westbrook, *Reformation revised?*, pp. 18-19.
[562] P. Nockles, 'The Reformation revised? The contested reception of the English Reformation in nineteenth-century Protestantism', in Nockles and Westbrook, *Reformation revised?*, pp. 231-256.

Whilst these accounts valuably recover one possible reaction of a late-Victorian generation to the symbols of pride and belonging reinvigorated by revival, it was not the only or even the primary one. The history of the Reformation- and post-Reformation periods continued to be a field in which critics debated the meaning of Protestant commitment, and its social and ethical worth, up to the end of the Victorian era and beyond. To present later Victorian treatments of the Reformation as epitomising a general shift in educated society towards cultural as opposed to believing Protestantism would be to pass over the complex argumentative patterns involved in how idealist currents, and the discovery of the Renaissance, shaped both more religious and more secular responses to a formative inheritance. This chapter accordingly examines how an early-Victorian world, in which the Reformation was significant for the ways in which Christ had faced Antichrist, incrementally gave way to a late-Victorian environment in which that conception, though still present in places, no longer seemed as urgent or compelling as the hotly-disputed possibility that modern society had outlived the Protestantism that many believed had given birth to it.

James Anthony Froude's Carlylean reverence for original Protestant heroism, combined with his determination to approach Protestant history more critically than was common among contemporary evangelicals, is a familiar theme in this context.[563] The melancholic tincture introduced into Froude's writings by his belief that the historical conditions which had given energy and plausibility to Protestant claims had passed away certainly obtained a wide diffusion. His crisis-stricken historical vision was, however, not so much emblematic of an age as one position on a complex spectrum of contemporary responses. This chapter casts a light on the different parts of that spectrum. It does so by bringing into relation with one another the diverse thinkers troubled or enthused by the question of whether the legacies of the Reformation, as a religious event, might be harmonised with or made intrinsic to freedom,

[563] C. Brady, *James Anthony Froude. An intellectual biography of a Victorian prophet* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 247-249; Garnett, 'Protestant histories'.

progress, and individual moral experience. A broad range of moralists, a number of whom are not typically thought of as historically-minded critics of religion, were linked through their search for answers to a common problem.

The structure of the chapter examines the tensions and reconciliations that emerged in this developing course of argument. The first section considers how, in the 1830s and 1840s, Protestants from many denominations deliberately revived public interest in Reformation and post-Reformation history as a weapon of evangelicalism. It focuses on the role of Protestant history in the articulation of religious traditionalism, by drawing out the similarities in how authors within widely differing confessions used such history to promote certain conceptions of religious truth and of the human condition. Nonconformist identities were emboldened, and the Church of England's rancorously divided, as great Reformers and Puritan heroes were exhumed in order to be reanimated or exorcised. Reformation history, witnessing to the redemption of fallen humanity by the intervention of divine grace, became a macrocosmic projection of the individual Christian life and the dualistic, atonement-centred theology in terms of which evangelicals understood it. These confessionalist uses of the past remained the common currency of religious controversy until the end of the century and for some time beyond.

They were, however, significantly displaced by major reinterpretations of the Protestant tradition in British intellectual life. These relied on the emergence of alternative historical paradigms – sometimes theological, sometimes secular - to that typically deployed by evangelicals. The second section examines how critics who sought to modernise Protestantism, by reconciling it to biblical criticism and moral freedom, made an historical rhetoric central to that enterprise. In accounts that aimed to situate freedom and criticism within a framework that remained recognisably theological, the Reformation often became the beginning of progressive modernity, and offered abiding principles that could be turned to

criticise the supposedly outworn husks of Reformation-era dogmatism. The section focuses on both Scottish and English intellectual leaders taken to be representative of this transition, and on how arguments of the kind advocated by John Tulloch and Frederic William Farrar percolated among a wider public in later Victorian debates concerning the authority of the bible, the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Westminster Confession. Religious liberals' attempts to reassure fellow-Protestants that they could accept change in these areas, whilst also remaining loyal to their history, played a hitherto underestimated role in the more familiar story of how stances that at first seemed bitterly liberal became more digestible in conservative circles over the course of the century.[564]

The Reformation's claim to a culturally modernising function, especially foregrounded in liberal Protestant accounts of the Reformation, was challenged after 1870 by the rising vogue for the Renaissance. The third section of this chapter demonstrates that later Victorian debates over the Renaissance, which are often treated as a specifically secular kind of progressive argument, were in fact significantly animated by their pertinence to the authority of Christianity in general and Reformation Protestantism in particular. The debate drew in freethinkers, novelists, and historians of art, scholarship and the church. Secular-minded thinkers such as Mark Pattison and Karl Pearson, the latter markedly influenced by Catholic German works of cultural history, saw early modern history as a means of polemically stressing the gulf between pre-modern Protestantism and quintessentially progressive Renaissance values. But John Addington Symonds, one of those chiefly responsible for creating the late Victorian generation's picture of the Renaissance as an historical period, somewhat ambivalently insisted on linking it to the Reformation as part of his gaseous, idealist and religiously regretful vision of progress. In this, Symonds departed notably from

[564] Classic accounts include: B.M.G. Reardon, *Religious thought in the Victorian age: a survey from Coleridge to Gore*, 2nd edn (London, 1995); L. Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian era* (London, 1936); C.C.J. Webb, *A study of religious thought in England from 1850: being the Olaus Petri lectures, delivered at Uppsala in 1932* (Oxford, 1933).

the historical sensibility of Jacob Burckhardt, whose *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* – belonging to a different strand of Germanic cultural-historical study from that deployed by Pearson - was often an important presence in Victorian depictions of the period. This departure showed that, with one side of his mind, Symonds shared the broader, late-Victorian reluctance to see the Renaissance's recovery of nature, free criticism and artistic creativity as a sufficient basis for selfhood, personal conduct and social engagement.[565] George Eliot's *Romola* offered a meditation on these questions, and presented a possible solution as lying in altruism.[566] It was more common to find it in Protestantism, or in simplified Christianity. Religious apologists looked for ways of integrating the Reformation and the Renaissance as part of a shared spiritual moment, in order to emphasise the contribution made by reformed religion to civilisation and so to resist secularised conceptions of progress. Evangelicals held that to render the Reformation attractive by casting it as a movement of the human spirit, to which grace was marginal, was to sacrifice too much. Matthew Arnold was a significant presence in these debates.

Rooted in these complex exchanges, two general changes had taken place by the early 1900s. First, Protestant thinkers, including evangelicals, had become more inclined to see a tension between Protestantism as a body of historically-locatable scholastic doctrines and Protestantism as an ever-necessary moral orientation, which was to be resolved in favour of the latter. Secondly, religious apologists – and even so decidedly heterodox an advocate of Renaissance values as Symonds – became markedly concerned to represent the Renaissance and the Reformation as different sides of a broader pivot away from 'medievalism' towards modernity. The Reformation and the Renaissance did not, on these readings, embody incommensurable value-systems, but were instead presented as complementary parts of a shared spiritual movement: a successor-phase to spiritually animated, but now outdated

[565] J. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009); first edition 1860.
[566] G. Eliot, *Romola*, ed. D. Barrett (London, 1996); first published 1862-1863.

medieval Christianity. Both the first and the second developments were expressed and experienced as changes in what the Protestant tradition, as living history, was understood to involve.

II) The Reformation revived

As Tractarians quarried patristic texts, and medievalisers set their Gothic fantasies in stone, evangelical Protestants across the British Isles sought to rebuild the edifice of Reformation doctrine which they thought had been damaged by a century of latitudinarian neglect. Where the emphasis was placed in that doctrine – justification by faith, scriptural literalism, the divine decrees, the priesthood of all believers – varied from denomination to denomination, and very often within them. But Protestants across Britain who held to a high view of Christ's Atonement, felt their reliance upon individual divine grace, and feared the encroachments of 'popery' at home and abroad, were alike led to rediscover Reformation and post-Reformation history amidst the historicist turn in early-nineteenth-century culture. Evangelicals in England and Scotland came more self-consciously to define themselves as the heirs to the Reformers and seventeenth-century Puritans and Covenanters in order to legitimise their own ecclesiastical identities. The manner in which they did so implied a certain philosophy of history. The same evangelicals who tended to decry popish medievalism in the way discussed in chapter three, cast the Reformation as its luminous anti-type. Placing their faith in the wondrous action of providence in historical as in individual life, they conceived of the Reformation as an irruption into medieval darkness rather than as an outgrowth of historical development. The significance of the Reformation was not, in this account, worldly or sensual, but lay in its restoration of scriptural truth. The primary reason for studying the

history of the Reformation, and subsequent attempts to purify and secure Reformed doctrine, was to exhibit and promote this truth in all its pristine clarity. Writers who wished to challenge evangelical claims to represent true Protestantism, or to undermine it altogether, came to regard history as a major chink in evangelical armour. The divinity of historical movement itself resisted evangelical attempts to constrict and sectarianise it, or so religious liberals came to argue.

In pushing evangelicals towards a more concretely historical articulation of Protestant traditionalism, English, British and European contexts overlapped. In part, evangelicals were responding to external dangers; in another sense, they were giving expression to the energies of revivalism in ways that came naturally to a historicist culture. But among the strongest forces in promoting a more general familiarity with Reformation history was undoubtedly the English church faction whose goal was the reversal of Protestantism. The Oxford Movement shattered a brittle Anglican consensus on the subject of the English and European Reformations, and the principles to be deduced from them.[567] In this the Oxford fathers went against those whom Hurrell Froude categorised as 'Zs'.[568] These old high churchmen valued the English Reformers and doughtily defended the Church of England's right to its rubrics and Articles, as warranted by scripture understood in the light of antiquity.[569] They also accepted that the continental non-episcopal churches were true churches, for they had not found it possible to maintain purity of doctrine alongside the episcopal system during the turbulence of the sixteenth century. Hints of this older eirenicism survived in some of the early Tracts.[570]

The Tractarians and their successors, being acutely opposed to Reformed theology, came to see the Reformation as deeply problematic. Unlike old high churchmen, they were given to

[567] Nockles, 'The Reformation revised?', in Nockles and Westbrook, *The Reformation revised?*, pp. 231-256.
[568] Nockles, *Oxford Movement in context*, pp. 20-21.
[569] Ibid., pp. 112-136.
[570] Ibid., pp. 156-157.

condemn the continental Reformation, and at least the political side of the English Reformation, in terms of quasi-Augustinian moral analysis. The sixteenth century seemed to them a period when impetuous spirits, spurred on by political self-interest and overreacting to ecclesiastical abuses, had divided the Catholic Church - or in England's case, either gave or came perilously close to giving the appearance of having dividing it. Hurrell Froude's declaration of hatred for the Reformers, put forward publicly by the editors of his *Remains*, was a sentiment increasingly and shockingly characteristic of the Oxford Movement and those associated with it.[571] Tractarian objections to the Reformation were not solely theological. In an early example of how critiques of Protestantism often also became criticism of Victorian society, Tractarian and Tractarian-inspired novelists and historians traced the disintegrative rise of commercialism to the dissolution of the monasteries.[572] Yet if the Tudor Reformation had been flawed, so the Tractarian argument ran, it was nevertheless essentially distinguishable from the comprehensively destructive continental form, which had abandoned episcopacy and the rule of antiquity in a way in which the English movement had not. Two early figures of the Movement, James Bowling Mozley and W. F. Hook, blamed what they represented as Luther's favourite and essentially subjective principle of private judgement for planting the seeds of that religious rationalism which had subverted the gospel and destabilised political order in modern times.[573]

Faced with the danger of Oxford's rising popery – which it proved difficult to separate from a more general Catholic revival at home and abroad - British evangelicals were driven to anchor themselves more definitely in Protestant history as events cut them loose from the

[571] See note 177 above. Froude's views were at the extreme end of the catholicising spectrum: J.M. Neale wrote in correspondence that the whole movement should not be made responsible for Froude's private views: letter to E. Boyce, January 11, 1839, in M.S. Lawson (ed.), *Letters of John Mason Neale D.D.* (London, 1910), pp. 19-20.
[572] S.A. Skinner, '"A triumph of the rich": Tractarians and the Reformation', in Nockles and Westbrook, *The Reformation revised?*, pp. [69]-91.
[573] W.F. Hook, *The three Reformations: Lutheran-Roman-Anglican* (London, 1847), p. 33; J.B. Mozley, 'Luther', reprinted in his *Essays historical and theological* (2 vols, London, 1878), i, 348-354, 425-433.

familiar moorings of more unselfconscious times. This new interest in history manifested itself in several ways. English evangelicals' invocations of the Reformation in public controversy, noticeable from the 1820s, became at once more systematically combative and historically particular as pessimism over the prospects of Irish conversion, and alarm at the Oxford Movement, intensified during the 1830s. The first of many commemorations of Protestant events and heroes in nineteenth-century England, the tercentenary of the publication of Miles Coverdale's English bible, took place in 1835. The commemoration set the tone for later such occasions by involving Wesleyans and Independents.[574] The hope that orthodox Protestant denominations might be drawn to unite on a shared basis in 'Reformation' principles, though frequently frustrated, often surfaced in the historical imagination of nineteenth-century evangelicalism.

At the same time as historicist and commemorative impulses started to run through conservative Protestantism, books appeared to meet the rising, cross-denominational evangelical appetite for Reformation history. Evangelical interest was not confined to the history of the British reformations; and their enthusiasm for the Reformation leapt beyond their immediate anxieties about Romanism, to become an instrument in the positive inculcation of gospel truths. Whereas high church Anglicans, and especially Tractarians, drew an essential distinction between the episcopal Reformation in England and its schismatic continental varieties, evangelicals typically stressed that all Europe shared in the restoration of the truths of *sola scriptura* and justification by faith which the Reformation had secured. The popularity of Jean Henry Merle d'Aubigné's *History of the Reformation*, the first English translation of which began to be published in 1846, provides one indication that British evangelicals attached importance to the Reformation as a unified and international

[574] J. Wolffe, 'The commemoration of the Reformation and mid-nineteenth-century evangelical identity', in Nockles and Westbrook, *Reformation revised?*, pp. [49]-68. Wolffe notes that the Coverdale tercentenary took place shortly before evangelical concerns about Tractarianism became acute.

movement from an early date.[575] Marrying a modishly pietistic sensibility indebted to Augustus Neander with a romanticised Calvinism more loyal to Calvin himself than to the scholastic system completed by Calvin's successors, the popularity of the itinerant Genevan pastor soon rivalled the Milners' in evangelical circles.[576] Liberal historians were to understand the idea of the Reformation as a shared European and, indeed, global moment in a markedly different way.

New editions of dormant Reformation-era texts also began to circulate, furnishing disputants with intellectual archaeologies for their favoured doctrinal systems. Anglican debates proved especially fruitful in this respect. The evangelical publishers, Burnside and Seeley, announced a new edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* – the classic text of Protestant martyrology - in the late 1830s, at the height of Tractarian advance.[577] Anti-Tractarian Anglicans, newly aware of the need to assert the Protestant origins of the Church of England, formed the Parker Society in 1840. The evangelical earl of Shaftesbury served as its president. It aimed to republish, in affordable editions, the reformed divinity of the early fathers of the Church of England. Churchmen edited 54 volumes for the Society, to be published by Cambridge University Press, including the works of Nicholas Ridley, Edmund Grindal, John Whitgift and John Jewel.[578] The thirteenth and final report of the Council of the Society, issued in December 1855, declared at the completion of the series that these works had been issued because 'they contain proved weapons for the whole encounter with popery, and maintain the doctrine and order of the Church of England against those who afterwards

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[575] J.H. Merle d'Aubigné, *Histoire de la Réformation du seizième siècle* (5 vols, Paris and Geneva, 1835-1853); idem, *History of the Reformation of the sixteenth century*, trans. H. White (5 vols, Edinburgh, 1846-1853).
[576] J.B. Roney, *The inside of history. Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné and romantic historiography* (Westport and London, 1996), esp. pp. [109]-130, [157]-181; N.M. Railton, *No North Sea. The Anglo-German evangelical network in the middle of the nineteenth century* (Brill, 2000), pp. 32-33.
[577] D. Andrew Penny, 'John Foxe's Victorian reception', *Historical Journal*, 40:1 (1997), pp. 111-142.
[578] N. Ridley, *The Works of Nicholas Ridley, D.D. sometime Lord Bishop of London, Martyr, 1555*, ed. H. Christmas (Cambridge, 1841); E. Grindal, *The Remains of Edmund Grindal, D.D. successively bishop of London, and Archbishop of York and Canterbury*, ed. W. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1843); J. Whitgift, *The Works of John Whitgift, D.D., Master of Trinity College, Dean of Lincoln, &c. Afterwards successively bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. J. Ayre (3 vols, Cambridge, 1851-1853); J. Jewel, *The Works of John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury*, ed. J. Ayre (4 vols, Cambridge, 1845-1850).

rose up from her own bosom to assault her.'[579] In riposte to the Parker Society's promotion of Tudor divinity, Tractarian editors established the Oxford-based *Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology*, giving prominence to the more amenable Caroline theology of the next century. J. H. Parker republished for the *Library* the works of William Beveridge, William Laud, and a host of other theologians whom Tractarians grouped together as their own, legitimising ancestors.[580] Struggles between evangelicals and high churchmen in the nineteenth-century Church of England to control the meaning of the Reformation, heightened especially at symbolic anniversaries such as the four-hundredth birthday of Martin Luther in 1883, resounded throughout the century.

Scottish Protestants, for all their distinctiveness, had much in common with their English co-religionists when it came to treating the Reformation and the Protestantism it had created as absolute and normative. No powerful Scottish party attempted to disavow the Reformation, unlike in England; and Presbyterian historical and cultural links tied them to Irish and continental as much as to English churches.[581] But as in England, Scottish evangelicals keenly related the travails of their own churches to the Reformation, both as a unified historical occurrence and as a present ideal. And as in England, different reformed denominations, as well as conflicting tendencies within them, competed to control the meaning of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history. Scots seeking to modernise Scottish Protestantism were to have to confront the thought-world of John Knox and Samuel Rutherford, in the hope of incorporating them into an account of reformed religion capable of transcending national and denominational limits.

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[579] Prefixed to H. Gough, *A General Index to the Publications of the Parker Society* (Cambridge, 1855), [iii-iv].
[580] W. Beveridge, *The theological works of William Beveridge, D.D. sometimes Lord Bishop of St Asaph* (Oxford, 12 vols, 1842-1848); W. Laud, *The works of the Most Reverent Father in God, William Laud, D.D. sometime lord archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. W. Scott and J. Bliss (Oxford, 7 vols in 9, 1847-1860). Some of the *Library*'s editors, such as William Copeland and Charles Crawley, came to doubt whether some of texts were quite so supportive as they had first appeared: Nockles, *Oxford Movement in context*, p. 128.
[581] A.R. Holmes, 'The Scottish reformations and the origin of religious and civil liberty in Britain and Ireland: Presbyterian interpretations, c. 1800-60', in Nockles and Westbrook, *The Reformation revised?*, pp. [135]-153.

Scottish conflict became acute when the Church of Scotland, as the Church of England had done, gave birth to an insurgent movement as dissatisfied with allegedly Erastian laxity as it was confident that it possessed history's mandate. The Disruption of 1843, immediately occasioned by a dispute over lay patronage, expressed long-simmering anxieties over state intrusion in religious affairs, and the vitality of the classically Reformed theology embodied in the Calvinist Westminster Confession. The decision of one third of the Church of Scotland's ministers to exit the General Assembly occurred amidst and further stimulated the rediscovery of Reformation religion by Scotland's conservative Presbyterians. This had been underway for some years. Thomas McCrie, an Original Secession minister and author of a much-reprinted 1811 *Life of John Knox*, and James Seaton Reid, an Ulster Presbyterian who served as professor of ecclesiastical and civil history at Glasgow from 1841 to 1851, were early and influential challengers of David Hume's and William Robertson's disparagement of the Scottish Reformation.[582] 'How criminal must those be,' apostrophised McCrie, 'who sitting at ease under the vines and fig-trees … watered by the blood of these patriots … misrepresent their actions, calumniate their motives, and cruelly lacerate their memories!'[583]

Disruption-era Free Churchmen, more than Establishment ministers, aligned themselves with Scotland's Reformers and Covenanters. John Tulloch expressed and exemplified the temperamental difference when he wrote in the *Contemporary Review* that Free Churchmen played 'the part of defenders of the pure confessional faith of Scotland, for which the martyrs of the seventeenth century had perished, and the Church had witnessed in its purest days'.[584] Secessionist emotions particularly centred on the spiritual independence of Presbyteries, God's sovereignty in grace over fallen man, and the supreme authority of the bible. What,

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[582] Ibid.; J. Kirk, 'McCrie, Thomas (1772-1835)', *ODNB*.

[583] T. McCrie, *The life of John Knox with biographical notices of the principal Reformers, and sketches of the progress of literature in Scotland, during a great part of the 16th century* (London, Edinburgh and New York, 1889), p. 15.

[584] J. Tulloch, 'Progress of religious thought in Scotland', *CR*, 29 (March, 1877), p. 538.

exactly, was involved in the latter two positions, especially, became an increasingly fraught issue as the century wore on; but that saints and martyrs had fought and died for them all was an awful fact. Free Churchmen did not disclaim the names of John Calvin or Calvinism; but these terms were etched into their hearts rather less deeply than Scotland's own Reformers and the persecuted adherents of the Solemn League and Covenant.[585] A set of *Communications on the Principles of the Free Church of Scotland*, replete with allusions to Scottish Reformation history, were issued in 1855 by a committee appointed by its General Assembly to defend the position of the church and to vindicate its dramatic secession over ten years earlier.[586] The unbending James Aitken Wylie later edited a lavish hagiographical memorial to the *Disruption Worthies*. Published in 1881, it was intended to instruct a younger generation, with no personal experience of 1843, of the momentous issues on which the Disruption turned. The collection situated Alexander Keith, William Hetherington and other secessionists on a shared religious plane uniting the Old Testament, the Reformation, the 'killing time' and the nineteenth-century revival. They belonged to 'a party whose theology was in accordance with the standards of the first and second Reformation, and whose principles were those of the Puritans and the Covenanters, and whose preaching, faithful and fervent, had the scarlet thread through it, and the blood-bought salvation in its freeness and fullness, as its constant and urgent theme'.[587] Those who remained loyal to what the seceders castigated as 'Moderatism', or the impudent secularity that had allegedly withered the souls

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[585] John Calvin, as David Bebbington has shown, became a more familiar figure to evangelical audiences in nineteenth-century Britain, but not necessarily a more lovable one. Preferring to stress the moral and voluntary as opposed to the natural and necessary inability of the sinner, evangelicals – even in 'Calvinist' Scotland - often found it difficult to enthuse over Calvin to the extent which their liberal opponents commonly claimed that they did: D.W. Bebbington, 'Calvin and British evangelicalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', in I. Backus and P. Benedict (eds), *Calvin and his influence, 1509 – 2009* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 282-305.

[586] T. McCrie et al., *Communications on the Principles of the Free Church of Scotland. Issued by the Committee of the General Assembly* (Edinburgh, 1855).

[587] The Hon. Lord Ardmillan, 'Introduction', to J.A. Wylie (ed.), *Disruption worthies. A memorial of 1843. With an historical sketch of the Free Church of Scotland from 1843 down to the present time* (Edinburgh, 1881), xiv-xv.

of the Establishment's eighteenth-century elite, would have to find an alternative way of defining the authentic spirit of historic Protestantism.

Despite denominational divisions and differences of theological emphasis, evangelical enthusiasm for Reformation and post-Reformation moments across Britain rested on a deeper consensus as to what drove history. That underlying agreement itself pointed to a certain doctrine of man, and his relation to divinity, which the Reformation had restored and secured. Evangelical historians deliberately reversed Enlightenment-era accounts of the Reformation's causes. These were now seen to lie in God's plan and the activity of the Holy Spirit, and certainly not in the self-willed movements of earth's proud empires. Eager to rescue church history from eighteenth-century historians' idolatry of secondary causes, Joseph Milner and his continuator, his brother Isaac, placed the Lutheran Reformation at the apogee of their *Church History*. They depicted it as flowing from immediate effusions of the Holy Spirit, significant for its definitive recovery of justification by faith and the open bible: an evaluation with which they rebuked those who thought of the Reformation primarily in terms of its secular contexts and results.[588] The Milners "saw the FINGER OF GOD in every step of the Reformation".[589] On the classically evangelical reading, the Reformation was second only to the foundation of Christianity as an event in salvation-history. The implication was that similar forces were at work in both. William Cunningham opened an essay on the subject by claiming that 'the Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century was the greatest event, or series of events, that has occurred since the close of the Canon of Scripture'.[590] 'Les puissances célestes qui depuis les premiers âges du Christianisme avaient sommeillé dans l'humanité', wrote Merle d'Aubigné, 'se réveillent au seizième siècle, et ce réveil enfante les

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[588] Walsh, 'Joseph Milner's evangelical church history: a biography' (MS), pp. 39-47.
[589] Milner, *History of the church of Christ*, i, xxv.
[590] W. Cunningham, 'Leaders of the Reformation', repr. in his *The Reformers and theology of the Reformation* (London, 1862), p. 1.

temps modernes.'[591] God's interventions, through the spirit, gave to history whatever glory it possessed.

This high view of providential action encouraged, indeed required, evangelical historians to isolate the transcendent motor of the Reformation from profaner contexts. It was not solely, or even mainly, the lack of specialist monographs which made the Reformation seem like a dramatic rupture. It was instead an Augustinian vision of human experience which emphasised the sovereignty of grace, and Manichaean separation between the cities of God and man, in historical as in individual life. As chapter three showed, evangelicals insisted that the Reformation came as a shaft of light in the darkness. In no way was it the outcome of medieval religious currents. 'Of the doctrine of Christianity, scarce anything remained but the name', wrote Thomas McCrie of the pre-Reformation church in Scotland.[592] They were likewise disinclined to connect the Reformation with the preceding recovery of Greek and Latin literature, and the expansion of artistic sensibility. Evangelicals wrote of the 'revival of letters' as part of God's preparation for the Reformation, to which it was firmly subordinate. But they took the significance of this revival to lie in how it had made scriptural exegesis available to the faithful once again, rather than in any general renewal of the human spirit.[593] Partly this was because 'the Renaissance', as shorthand for an autonomous, extensive event in cultural history, did not come into being before the mid-century. But it also witnessed to the cultural power of that view of humanity's estate as being predicated upon man's total depravity. This was a view which later Victorian fascination with the Renaissance was to subvert at many points. Later Victorian Protestants, who wished to suborn and not to castigate human reason and mankind's innate capacities, would seek ways of bringing the Renaissance and the Reformation closer together, both as historical events and as sources of

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591 Merle d'Aubigné, *Histoire*, v, [1]. Merle did however also regard the role of Christianity in history, with Neander, as a leaven: J. Winkler, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné* (Zurich, 1968), pp. 90-91.
592 McCrie, *life of John Knox*, p. 11.
593 Merle d'Aubigné, *Histoire*, i, 112-113.

value. This became especially urgent once the Renaissance had become a favourite category for critics of dogmatic religion.

The continuing authority of Protestant tradition, and the applicability of classically evangelical ideas of mankind's fallen state, were issues that drove vigorous contemporary debates generated by the official creeds which the British churches had inherited from the Reformation period. Contemporary anxieties about biblical and church authority, human potential, the freedom of the believer, and the capacity of the human mind to know God's purposes took on an historical form as the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles, and the Westminster Confession recognised by Scottish Presbyterians, became the subjects of intense public discussion once the evangelical revival had focused renewed attention upon them. Ideas concerning the Reformation and its legacies, far from being confined to the systematic texts conventionally regarded as the province of historiography, also structured the cut-and-thrust of the creedal debates through which Victorian society sought to come to terms with its religious past.

Revivalists' search for timeless sources of authority led them to give new and unstable emphasis to the authority of Reformation-era creeds and the ideas they upheld. By 1843, legal constraint had long since supplanted full-hearted commitment as the bond tying the Church of Scotland to the Westminster Confession. The Free Church, and other secession churches, at that time pointedly took pride in defending the Confession's increasingly troublesome affirmations of mankind's total depravity through the imputed sin of Adam, the futility of the will to secure conversion, the unity of Scripture, and the predestination of the reprobate to eternal torment. Free Churchmen pointedly celebrated the 1843 bicentenary of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, which had drawn up the Westminster Confession, shortly

after their exodus from the Church of Scotland General Assembly.[594] The Thirty-Nine Articles, partly on account of their inescapable capaciousness, never quite became the emotional emblem of reformed religion in the Church of England in the sense that the Westminster Confession did further north. But their affirmation of the salvific sufficiency of scripture and justification by faith alone, and their repudiation of purgatory and church infallibility, made them less problematic for evangelical and Protestant high church than for catholicising Anglicans. They might be seen to immortalise a Protestant achievement. John Charles Ryle, a moderate Calvinist, future bishop of Liverpool and popular author, sounded 'the trumpet of ecclesiastical history' in their defence before the Derby Church Association in 1878.[595] The old orthodox canon of Westminster and future bishop of Lincoln, Christopher Wordsworth, esteemed the Articles as the fruit of the Holy Spirit and purified by 'the fires of martyrdom'; their fundamental principle, he thought, was the supremacy of scripture as the rule of faith.[596]

In the earlier days of the Oxford Movement, before the rupturing of their common stand on 'church principles', high churchmen began to place a distinct, potentially subversive emphasis on the Articles as an expression of church authority, and as the guarantor of the orthodox character of the university. Oxford's Bampton Lecturer for 1833, Renn Dickson Hampden, played an important role in precipitating this change of tone. Published as *The Scholastic Philosophy in its Relation to Christian Theology*, Hampden argued in his lectures that 'church-creeds and Articles' were 'records of Opinions' and hence not immutable, though he was careful to insist that he did not believe that any modification of them was in

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[594] T. Chalmers, *Christian Union. Address of the Rev. Dr. Chalmers at the bicentenary commemoration of the Westminster Assembly, July 13, 1843* (London, 1843).
[595] J.C. Ryle, *Church principles and church comprehensiveness. Being two papers: one read at Derby Church Association, conference, and the other at Sheffield Congress, in 1878* (London, 1879), pp. 13-14.
[596] C. Wordsworth, *The two tercentenaries: the thirty-nine Articles and the Council of Trent. A sermon, preached in Westminister Abbey, on Sunday, December 13, 1863* (London, 1863), pp. 5-6.

fact required.[597] Hampden soon applied his alarming stance in support of the separately offensive rising clamour to admit Nonconformists to academic degrees, thus completing the preconditions for the vociferous high church opposition to Melbourne's whiggishly anticlerical decision to appoint him as Regius Professor of Divinity in 1836.[598] In this disturbing climate, divines caught in the whirlpool of Tractarianism began to argue that with the Articles stood or fell every principle of dogmatic authority. Suddenly assailed on what seemed to be every side, they were disinclined to press historically-minded distinctions between the claims of the Articles to whole-hearted obedience, and those of the Nicene or Athanasian creeds.[599]

High churchmen's belligerent commitment to the Articles' authority soon grated against the catholicising direction of the Oxford Movement. As early as 1835 Newman had come privately to dislike the Articles. But his peculiarly egotistical kind of self-abasement in the face of authority compelled him to uphold them, on the grounds that they witnessed 'to the principle that religion is to be approached with a submission of the understanding'.[600] Newman's 1841 *Tract 90* pushed the Movement towards its denouement by venturing to argue that the literal sense of the Articles – to which the doctrinal historian Newman, for his current purpose, made history irrelevant - was opposed to 'Romish' error, but not to Tridentine teaching.[601] To a later generation of high churchmen, a pious form of historical relativism, as opposed to Newman's logical ingenuity, was to be the preferred mode of

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[597] R.D. Hampden, *The scholastic philosophy considered in its relation to Christian theology, in a course of lectures delivered before the University of Oxford in the year MDCCCXXXII* (Oxford, 1833), p. 381.
[598] H.C.G. Matthew, 'Noetics, Tractarians, and the reform of the University of Oxford in the nineteenth century', in *History of Universities*, 9 (1990), pp. 195-225; R. Brent, 'Hampden, Renn Dickson (1793-1868)', *ODNB*. Hampden withdrew from public controversy thereafter, and accepted Russell's offer of the diocese of Hereford in 1847. At one of his most Gibbonian moments, Milman regretted that Hampden, rather than fulfil his promise to be 'the English historian of this remarkable chapter in the history of the human mind', had 'sunk into a quiet bishop': *HLC*, vi, 435-436 note a.
[599] W. Palmer [of Magdalen], *A letter to the Rev. Dr. Hampden, Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford* (Oxford, 1842), pp. 18-19.
[600] J.H. Newman, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman. Vol v. Liberalism in Oxford. January 1835 to December 1835*, ed. T. Gornall (Oxford, 1981), pp. 70, 196.
[601] Nockles, *Oxford Movement in context*, pp. 136-142.

dispelling the Articles' constraints. A comparable movement was also to percolate through those Scottish churches where, in the 1840s and 1850s, the strongest defenders of Reformation-era dogmatism had been found.

By supporting or denouncing the sixteenth-century religious revolution, revivalists hoped that they would either restore or reverse it. In this aspiration they were disappointed. They were not, however, without success in their more restrained desire to encourage greater familiarity with the principles and personalities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By 1845, the Reformation and its defenders conventionally featured in Victorian rhetoric. Luther and Calvin, Tyndale and Knox, were living and familiar personalities once more. Evangelical theology, and Biblicist conviction, now seemed rooted in concrete historical conflicts and triumphs. Protestant tradition, thus understood, provided a stable resting-point for some; but not to all. Critics who believed that Christian credibility would suffer for as long as the religion was made dependent on an infallible bible, and associated with the abasement instead of the enhancement of mankind's innate moral and reasoning capacities, could not rest content with evangelical constructions of the Protestant tradition. In the historicist climate of Victorian argument, liberal critics developed progressive interpretations of Protestant history which, they hoped, would harmonise Protestant Christianity with the free movement of criticism.

II) History, dogma, and Protestant liberty

Liberal critics, determined to modernise Victorian Protestantism, had to confront the Reformation and its legacy. They saw in the movements of Protestant history the origins, legitimation and even the eventual issue of their favoured departures from forms of religious

conservatism which also claimed the authority of that history. John Tulloch gave especially reflexive articulation to the idea, which became very widespread, that intellectual and moral principles might be extracted from the Reformation in order to criticise and displace the outworn if temporarily needful forms which Reformation Protestantism had historically taken. Protestant dogmatism, on this reading, was more a misplaced remnant of Latin Christianity than intrinsic to Protestantism. Critics of Reformation-era creeds sometimes made the negative argument that they embodied a phase of religion that lay wholly in the past. The more positive idea that Protestantism, rooted in the past yet open to the future, had both given birth to and placed reverent limits around modern freedom, also became the common currency of attempts to elevate religious culture, popularise biblical criticism and modify the churches' adherence to Reformation-era creeds. Frederic William Farrar, Thomas Martin Lindsay and many pamphlets, books and speeches prompted by the Thirty-Nine Articles and Westminster Confession sought to relativise evangelical traditionalism, whilst firmly upholding alternative readings of what the Protestant tradition involved. Even high Anglicans, often suspicious of historical progressivism in certain contexts, found reasons to deploy it on the Thirty-Nine Articles upon which they had once set their colours. As the absoluteness of the Reformation came into question across Britain, both more liberal and more conservative thinkers began to search for shared religious fundamentals which, it was hoped, history would vindicate rather than subvert.

John Tulloch made the enlightenment of his fellow-Presbyterians, and British Protestants more generally, through historical reassessment an integral part of his public duties after his appointment as principal and primarius professor of theology at St Mary's College, St Andrews, in 1854. As will be seen, in later life Tulloch's primary argumentative target shifted from evangelical traditionalism to rising secularism; but he never gave up his efforts

to prise authentic Protestantism free from traditionalism.[602] His inaugural lecture on 'theological tendencies of the age', delivered in November 1854, set out the main lines of the argumentative aims which his subsequent historical writings faithfully subserved. The traditionalist tendency, evident in anti-Catholic Protestants as much as in Anglo-Catholics, maintained that truth was to be referred to 'some outward authoritative expression … *in reference to which the right of private judgment is not to be exercised*.' Although it was important to respect the past, Tulloch continued, to attempt to bar the reason from criticising its theological productions rendered religion helpless in the face of 'the seductions of Popery and the assaults of Infidelity.'[603] 'Rationalism' was equally dangerous. In the more recent, *'intuitional'* form of rationalism, which Tulloch especially associated with Schleiermacher, the present Christian consciousness was made the supreme test of religious truth.[604] The correct view of the formation of religious opinion, he concluded, was that it should emerge from the application of the variable, subjective element of criticism, in the recognition that it should always be subordinate to the objective authority of scripture.[605] Tulloch counted it the great failure of traditional Protestantism, represented locally by the early Free Church, that it failed to recognise the subjective nature of the sense in which it construed the objective fact.[606]

Tulloch's understanding of the positive function of criticism led him to place his confidence in the interpretative power of a complex historical method in which he characteristically traced the interactions between religious thought, character, and spiritual progress. He chiefly applied it not to the bible itself, but to the fructifications of religious thought which lay between the apostolic period and the nineteenth century, and especially to the history of

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[602] See chapter five below.
[603] J. Tulloch, *Theological tendencies of the age: an inaugural lecture, delivered at the opening of St. Mary's College on Tuesday, the 28th November 1854* (Edinburgh, 1855), pp. 5-12
[604] Ibid., pp. 20-27.
[605] Ibid., pp. 28-31.
[606] J. Tulloch, 'Dean Stanley and the Scotch "Moderates"', *CR*, 20 (June, 1872), p. 717.

Protestantism.[607] Tulloch held that history, thus understood, both witnessed to the intrinsic truth of the Christian religion, and furnished a critical principle by which the essence of Protestantism might be freed from the incredible, scholastic accretions that had hardened around its historical manifestations. Two sources appear to have been formative in leading Tulloch towards this outlook. He admired Augustus Neander for his capacity to exhibit the universal, leavening power of Christianity in successive, even opposed individual forms of culture, whilst avoiding Schleiermacher's excessive psychological subjectivism by cleaving to the objective, redemptive efficacy of revelation.[608] Tulloch's construal of ecclesiastical doctrines as living thought may have had a Coleridgean beginning; he credited Coleridge with focusing minds on 'the transcendental element in all Christian dogma'.[609] These influences combined to make the history of religious movements significant to Tulloch insofar as their peculiar theologies and personalities vivified fundamental principles, which were then taken up and further purified in later stages of growth. 'Deeper intelligence', Tulloch wrote in an 1877 essay in the *Contemporary Review* on the progress of Scottish theology, 'sees through the decay of systems the onward working of principles destined to better and more comprehensive constructions in the future.'[610] As he was to affirm in his study of nineteenth-century *Movements of Religious Thought*, published in 1885, 'I believe in the continuous movement of the Divine Spirit enlarging, correcting, and modifying human opinion.'[611]

Tulloch brought these perspectives to bear on Reformation history in his 1859 study of the *Leaders of the Reformation*. In this text, Tulloch drew out the right relationship between past

[607] Tulloch popularised the results of biblical criticism in order to vindicate the historicity of the New Testament narratives, but he was not himself an original exegete: idem, *The Christ of the gospels and the Christ of modern criticism: lectures on M. Renan's 'Vie de Jésus'* (London, 1864); idem, *Beginning life. A book for young men*, revised edn (London, 1882), pp. 46-123.
[608] [Idem], 'Augustus Neander', *BQR*, 24 (November, 1850), pp. 297-337; cf. A. Neander's programmatic announcement in his *Allgemeine Geschichte*, i, 1. On Neander and his wider appeal, see chapter one above.
[609] J. Tulloch, 'On dogma and dogmatic Christianity', *CR*, 23 (December, 1873), p. 924.
[610] Idem, 'Progress of religious thought in Scotland', p. 536.
[611] Idem, *Movements of religious thought*, p. 4.

and present Protestantism by threading progressive lines of spiritual development through a succession of Protestant actors. He lifted out and universalised what he regarded as their praiseworthy ideas; whilst he localised and dismissed their overly dogmatic or scholastic stances as products of lingering medievalism or personal crotchetiness. In keeping with his dislike of scholastic formalism, Tulloch redefined Martin Luther's principle of justification by faith alone in a 'more general and ethical form of expression' as 'the principle of *moral individualism*'.[612] This was the ground spring of Protestantism, in the past as in the present. Tulloch thought it unavoidable and right that in course of time this principle should have come to encompass the individual's right privately to judge and interpret the bible: a right that hard-line revivalists were careful to construe as the right of responsible individuals to refer everything to God's word.[613] But Luther's belief in a personal devil was 'medieval', and his reaction against the Catholic religion of works led him unduly to deprecate the importance of moral conduct.[614]

Tulloch applied the same treatment – lifting up progressive principles, and demoting unsightly dogmas – to Luther's successors. Where Luther had proclaimed the principles of the Reformation, it was left to Calvin systematically to convert them into a form of ecclesiastical polity. Whilst Calvin's disciplinary and dogmatic systems had formed the strong rocks necessary to break the Jesuitical reaction, their externality and presumed absolutism gave them more a medieval than a truly Protestant colouring. Henry Longueville Mansel's Bampton Lectures, Tulloch added, had recently shown the futility of the logical dialecticism in theology which Calvin had practised, although Mansel was wrong to conclude that believers should therefore place their trust in traditional authority rather than in the spiritual simplicity of scripture. And while it was true that the kingdom of righteousness must

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[612] Idem, *Luther and other leaders of the Reformation*, 3rd edn (Edinburgh and London, 1883), p. 163; first edition 1859.
[613] Ibid., pp. 170-171; cf. William Cunningham's review of the work: 'Leaders of the reformation', p. 4.
[614] Tulloch, *Leaders of the Reformation*, p. 144.

take some outward shape, scripture had predetermined no particular outward form of religious polity. Rather – and here Tulloch sounded a Coleridgean note against Presbyterian sectaries – the Christian idea had to work itself free from Judaical elements, and the divine society take shape according to the development of Christian reason in history, moulded by the inner bonds between believers.[615] By reconceptualising Protestant history, Tulloch both offered a progressive justification for loyal departures from Reformation religion, as well as – he hoped – a means of harmonising such freedom with biblical authority and the divine rules unveiled by conscience.

Historically-articulated conceptions of Protestant freedom, elevating conscience in the interpretation of revelation and doctrine, soon became central to reformist rhetoric in late-Victorian debates over the status of the bible and Reformation-era creeds. Critics who aimed to reconcile their fellow-believers to the historical criticism of scripture often represented the enterprise as a freedom won, and a duty imposed, by the Reformation. Frederic William Farrar, former headmaster of Marlborough, a canon of Westminster and future dean of Canterbury, made this argument in the *History of Interpretation* he expounded as Oxford's Bampton Lecturer for 1885.[616] He had already courted controversy through his denial of eternal punishment in an earlier course of sermons, published as *Eternal Hope* in 1878.[617] The idea of continuing in this boldly liberal line, by exploring how past and present theological misconceptions derived from historically locatable misunderstandings of the bible, may have been first suggested to him by Benjamin Jowett's call for a history of

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[615] Ibid., pp. 255-271; cf. Tulloch's Coleridge-inflected defence of Establishment: J. Tulloch, 'The ideal of the church', reprinted in his *Sundays at Balmoral. Sermons preached before her majesty the Queen in Scotland*, ed. W.W. Tulloch (London, 1887), pp. 198-223.

[616] Farrar, *History of interpretation.*

[617] G. Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians. A study of the nineteenth-century controversies concerning eternal punishment and the future life* (Oxford, 1974), pp. [139]-152; N. Vance, 'Farrar, Frederic William (1831-1903), *ODNB*.

interpretation in his contribution to *Essays and Reviews* in 1860.[618] The Reformers, Farrar argued, showed the 'effeminate pusillanimity' of blindly trusting in authority on questions of scriptural meaning, as on other points of religion: a lesson as pertinent to the nineteenth century as to the sixteenth. Although Luther and Calvin were imperfect exegetes, especially because of their inability to distinguish between the weighting properly assignable to different phases of biblical development, Farrar regarded them, in an explicitly Fichtean sense, as gifted men and mediators of the divine spirit. So too were their nineteenth-century successors.[619] Farrar had made a similar point the previous year, in a series of essays published in 1884 in *The Expositor*, an exegetical journal which included John Tulloch and George Matheson on its staff.[620]

It was not only progressive critics of the historical course taken by the Reformation who argued in this way. The young Thomas Martin Lindsay, before he became well-known as a Reformation historian, had made a similar argument in the *Contemporary Review* for 1878 in support of William Robertson Smith, the Free Church professor of Hebrew who was facing prosecution by the Aberdeen General Assembly for heresies including his denials of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the historicity of Deuteronomy.[621] Modern biblical scholars, as the sixteenth-century Reformers had accomplished for their own age, were in Lindsay's view obliged to challenge both Arnoldian paganism and Manningite dogmatism by resolving 'the Bible into scene after scene of fellowship and communion with God.'[622] The theology of the Reformation, Lindsay insisted, both mandated scriptural investigation, and was corroborated by it. His later histories of the Reformation were to carry a similar moral,

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[618] B. Jowett, 'On the interpretation of scripture', reprinted in his *The interpretation of scripture and other essays* (London and New York, [1906]), pp. 7-9; Farrar dedicated his Bampton Lectures to Jowett.
[619] Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, pp. 307-354 and esp. 329-330, 353 and n., 354.
[620] Idem, 'The reformers as expositors. II. Luther', and 'Calvin as an expositor', *The Expositor*, 7 (1884), pp. 214-229, 426-444.
[621] Drummond and Bulloch, *Late Victorian Scotland*, pp. 44-76. Robertson Smith was deposed from his chair in 1881.
[622] T.M. Lindsay, 'The critical movement in the Free Church of Scotland', *CR*, 33 (August, 1878), pp. 22-25.

which was implicitly critical of the self-sufficient Renaissance spirit with which some liberals were by then trying to criticise historic Protestantism.

Changing understandings of the bible joined other theological fashions, including growing moral unease with the doctrines of original sin, predestination and eternal punishment, in causing growing disquiet at the churches' professions of faith in what were increasingly understood to be doctrines that belonged to the Reformation period.[623] In both England and Scotland after 1860, churches bound to Reformation-era standards modified the terms on which their clergy subscribed to them. The Clerical Subscription Act of 1865 replaced the complex and narrow earlier formulae of Anglican clerical subscription with a more general, and ambiguous, declaration of endorsement.[624] The Scottish free churches likewise formally resolved to make their adherence to the Westminster Confession more capacious, as defenders of the Established church developed and justified their own more traditionally relaxed attitude towards it. In 1879, after years of debate, the United Presbyterian Church modified its subscription to the Confession by declaring that it did not exclude more uplifting doctrines, such as the free offer of salvation to all and the operation of the Holy Spirit in fallen man.[625] The General Assembly of the Free Church approved a similar measure in 1889.[626] The perception that Reformation-era standards were constrained by the periods that had given rise to them, and that the inner principles of the Reformation might themselves justify departure from the external, often scholastic and 'medievalist' form the Reformation had in fact taken, recurred during the public debates surrounding English and Scottish confessions of faith.

Pamphleteers and orators often historicised the creeds, in different ways, in order to prepare the way for these changes, and to reconcile others to them. James Stark, a member of the

[623] For a general account of controversies surrounding eternal punishment, see Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians*.
[624] O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (2 vols, London, 1966-1970), ii, 132-133.
[625] Drummond and Bulloch, *Late Victorian Scotland*, pp. 29-38.
[626] Ibid., pp. 262-273.

Church of Scotland though not a minister, urged substantial revision of the Westminster Confession in the 1860s in these terms. The Confession was, he believed, the product of a group of men who lacked modern critical knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages; and it should be revised to give relatively greater importance to the New than to the Old Testament. 'The Calvinistic Theology' it enshrined was 'just that Metaphysical or Philosophical method of interpreting the Scriptures which prevailed from the Third Century onwards through all the dark Ages'.[627] More widely heard than calls for the revision of the Confession, and ultimately more successful, was the argument that the creed, when set in its historical context, need not commit those who valued it to the severe or credulous theology which its enemies and more ferocious adherents ascribed to it, perhaps unfairly. Addressing the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1878, Tulloch claimed that the Confession approved by the Westminster Assembly substantially represented the 'large and liberal' confession of John Knox, and so by extension the common doctrine of all reformed churches. 'It was in this large historical spirit, and not in any rigorous and mere rigid temper, that our national Presbyterianism adopted the Westminster Confession.' The way to resolve the problems it posed for churchmen in the present was therefore to accept it in an historical spirit – which was indistinguishable for Tulloch from a progressive Christian spirit - and make official declarations to this effect, not reject it or to rewrite its defective or excessive parts 'according to modern fashion.'[628]

Similar attitudes spread from the Established church to the free churches as the century wore on. Robert Mackintosh, born into a Free Church family in 1858 and soon to become a Congregationalist out of opposition to Calvinism, provided an extremer instance of the

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[627] J. Stark, *The Westminster Confession of Faith critically compared with the Holy Scriptures and found wanting; or, a new exposition of the doctrines of the Christian Religion, in harmony with the Word of God, and not at variance with modern science* (London, 1863), [iii]-v.

[628] J. Tulloch, *Position and prospects of the Church of Scotland. Address delivered at the close of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. June 3, 1878* (Edinburgh and London, 1878), pp. 30-34.

growing Free Church dissatisfaction with the theology of 1843 in a paper he published in 1888.[629] Here Mackintosh called not for immediate revision, but for a formula of only 'general adherence', which made it clear that, in the future, new towers were to be raised atop the old foundations.[630] Like so many of the theologians of the later century, Mackintosh believed that the scholastic presumption in favour of logical syllogism, inherited from the middle ages by the Westminster Divines, subtly changed the purport of that spiritual truth to which it was applied. Rather than logic determine the controlling truth, he thought, scriptural truth should control the logic.[631] Thus the Westminster Divines, constrained by a partial medieval idea of God as the administrator of a legal system, drew up an elaborate mechanism for the forensic operation of grace.[632] Mackintosh held, with Stark, that the architects' belief that scripture was 'not manifold, but one' – the precondition of their doctrinal symmetrising across the Old and New Testaments – had been discredited by the subsequent growth of the historical sense.[633] The bible, itself an evolution, did indeed speak of election, but also of probation and moral freedom. The argument that the Confession was not truly Protestant, but coloured by medieval scholastic survivals, was one instance of broader liberal complaints about the nature of Protestant traditionalism. Liberal Protestant argument reflected definite historical self-positioning, in which they often claimed to keep more faithfully to the essence of the Reformation than their evangelical opponents did.

Liberal Anglican critics of the Thirty-Nine Articles deployed similar kinds of historical rhetoric. They often argued that the Thirty-Nine Articles expressed outmoded sectarianism. Milman and Stanley, in keeping with their relative unconcern with the growth of religious consciousness, both publicly came out in favour of abolishing clerical subscription to the

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[629] A.P.F. Sell, 'Mackintosh, Robert (1858-1933)', *ODNB*.
[630] R. Mackintosh, *The Obsoleteness of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow, 1888), pp. 59-60.
[631] Ibid., p. 5.
[632] Ibid., pp. 11-14.
[633] Ibid., pp. 46-54.

Articles in the debates preceding the 1865 amendment; but they did not seek to invest them with any compensatory symbolic importance.[634] Benjamin Jowett, similarly, wrote privately of the impossibility of enforcing agreement on points upon which none could really agree, and of the absurdity of supposing English belief to have been definitively settled by the 'compromises and accidents' of the sixteenth century.[635] Lord John Russell, though he adopted a 'large and friendly view of the Reformation' in his retirement *Essays on the Rise and Progress of the Christian Religion*, also chafed at the Articles.[636] He held that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council's power of interpreting them afforded the only security that 'the spirit of Laud or the spirit of John Knox shall not indulge itself in prohibitions and exclusions, banishing from the Church such men as Clarke, Middleton, and Hampden'.[637] The Privy Council had not quite lived up to Russell's idea of it in 1871, when it deprived the controversial preacher Charles Voysey of his Anglican living on the grounds that the views he expressed in his best-selling sermons, including the denial of Christ's divinity and saving atonement, were contrary to the Articles. Voysey, who conducted his own defence, alluded to Milman's concluding words in his *HLC* on the ultimate destiny of Teutonic Christianity: 'the words of Christ, and His words alone (the primal indefeasible truths of Christianity), shall not pass away'.[638] Though the Articles were supposed to have lost their relevance, the principles of the Reformation had not.

It was not only those who desired to make the Church of England more doctrinally comprehensive who rhetorically localised the Articles in a bygone age. As the early Victorian crises passed away and as the revival of Catholic theology and ritual in the Church of England continued, high churchmen found themselves at once less urgently committed to the

[634] Witheridge, *Excellent Dr Stanley*, pp. 276-277; A. Milman, *Milman*, pp. 244-247.
[635] P. Hinchliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian religion* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 63-64; B. Jowett, *Letters of Benjamin Jowett, M.A. Master of Balliol College, Oxford*, ed. E. Abbott and L. Campbell (London, 1899), pp. 4-6, 41-42.
[636] Russell, *Essays*, vi-vii.
[637] Ibid., pp. 278-279.
[638] Quoted in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 20 November 1870, p. 6.

Articles and more discontented with them. Historicism of the kind which Hampden had once been hounded for promoting thus crept into high church treatments of the Articles in the later part of the century. John Henry Blunt's account of the history of the English Reformation praised the Ten Articles of the orthodox, Henrician Reformation. But the framers of later versions, ending with the Articles of 1563, had pared them down with 'Continental Protestantism' and the desire to 'conciliate dissenters'.[639] Richard William Church, relating the controversy over *Tract 90* fifty years afterwards, commented that the Articles did not pose a problem if read as a broad and loosely-worded condemnation of an antagonistic, Roman system. 'But take them as scientific and accurate and precise enunciations of a systematic theology, and difficulties begin at once, with every one who does not hold the special and well-marked doctrines of the age when the German and Swiss authorities ruled supreme.'[640] Dynamically conservative, as well as liberalising imperatives thus contrived to reduce the hold of the Reformation-era intellectual settlement in Anglican circles.

As the hold of Reformation-era creeds in both England and Scotland became less intense, it became necessary to find alternative sources of authority in history. The reinvigoration of the early creeds analysed in chapter two often became the counterpoint to the relative marginalisation of Reformation-era standards. Beresford James Kidd, in his 1899 exposition of the Articles for the *Oxford Church Text Books* series, argued that they were susceptible of Catholic senses, but stressed the distinction between the Articles and the earlier formularies. The creeds were spontaneous and anonymous growths; the Articles were made. The creeds were 'theological' and 'historical', preserving doctrines only as far as they were bound up with the acts and nature of Christ; the Articles were 'anthropological' and 'controversial'.[641] Robert Rainy had made a comparable distinction between the early creeds and the

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[639] J.H. Blunt, *The Reformation of the Church of England. Its history, principles and results [A.D. 1514-1547]*, 2nd edn (London, Oxford and Cambridge, 1869), pp. 444-447.
[640] Church, *Oxford Movement*, pp. 250-251.
[641] B.J. Kidd, *The Thirty-nine Articles. Their History and Explanation* (2 vols, London, 1899), i, 1-7.

Westminster Confession in the Cunningham Lectures he delivered to the Edinburgh New College in 1874. He concluded his series by suggesting that the Confession, for historical reasons, involved its adherents in positions to which the universal church was not committed; and that Free Churchmen would eventually have to confront this fact.[642] He was later to be instrumental in securing the modification of the Free Church's adherence to the Westminster standards.[643] Even Milman had favoured continuing subscription to the Book of Common Prayer, on the grounds that this also involved subscription to the catholic creeds.[644] Tulloch, for his part, was led through the contests with anti-theological thinkers of his later life to locate the essence of religion not in any historically-fluctuating formula, but in the spiritual consciousness universal to human historical experience.[645]

Developmental conceptions of Protestant history offered ways of justifying departures from Reformation-era doctrines. Such changes were either legitimised negatively, as representing the clearing away of systems whose intellectual rationale lay wholly in the past, or more positively, as legitimised by Protestant tradition. Initially the province of determinedly liberal critics, these ideas spread to a broader constituency in the later part of the century. For all the senses in which this form of liberal historicism acted to challenge evangelical typologies, there were ways in which the agendas of liberal and conservative Protestant writers intersected. It was common for both to assume that modern intellectual and spiritual life had, in important if contrasting ways, begun at the Reformation. They also believed that biblical faith and individual responsibility towards a personal creator were normative and beneficial facets of the modern mind. Liberal historians such as Tulloch were conservative in the sense that they wrote history in order, in part, to protect this idea. Meanwhile, a newer fashion for

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[642] R. Rainy, *Delivery and development of Christian doctrine. The fifth series of Cunningham Lectures* (Edinburgh, 1874), pp. 235-286.
[643] H.C.G. Matthew, 'Rainy, Robert (1826-1906), *ODNB*.
[644] A. Milman, *Milman*, pp. 244-247.
[645] See chapter five below.

extolling the Renaissance – often a historically-articulated code for expressing a broader complex of irreligious ideas – posed a serious challenge to this understanding of modern individuality.

III) Renaissance, Reformation and Protestant origins

While British Protestants were hesitantly and controversially internalising bolder notions of the liberty won for them by the Reformation, an alternative and potentially secularised understanding of the origins of modern freedom and progressive culture was taking shape. For those deeply discontented with the power of evangelical religion, and the legacies of puritanism in British life, the Renaissance as both an historic event and a present ideal was slowly forming in the British imagination. British writers first began to treat the Renaissance as an integrated, epoch-making historical movement in the 1860s and 1870s. The term 'Renaissance' had been used earlier, to describe a classicising style of art, architecture and design. But the sexually and religiously heterodox Oxford aesthete Walter Pater was conscious of imparting something new when he wrote in his 1873 *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* that the word 'is now generally used to denote … a whole complex movement of which that revival of classical antiquity was but one element or symptom.'[646] Enthusiasts for the Renaissance began to write of it as the cradle of the supposedly 'modern' spirit of humanity, creativity and fleshly release, with roots stretching back to the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries. They often did so under the influence of Jacob Burckhardt. Burckhardt interpreted the Renaissance's swing towards secular modernity through a conception of history newly freed from metaphysics and theology; debate over the

[646] 'Renaissance, n.', *OED*.

Renaissance presupposed disagreements over the correct framework within which to interpret human history as a whole. Depending on the position thus adopted, the Reformation could appear, by comparison, to be a backward-looking obstacle to progress, or else an epiphenomenal result of a more fundamental transition.

This presented a problem to religious apologists. Where evangelicals had located the origins of the Reformation in the outpouring of divine grace, liberal Protestants and thinkers open to Idealism now sought to depict the Reformation and the Renaissance as two sides of a shared spiritual movement. Different inflections of this mode of harmonising religion with human autonomy and self-culture appealed not solely to advanced thinkers such as the Unitarian historian Charles Beard and the Church of Scotland Hegelian, George Matheson, but also to the high churchman Mandell Creighton. Late-century evangelicals responded coolly; but even they began to define Protestantism's contribution to history in more humane and ethicised terms than had once been popular. Secularising critics such as Karl Pearson and Mark Pattison rejected any equivalency between the Reformation and the Renaissance for a different reason, preferring polemically to stress the separation between ossified Protestantism and the progressive intellectual culture which the Renaissance had made possible. But the self-sufficiency they ascribed to Renaissance values made them unusual even among the religiously de-converted. George Eliot thought Renaissance principles flimsy as a basis for ethical commitment; and many others affirmed, often casting a disapproving glance at Matthew Arnold, that progress could not proceed from criticism and artistic exploration without the grit provided by earnest religion.[647] Even John Addington Symonds, one of the chief popularisers of Renaissance history to late-Victorian audiences, tried to locate it within a higher movement of spirit that kept space for Protestantism.

[647] Cf. [H. Sidgwick], 'The prophet of culture', *MM*, 16:94 (August, 1867), pp. 271-280.

Writing to a friend on the subject of the Renaissance in 1885, Symonds declared that this 'period of history has only been defined during the last twenty-five years, and its importance recognized.'[648] He was almost certainly alluding to Jacob Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, which had been published in 1860. It was this work, more than any other, which first brought international recognition to the Basel professor and pioneering cultural historian.[649] Burckhardt became a frequently-cited author in late-century British accounts of the Renaissance; and while they often echoed his idea of its cultural unity, Victorian critics were notably more anxious to understand the Renaissance within a conception of history that did not cast off history's spiritual moorings. The Renaissance, in Burckhardt's account, was that period of Italian history, running from the end of the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century, during which the veil of medieval faith was lifted from human eyes and the dreams which had bound mankind into a corporate life of guild and church dispelled.

> It was first in Italy that this veil was blown away into the air; there awoke *objective* observation and treatment of the state and all the things of this world in general; but besides that, the *subjective* arose in all its power; man became a spiritual *individual* and recognised himself as such.[650]

A Basel patriot and sometime pupil of Ranke who grew disillusioned with the hieratical Berlin professor, Burckhardt did not idolise the Renaissance. His analysis of the naked power politics of the Italian principalities, removed from all traditional restraints, and of the uninhibited egotism which underlay so many undeniable architectural and artistic masterpieces, told of his civilised distaste for the Prussian military state and democratising,

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[648] J.A. Symonds to H.F. Brown, 26 June 1885, printed in H.M. Schueller and R.L. Peters (eds), *The letters of John Addington Symonds* (3 vols, Detroit, 1967-1969), iii, 60.
[649] L. Gossman, *Basel in the age of Burckhardt. A study in unseasonable ideas* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 239-240. The first English translation was published in 1878: J. Burckhardt, *The civilisation of the period of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (2 vols, London, 1878).
[650] Burckhardt, *Kultur der Renaissance*, p. 134 (Burckhardt's emphasis).

commercialist liberalism.[651] Burckhardt's approach to the Renaissance also recorded his quiet but thorough rejection of theology as an appropriate framework for historical analysis. Initially a student of theology, Burckhardt's transition to history in 1839 expressed not simply a change of specialisation, but his stoical, unsensational withdrawal from the orthodox Protestant world-view of his childhood.[652] This fructified into a new historical *Sinn*, of great significance in the longer-term development of *Historismus*. For Burckhardt, there was no transcendent spirit or world-plan which spoke through distinctive historical epochs, as there was for Ranke and his acolytes. So far as the historian was concerned, there were only concrete historical totalities, or cultures. Burckhardt's own route to rejecting metaphysical readings of history in favour of *Kulturgeschichte* was a peculiarly Germanic one. But it was to find analogies in British debates over how to interpret the moment at which, it seemed to more and more, the modern spirit had been born.

For one of the early British students of *Kulturgeschichte*, Karl Pearson, the answer to this problem was relatively uncomplicated. Pearson was to become famous in later life for his statistical work and eugenicist scientism. But led on by his early rejection of conventional religion, and growing socialist sympathies which made him regret the passing of medieval Catholic social solidarity, he devoted much time to ecclesiastical history in the 1880s. In these writings, dogmatic Protestantism became a comprehensively destructive aberration from the Renaissance, whose paths Pearson thought Europe should have followed at the sixteenth-century juncture in its history. Whilst his disparagement of individualistic Protestantism drew heavily on German depictions of medieval Catholicism as a flourishing social whole, the second part of his argument – that Protestantism had inhibited enlightened

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[651] H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'Jacob Burckhardt', in his *History and the enlightenment*, pp. [246]-265; Gossman, *Basel in the age of Burckhardt*, pp. 259-290.
[652] T.A. Howard, *Religion and the rise of historicism. W.M.L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the theological origins of nineteenth-century historical consciousness* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 110-136; Gossman, *Basel in the age of Burckhardt*, pp. 210-213.

humanism from running its course – reflected more his own highly public rejection of orthodox religion. During his undergraduate years at King's College, Cambridge from 1875 to 1879, Pearson had rebelled against compulsory attendance at chapel and divinity lectures: a statement that precipitated the abolition of the system in 1878.[653] His motivation for doing so lay more in his objections to religious hypocrisy than his commitment to science, which then lay in the future. His formulated alternative to Christianity, akin to Mark Pattison's and Matthew Arnold's, was a personal religion of the intellect formed from reading Spinoza and German philosophy, an attitude which acquired fuller theoretical shape in the time he spent studying at Berlin and Heidelberg after leaving Cambridge.[654]

Pearson's experience of religious disenchantment, and his reading of German cultural historians - especially the Catholic Johannes Janssen - informed two subversive essays on the Renaissance and Reformation in Germany.[655] Published in the radical *Westminster Review* in 1883 and 1884, at which time evangelicals around the world were celebrating the four-hundredth birthday of Martin Luther, Pearson's essays argued that the birth of the modern spirit preceded Luther, and had only been stymied by him. His first essay explored the promise of the Renaissance. The rediscovery of Greek learning by 'the so-called *Humanists*' – a construction recording the deliberately innovative character of ideas that have since come to seem conventional – enabled philosophy to work itself free from service to ecclesiastical dogma. This process was significant not for how it cleared the way for Protestantism, but for making possible wholly secular sources of value. 'For the first time in the history of culture, Hebraism and Hellenism will step out as conflicting truths', Pearson wrote, alluding to Arnold.[656] The foundation and reform of universities in Germany in the century preceding the

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[653] J. Woiak, 'Pearson, Karl [*formerly* Carl] (1857-1936)', *ODNB*.
[654] On Pearson's early life, see T.M. Porter, *Karl Pearson. The scientific life in a statistical age* (Princeton and Oxford, 2004), pp. 1-66.
[655] Ibid., pp. 96-105. University College London (Karl Pearson papers), Pearson 3/1/1/6; Pearson 3/1/3/17, 1-5.
[656] [K. Pearson], 'Humanism in Germany', *WR*, 119:236 (April, 1883), pp. 315-318

Reformation, by encouraging Greek and historical learning, spread a culture that 'must ultimately oppose a theology which had ceased to keep pace with the progress of thought'.[657] The unconventional lives of the German humanists, roving from university to university between drinking bouts and military service, expressed a temperamental gaiety altogether at variance with medieval asceticism.[658]

This revival of humanity, Pearson continued in his 1884 second instalment, was crushed by the Lutheran Reformation. Writing in the aftermath of the November 1883 commemorations, Pearson complained, with hints of speculative anthropology, that Luther's admirers invested the founder of their 'phase of religion' with 'legendary perfection'.[659] Disclaiming redundant 'theological discussion', he challenged those who insisted that modern freedom began at the Reformation by examining its effects on the intellectual and material welfare of Germany.[660] Pearson speculated that, had Reuchlin and Erasmus been allowed to reform the Catholic Church slowly, it might by the nineteenth century have become 'the universal instrument of moral progress and mental culture', counting Huxley and Arnold among its members.[661] But it was not to be. Pearson argued that intellectual and artistic activity disappeared from Germany as Lutheranism spread.[662] Humanists placed their faith in the slow education of the universal church by reason. For Luther, reason was the arch-enemy of faith; Pearson was especially caustic about his belief in the personal activity of the devil.[663] Not only was Luther uncultivated, but also demonstrably immoral: his invectives against the Jews animated contemporary German anti-Semitism.[664] Citing Döllinger, Pearson maintained that the religious conflict Luther unleashed caused schools and universities, invigorated by the

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[657] Ibid., p. 326.
[658] Ibid., pp. 331-332.
[659] [K. Pearson], 'Martin Luther: his influence on the material and intellectual welfare of Germany', *WR*, 121:241 (January, 1884), p. [1]
[660] Ibid., p. 3
[661] Ibid., p. 6.
[662] Ibid., pp. 5, 22 and n.
[663] Ibid., p. 16.
[664] Ibid., p. 19.

humanists, to fall into decay.[665] Echoing the anti-Lutheran tropes of Catholic polemicists, Pearson also claimed that the Reformation enriched the German princes at the expense of the people; and despite his professed aversion to theology, insisted that the doctrine of justification by faith alone sanctified moral selfishness.[666] It followed from the historical destructiveness of Protestantism that no future progress would come from it. The future lay with Erasmian 'rational reform' and 'the gradual influence of education'.[667]

Pearson more than once invoked the authority of Mark Pattison, who often framed his commitment to university reform and the life of scholarship – which Pattison liked to experience vicariously – in terms diametrically opposed to the claims of dogmatic religion on the attention of modern civilisation.[668] 'Reformed Europe', Pattison intoned in one of his rare later sermons before Oxford University, possessed an ideal of intellectual culture which it had 'inherited from Greek civilisation'.[669] By the time he ascended the pulpit, in 1865, he had come to regret his youthful forays into religious polemic and ecclesiastical history, and dogmatic Protestantism now became a recurrent target in his writings on the history of literature and scholarship.[670] Pattison's semi-autobiographical biography of *Isaac Casaubon* regretted how the untiring Huguenot classical scholar and philologist had periodically squandered his gifts on patristics, which he approached as a matter of consecrated precedent instead of historical analysis. At the conclusion of the work Pattison quoted a telling remark from the work of Eduard Zeller, one of the German scholars he came to idealise as his departure from Christianity solidified. An adherent of the Tübingen School during the *Vormärz*, Zeller's early interests in radical theology slowly receded as he came to focus on the history of Greek philosophy, though he never completely jettisoned Hegelianism. In a

[665] Ibid., pp. 24-25.
[666] Ibid., pp. 31-33.
[667] Ibid., p. 41.
[668] Jones, *Intellect and character*.
[669] M. Pattison, *Sermons* (London, 1885), p. 125.
[670] Idem, *Memoirs*, p. 159.

passage that offered a pointed comment on why Pattison had left theology behind, he translated one of Zeller's aphoristic sentences: 'when, in the very conception of the problem, the intellectual activity is engaged in the service of a religious interest, a scientific solution cannot be looked for.'[671] Pattison's study of *Milton* was tinctured by the same duality. First published in John Morley's 'English men of letters' series in 1879, Pattison presented the poet and political theorist as still more torn between two selves than Casaubon had been. 'The Puritan self', on Pattison's reading, constantly wrestled with 'the poet's self', the lover of 'culture and the humanities'.[672] Pattison became inclined to construe the critical and religious currents at work during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as radically severed from one another, with significant implications for how he understood the conditions and ends of true scholarship in the nineteenth century.

Not every enthusiast for the Renaissance wanted to divide it so pugnaciously from religious commitment. One of the most influential figures in impressing the Renaissance into the British cultural lexicon, John Addington Symonds, was drawn to the subject out of his love of Italy and belief in sexual freedom. But his enthusiasm for the 'natural' was always tempered by his residual gratitude, greater than Arnold's, for the historic benefits of Protestant vigour. Born into a family of Shropshire nonconformists, he spurned a legal career after leaving Balliol College, Oxford, in favour of a life as a man of letters. Though his marriage was affectionate and produced children, Symonds was obsessed by his homosexuality and spent much time in Italy from his first visit in 1861 until his death in Rome in 1893 in order to escape from repressive English domesticity. Growing out of these experiences was his *Renaissance in Italy*, his seven-volume, literarily ornate *magnum opus* published between

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[671] Idem, *Isaac Casaubon 1559-1614* (London, 1875), pp. 374-378, 524-525 and 524 n.: 'Wenn schon durch der Aufgabe die wissenschaftliche Thätigkeit in den Dienst des religiosen Interesses gezogen war, so musste es sich im weiteren Verlaufe vollends heraustellen [sic], dass ein wissenschaftliche Lösung desselben unter den gegebenen Voraussetzungen unmöglich sei.'

[672] Idem, *Milton* (London, 1913), pp. 67-68; first edition 1879.

1875 and 1886. It was while he was completing the first volume, he claimed, that he first encountered and was deeply struck by Burckhardt.[673] Although Symonds' idea of the Renaissance was not demonstrably taken from Burckhardt, his description of it as 'the whole transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern World' indicates why he could appreciate him.[674] It was, thought Symonds, 'the history of the attainment of self-conscious freedom by the human spirit manifested in the European races', which inspired new achievements in the art, science, literature and invention. This was not solely an event in the past: 'the truth is that in many senses we are still in mid-Renaissance'.[675] Many of Symonds' descents from the general to the particular amounted to sometimes hidden, sometimes overt defences of the naturalness of same-sex attraction. 'When Luca Signorelli drew naked young men … he created for the student a symbol of the attitude assumed by fine art in its liberty of outlook over the whole range of human interests.'[676]

Italian painters and sculptors provided Symonds with ways of idealising and ennobling voluptuous earthly passion, and in ways he saw as separating him from the stern puritanism of his forebears. Writing to Henry Sidgwick in July 1880, after destroying a number of his papers, Symonds reported the psychological interest he felt in his own and his ancestors' correspondence before committing it to the flames. 'The ardent faith of the Puritan impulse' evident in his seventeenth-century Independent forebears, after passing through 'formalized Methodism' and 'strict Puritan orthodoxy' in the eighteenth century, faded into the 'robust theistic complexion' of his father's letters. It expanded 'finally into a free and gaseous

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[673] J.A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy* (7 vols, London, 1875-1886); P. Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds. A biography* (London and Southampton, 1964), pp. 251-252. Grosskurth speculates that Symonds expanded his work to such length in order to avoid comparison with the Swiss historian.
[674] J.A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: the age of the despots*, 2nd edn (London, 1880) [volume 1], p. 1.
[675] Idem, *Age of the despots*, pp. 2-4.
[676] Idem, *Renaissance in Italy: the fine arts* (London, 1877) [volume 3], pp. 23-24.

atmosphere' in Symonds' own aesthetically-preoccupied missives. 'The spiritual problem was the main matter of all these letters', he wrote.[677]

The wistfulness with which Symonds related the transmutations of his ancestral beliefs furnishes a presumption against the claim that Symonds 'celebrated paganism over Christian superstition' in his Renaissance studies.[678] Symonds certainly understood the Renaissance to involve the total reversal of the self-denying, ascetic culture of medieval religion. He thought of the growth of religious art as incubating the worship of the human body for its own sake, in what was ultimately a complete reversal of prior ecclesiasticism and an essential departure from its premises.[679] He closed his volumes by relating how the Catholic hierarchy, realising this danger, set about extinguishing the intellectual and artistic freedoms cultivated during the Renaissance. 'Over the Dead Sea of social putrefaction floated the sickening oil of Jesuitical hypocrisy.'[680] It was not only Catholicism for which the ancestrally dissenting Symonds had harsh words. 'The counter-movement of the modern spirit' crystallised not solely in papal countermeasures, but in 'Protestant establishments'.[681] He even insisted that the medieval asceticism against which he revolted was soundly rooted in Christ's own severity towards fleshliness and earthly ties.[682]

Symonds nevertheless repeatedly returned to the idea that the Reformation and the Renaissance were two parts of the same movement, still active in the present, which imparted 'recovered energy' and 'freedom of the reason' to religious thought and national politics just as much as to culture, art and science.[683] These were not points on which Symonds was wholly consistent. Sometimes he wrote of intolerant, post-Reformation Protestantism as

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[677] J.A. Symonds to H. Sidgwick, 8 July 1880, in H.F. Brown (ed.), *Letters and papers of John Addington Symonds* (London, 1923), p. 105.
[678] R. Norton, 'Symonds, John Addington (1840-1893)', *ODNB*.
[679] Symonds, *Age of the despots*, pp. 17-18; idem, *The fine arts*, pp. 7-8.
[680] Idem, *Renaissance in Italy. The Catholic reaction. 2 parts – part 1* (London, 1886) [volume 6], p. 67.
[681] Idem, *Renaissance in Italy. Italian literature. In two parts. Part II* (London, 1881) [volume 5], p. 490.
[682] Idem, *The fine arts*, pp. 24-25.
[683] Idem, *Age of the despots*, p. 24.

though it were a continuation of clericalist bigotry, its progressive significance lying purely in the impetus it gave to scepticism.[684] Elsewhere he thought of the Renaissance and the Reformation as a 'twofold Liberalism', which he hoped would ultimately result in the harmonisation of 'the classical ideal of a temperate and joyous natural life' with 'the conscience educated by the Gospel'.[685] Italian thinkers who sought to philosophise Christianity by expressing it in terms of heathen speculation left him cold: 'they lack the vigorous simplicity that gave its force to Luther's intuition'.[686] Symonds' unwillingness altogether to jettison an ethicised form of Protestantism as an inspiration for action mirrored his criticisms, expressed in his correspondence, of Arnold's one-sided view of culture. Writing to Arthur Galton, a former Catholic priest who had become an Anglican vicar and apostle of Matthew Arnold's idea of culture, Symonds complained of the Arnoldian 'Gospel'. He judged that it 'leaves out a whole & very vital element of human life; the ignoring of which makes his Gospel jejune for disciples, though it has been aptly uttered by himself.'[687] He even called him 'the egotistical Mat.'[688]

The intellectual atmosphere of Symonds' undergraduate college provides some illumination as to what may have lain behind this ambivalence, not to say confusion, concerning the relationship between the Renaissance and religious commitment. After arriving at Balliol in 1858, he was taught by the newly-elected fellow and future Idealist worthy Thomas Hill Green. He also received instruction in Hegel from Jowett, who became a lifelong friend.[689] While Symonds cast around for some satisfying alternative to law in the 1860s, Jowett

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[684] Idem, *Renaissance in Italy. The Catholic reaction. In 2 parts. Part II* (London, 1886) [volume 7], pp 422-429; idem, *Italian literature. In two parts. Part II*, p. 490.
[685] Idem, *The fine arts*, pp. 35-36; idem, *The Catholic Reaction. In 2 parts. Part II*, pp. 422-423.
[686] Idem, *Renaissance in Italy. The revival of learning* (London, 1877) [volume 2], p. 23.
[687] J.A. Symonds to A. Galton, 5 April 1887, in Schueller and Peters, *Letters of John Addington Symonds*, iii, 220; cf. A. Galton, 'Matthew Arnold; his practice, teaching, and example: an essay in criticism', in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*¸ 11 (June, 1888), esp. p. 106: Galton had sent Symonds a copy of the essay. For identification of Galton, see C.Y. Lang (ed.), *The letters of Matthew Arnold* (6 vols, Charlottesville and London, 1996-2001), v, 427 n.
[688] Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds*, p. 104.
[689] Ibid., pp. 48-53.

imposed on him the ungrateful task of translating a part of Eduard Zeller's *Philosophie der Griechen*, in which he persevered for several years.[690] Zeller's post-Hegelian treatment of Greek philosophy as forming an evolving organic unity which anticipated Christian theology, together with Green's influence, helped to implant loosely idealist assumptions into Symonds' mind in the 1860s.[691] 'It is the immense amount of culture' – which Symonds distinguished from 'what M. Arnold calls culture' – 'contained in solution in the German theories of the Universe that gives them a value superior to the systems of the empirical schools.'[692] His literary flourishes invoked 'the Divine Mind' and 'the eternal sunrise of God's presence'.[693] No part of history, he assumed, was sufficient in itself. Symonds accordingly found it difficult to think of history in terms of radical ruptures, or that one side of a world-historical development – the Renaissance – could truly be complete without its religious counterpart. 'The strife of Protestantism and Catholicism was needed for preserving moral and religious elements which might have been too lightly dropped, and for working these into the staple of the modern consciousness.'[694] Where the Renaissance had made for self-development, the conflicts unleashed by the Reformation had preserved duty and self-sacrifice. The wateriness of Renaissance values as a basis for ethical commitment, fretted over by Symonds, ran more forcefully through George Eliot's novel *Romola*. The action of the work takes place in the superficial and lying world of 1490s Florence, which contact with Burckhardt may have helped its author to conceptualise. But Eliot's search for an alternative basis of moral commitment led her – and the novel's eponymous heroine – towards altruism, not religious reform.[695]

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[690] Tübingen Universitätsbibliothek, Md. 747.757: J.A. Symonds to E. Zeller, 31 August 1867. The letter is omitted from Schueller's and Peters' edition of Symonds' *Letters*.
[691] Hartung, 'Ein Schatzkammer des Wissens'; On Zeller in Britain, see chapter two above.
[692] J.A. Symonds to H.G. Dakyns, 29 October 1873, in Schueller and Peters, *Letters of John Addington Symonds*, ii, 318.
[693] Symonds, *The Catholic Reaction. In 2 parts. Part II*, pp. 432, 438.
[694] Ibid., pp. 411-412.
[695] Eliot, *Romola*; A. Fleishman, *George Eliot's intellectual life* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 115-116.

The discovery of the Renaissance in the second half of the nineteenth century was an important moment in the construction of resolutely secular interpretations of the roots and ends of modern progress. Yet its appeal as a source of value was also limited by its lack of what Henry Sidgwick called ‘fire and strength’ in his criticisms of Arnold’s doctrine of culture.[696] There was no synthetic substitute for religion as the inspiration for heroism, duty and triumph over circumstance. Conversely, historians who approached history as a form of Protestant apologetic now had to confront the new ideals of human experience which the rising vogue for the Renaissance helped to make normative.

As early as the 1850s, liberal Protestant scholars had tried to link the Reformation to a preceding change in cultural sensibility, in a sense that was more conceptually charged than simply pointing to the discovery of textual criticism or the invention of the printing press as technical preconditions for the restoration of the bible. Henry Hart Milman, hopeful of spiritualising Protestantism by freeing it from scholastic doctrinalism, had sketched the foothills of the Reformation anew in the last volume of his *HLC*. The freeing of Christian art from the trammels of Byzantine tradition and formalism, especially through the softer and humanising brush-strokes of ‘the great deliverer’ Giotto, was for Milman ‘prophetic, at least, if not presentient of a wider Catholicism.’[697] Drawing on earlier reappraisals of Christian art history, Milman came close to giving voice to the idea of a unified ‘Renaissance’ by proposing that a generalised transformation of the human spirit had taken place in the later middle ages, of which Protestantism was the religious expression.[698]

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[696] Garnett, ‘Introduction’ to Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, xviii-xix.
[697] *HLC*, vi, 612.
[698] Ibid., vi, 603 n.; cf. C. Lindsay, *Sketches of the history of Christian art* (3 vols, London, 1847), i, [xi]-xvii; A.F. Rio, *De las poésie Chrétienne dans son principe, dans sa matière et dans ses forms. Forme de l’art, seconde partie* (Paris, 1836), pp. 22-23: ‘On eut bien raison d’éternier la mémoire du triomphe obtenu ce jour-là sur les Iconoclastes, par la convocation d’un concile et par l’institution d’une fête annuelle: si les Grecs avaient vaincu, c’en était fais des belles destinées de l’Italie, c’en était fait de l’indépendence et de la gloire de la papauté, c’en était fait de l’art chrétien et de toutes ses merveilles’.

Attempts to locate the Reformation within a general return to individual freedom and fulfilment, religiously understood, became at once more appealing and more controversial as the lineaments of the Renaissance became more fully marked. The diffusion of Idealist philosophy into historical conceptualisation¸ evident in Symonds' writings during the 1870s, became one influential means by which religious historians combined apparent opposites in a purposeful unity. George Matheson published an essay on the 'religious forces of the reformation era' in 1881 in the *Modern Review*, the short-lived, non-denominational successor the Unitarian *Theological Review*. In it he sought to identify the inward unities of the Reformation period amidst the apparent fragmentation attendant upon the sixteenth-century religious revolution. Judaising Calvinism, imperial Lutheranism, and Hellenic intellectual culture were different sides of a religion that synthesised law, universality, and philosophy. The task of the nineteenth century, whose preoccupation with physical law, positivism, and agnosticism signalled a 'return to Judaism', was to construct a stable unity out of these conflicting elements.[699]

In a subdued way, Edward Caird's pupil, Mandell Creighton, shared elements of the same idealising sensibility. The regret he voiced in his *History of the Papacy* for the destructiveness of the Lutheran Reformation, which he regarded as an avoidable breach, recorded his high church leanings.[700] His aesthetic sympathies led him to criticise the hardened form of Reformation religion, Puritanism, for having 'stamped upon English life the somewhat hard and joyless aspect which it still wears.'[701] Yet he placed the main culpability for the severance of Christendom on the papacy, for refusing to adjust itself to the new reality

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[699] G. Matheson, 'Religious forces of the Reformation era', *MR* (April, 1881), pp. [329]-346, quotation at p. 346.

[700] M. Creighton, *History of the papacy from the great schism to the sack of Rome*, new edn (6 vols, London, 1907-1911), vi, 152-162; first edition 1882-1894. On Creighton's views of Luther, see O. Chadwick, *Creighton on Luther. An inaugural lecture* (Cambridge, 1959).

[701] M. Creighton, *The age of Elizabeth* (London, 1876), p. 197.

of emergent European nationalities.[702] Creighton characterised this movement towards nationality as part of a general recovery of spiritual individuality, occurring through successive reformations in the life-stream of European history, encompassing politics, religion and culture. He was especially given to expressing himself in these terms in his public addresses and occasional pamphlets, where the impartial self-repression evident in his *History* was less pronounced. 'To me it seems that the differentiation of nations is part of that continuous revelation of God's purposes which is contained in history', he remarked in a pamphlet published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, tellingly entitled *The Idea of a National Church*. 'God bestows on mankind 'diversities of gifts, but the same spirit.''[703] The unity of the church might have survived the Reformation, Creighton argued in a course of lectures delivered at St Paul's in 1892, had it internalised the spirit of Francis of Assisi. Francis' love of individual liberty, Christ's humanity, and God's presence in nature, and his indifference to the details of ecclesiastical systems, spurred on the Renaissance, and were in harmony with religion. But the rigidified church authorities vainly struggled to contain, instead of adopting, the historical forces by which they were judged and swept away.[704] Creighton, in common with Matheson, attempted to bring the diverse elements making up the Reformation into balance, with a view to vindicating the continuous and progressive character of the past.

A distinct strand of progressive religious criticism, also positing that the Renaissance and the Reformation were two sides of the same movement, pointedly used the principles of the Renaissance to reproach the obscurantism of the Reformation's misshapen heirs. The Unitarian historian Charles Beard, editor of the *Theological Review* between 1864 and 1879, went so far as to define the progressive features of the Reformation in terms of the

[702] Idem, *Papacy*, i, 36.
[703] Idem, *The idea of a national church* (London, 1898), pp. 7-8.
[704] Idem, 'The influence of the friars', in his *Historical lectures*, pp. 98-115.

Renaissance in order to encourage modern Protestants to align themselves with earthly fulfilment and scientific advance.[705] In his 1883 Hibbert Lectures, the published version of which he couched as a contribution to the Luther commemoration then underway, Beard declared that the Reformation 'was not, primarily, a theological, religious, or ecclesiastical movement at all'. 'It was part of a general awakening of the human intellect', originating in the fourteenth century and urged on by the revival of classical learning and the discovery of the printing press. 'It was the life of the Renaissance infused into religion, under the influence of men of the grave and earnest Teutonic race.' The return wrought by the Reformation was properly to Hellenism, not Judaic Christianity.[706] The fact that Protestantism, down to Beard's time, had not been true to its nature was responsible for the difficulties in which theology now found itself. Historical reassessment, to Beard, was a precondition of righting the wrong.

Beard accepted that the initial impulse of the Reformation, through Luther, was religious.[707] But the early Reformers 'understood neither the system which they attacked nor that which they founded, in its full relation to the long progress of the human mind.'[708] Luther's magical views of the sacraments, his belief in the devil, and Calvin's reversion to scholasticism, were among those forces that conspired to make the Reformation 'a failure' when judged 'only by its theological and ecclesiastical development'.[709] But the principles of Protestantism, which might themselves be turned to criticise stale Protestant orthodoxism, were worth more than the use their pioneers had made of them. Luther's rejection of the four-fold sense enabled the bible, in course of time, to be read historically.[710] The liberty the Reformers claimed for

[705] A. Gordon, rev. R.K. Webb, 'Beard, Charles (1827-1888)', *ODNB*.
[706] C. Beard, *The Reformation of the sixteenth century in its relation to modern thought and knowledge. Lectures delivered at Oxford and in London, in April, May, and June, 1883* (London and Edinburgh, 1883), p. 2.
[707] Ibid., p. 80.
[708] Ibid., p. 113-114.
[709] Ibid., pp. 137-139, 147-182, 263-299.
[710] Ibid., pp. 114-126.

themselves could not forever be denied to yet bolder spirits.[711] Beard traced how the tide unleashed by the Reformers overcame the barriers they vainly tried to erect in the subsequent development of philosophy, philology, higher criticism, geology and evolutionary theory.[712] As part of the growth of philosophy, Beard included the emergence of historical sensibility. As societies advanced, and became conscious that they were advancing, forms of belief that belonged to earlier stages of society, such as the vengeful God implied in the penal theory of the atonement, became perceptibly irrational.[713]

Beard stopped short of treating the significance of the Reformation as lying exclusively in the impetus it gave to science and criticism. Luther's liberation of subjectivity, and the power of conscience, enabled 'changed individuality' by incorporating the human soul with the saviour's.[714] Negatively alluding to Arnold, Beard criticised those who valued religion 'as the supreme agent in the softening, the sweetening, the elevating of human life', and yet who imagined that its emotional benefits could exist independently of positive theology or the historical Jesus. 'Absolute Religion', purified of extinct forces through science and the continuing application of the Reformation principle, must crystallise around the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the kingdom of God and the future state.[715] This new theology was, nevertheless, to owe very little to Reformers and scholastic divinity. 'The Reformation that has been, is Luther's monument: perhaps the Reformation that is to be, will trace itself back to Erasmus.'[716]

Beard's attempt to give the Reformation a Hellenising moral, and his regret that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century critical and intellectual developments had been stymied by the Protestant revolution, were echoed by other advanced religious thinkers. The Quaker activist,

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[711] Ibid., p. 172.
[712] Ibid., pp. 337-400.
[713] Ibid., esp. pp. 374-379.
[714] Ibid., pp. 130-131, 141-144.
[715] Ibid., pp. 404-430.
[716] Ibid., p. 73.

financier and historian, Frederic Seebohm, favourably contrasted the poetical and critical temperaments of Erasmus, John Colet and Thomas More with the regrettably Augustinan character of the Reformation in *The Oxford Reformers of 1498*.[717] Similarly, John Owen, a late-century Devonshire rector and Renaissance historian, saw the promising paths in nineteenth-century religion as leading back to the humanist movement rather than to the Reformation. In a series of studies published during the 1880s and 1890s, his hopes alighted particularly on what he thought to be the inherently sceptical character of Renaissance thought. Owen sought both to trace the historical operation of sceptical principles, and to rescue the original Greek sense of the term *skeptikos* from clerical misrepresentation. To him, scepticism meant open, perpetual investigation, the aim of determining truth in speculative problems, and resistance to finality where truth was unattainable; but it was not irreligious.[718] Just as scepticism had eroded ecclesiasticism and secularised literature in Renaissance Italy, so today it was working upon religious thought, and the harder forms of Darwinism and Hegelianism; in theology, the result would be to help return the churches to the original words of Christ.[719] Thus in Owen's hands, scepticism acquired the purifying historical function other liberals ascribed to Protestantism, which he criticised for its scriptural infallibilism, and generally regarded as creative insofar as it had ultimately fomented scepticism.[720] Owen's fondness for scepticism drew him towards Charles Beard and the Unitarian circles in which he moved. He wrote for the *Theological Review* under Beard's

[717] F. Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers of 1498: being a history of the fellow-work of John Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More* (London, 1867), pp. 412-416; P.D.A. Harvey, 'Seebohm, Frederic (1833-1912)', *ODNB*.
[718] J. Owen, *The religious aspects of scepticism. A lecture delivered at the South Place Institute, London, April 19th, 1891* (London, 1891), pp. [5]-7.
[719] Idem, *The skeptics of the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1893), ix-xv
[720] Idem, *skeptics*, pp. 7-11, 416-417. Owen, true to his disclaiming of argumentative finality, cast his extended histories in the form of dialogues, with different characters adopting different points of view. Identifying Owen's own stance in these dialogues is therefore not straightforward. That his own sympathies lay with his more advanced conversationalists may be inferred from the positions he adopted in his public lectures and occasional pieces: idem, *religious aspects of scepticism*, pp. 18-19.

editorship, and even composed an elegy set at his graveside.[721] Addressing the Unitarian foundation of Manchester College, Oxford, in 1891, Owen expressed his confidence that where other colleges in the university tried to perpetuate the past, the new foundation would promote the work of returning Christianity to its original simplicity.[722] The new Reformation, it appeared, would require the reanimation of those forces which the original Reformation had obstructed.

The Hellenisation of Protestantism, and still more the boiling down of flavourful Protestantism into bland moral theism and the spirit of criticism, did not have universal appeal. Frederic William Farrar, in his *History of Interpretation*, was among the religious liberals who thought that these ideas implausibly ignored the power of religious earnestness and the spread of true theology in securing progressive improvement. The Reformation was not, as Beard had it, "Renaissance infused into religion", but "Religion infused into the Renaissance". 'What the Renaissance was without the Reformation', Farrar added, 'may be seen in such men as Leo X.'.[723] Secular thinkers regarded the attempts of Beard and like-minded religious apologists to make the Renaissance and the supposed hidden principles of the Reformation sound alike as incoherent compromises. They credited religious dogma with intellectual achievements to which dogma was inherently antagonistic. Karl Pearson's essays on the Lutheran Reformation accordingly targeted Beard's reverence for Protestantism's past achievements. 'Mr. Beard, in his Hibbert Lectures, remarks, with great truth, that while the Reformation of the past has been Luther's, that of the future will be Erasmus's; we venture to

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[721] Idem, *The modification of dogma regarded as a condition of human progress. An address delivered at the commencement of the session 1891-1892, in Manchester New College, at Oxford, October 20th, 1891* (London, Edinburgh and Manchester, 1891), p. [3]. In Beard's life, 'Culture and Religion duly blent, / Formed with their energies its rich content': idem, 'At Dr. C. Beard's grave', in his *Verse-musings on nature, faith, and freedom* (London, 1894), p. 312.
[722] Idem, *Modification of dogma*, pp. 28-33.
[723] Farrar, *History of interpretation*, p. 308 and n.

remind Mr. Beard that but for Luther the Reformation of Erasmus would have been the Reformation of the past as well as of the future.'[724]

Late-century evangelicals, whose commitments were not dispersed by an Erasmian breeze in the way that some forecast, also resisted those currents in contemporary thought that linked the Reformation too closely to the preceding Renaissance. R. W. Dale, the popular Congregationalist minister, set himself against those who presented the Reformation as though it were merely a produce of human culture. It was not a sound 'philosophy of history', he maintained in a November 1883 sermon at the time of the Luther commemoration, that turned the Reformation into a mere impersonal product of intellectual forces. It was inconceivable without the religious genius of Luther, whose God-given strength changed the course of European history.[725] At the same time, the evangelical Anglican, W. Morris Colles, attacked the 'fancied necessity for explaining things' evident in recent writing on the Reformation.[726] To locate the origins of the Reformation in a general movement of human self-improvement, rather than in divine grace, was to deny the active role of providence and religious heroism in human affairs. To do so also tended to refer the benefits won for Europe by Protestant heroism, which set itself against circumstances, to the idle words of the self-indulgent creatures of circumstance. The unflinching James Aitken Wylie, in a popular pamphlet timed to coincide with the commemoration, called the fifteenth-century revival of letters a 'delusive' dawn. It was only the Reformation, rising up from consciousness of sin and descending through the Holy Spirit, that restored the authority of conscience and so, by degrees, caused laws to be based on consent, and made possible the spread of arts, inventions, letters and sciences.[727] Combatants who would have been at home during the 1830s and

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[724] [Pearson], 'Martin Luther', p. 11.
[725] 'Carr's Lane Chapel', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 November 1883, p. 5.
[726] W. Morris Colles, 'Martin Luther', *CM*, 9 (November, 1883), p. 129.
[727] J.A. Wylie, *Luther; or the Reformation worked out in the person of Luther before being worked out on the stage of Christendom* (London and Edinburgh, 1883), pp. 17-20.

1840s had by no means died out. But their battle-lines, once drawn up to face laxity within and popery without the Protestant churches, were now being sapped by changing historical sensibilities to which growing numbers on their own side were open.

Thomas Martin Lindsay's studies of the Reformation period exemplify how strong evangelical commitment might, by the end of the century, adapt to the humanisation and partial relativising of the Reformation initially pressed by liberals determined to mediate between Protestantism and criticism. Lindsay made his characteristic positions clear as early as 1882, in a short study of *The Reformation*, published by T. & T. Clark. Here Lindsay did not express himself in the Calvinist syllogisms popular among a previous generation of free churchmen. Rather he wrote of the great evangelical principles which the Reformation had liberated: the priesthood of all believers, and, following from that primary truth, justification by faith alone. He repeated his earlier claim that the Reformation had not set up an infallible book against an infallible church, but had instead taught Christendom to interpret scripture in its 'plain historical signification'.[728] Lindsay was a reader of Ranke, and saw that the Reformation had beginnings which stretched back far into the middle ages.[729] Yet he saw these beginnings as lying much more in evangelical currents in medieval religion than in the profaner, self-sufficient revival of letters he had criticised in 1878. As Merle d'Aubigné had shown, the Reformation was at heart a revival of religion.[730] It came, Lindsay thought, in reply to questions rising up through the heart of medieval Christendom. 'Gregory asked, How can I be separate from the world? Francis said, How can I be like Christ? The Mystics sighed, How can I have inward fellowship with God?' Luther was the first to return a satisfying answer.[731] Lindsay notably did not, with earlier evangelicals, find true Christianity mainly in the sects persecuted by the hierarchy, but in the internal development of medieval devotion.

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[728] T.M. Lindsay, *The Reformation*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1883), pp. 185-194.
[729] Ibid¸ v, pp. 169-170.
[730] Ibid, v.
[731] Ibid, p. 175.

In this, he came into alignment with the developments considered in the third chapter of this thesis.

Lindsay's attitudes had not fundamentally changed by the time he came to write his larger *History of the Reformation*. Published as part of T. & T. Clark's International Theological Library in two volumes between 1906 and 1907, this was the weightiest work on the Reformation as a European movement to come from any Victorian scholar. Lindsay's earlier stress on the Reformation as expressing the rediscovery of faith, understood not so much as dogma as the experience of personal dependence on God, now registered definite traces of contact with Ritschl and Harnack.[732] This disposition encouraged the doctrinally Calvinist Lindsay to give much more attention to Luther than to Calvin.[733] Searching for the spiritual roots of the Lutheran revolution, Lindsay found them much more in proto-Protestant medieval reform currents than in the Renaissance's rediscovery of nature. A reader of Symonds and Burckhardt, Lindsay agreed that the Renaissance embodied the 'transition from the mediaeval to the modern world'. But as its faith was chiefly placed in man rather than in God, Lindsay continued, its role in preparing the way for the Reformation was limited to the dissemination of printing and the critical spirit.[734] Socinianism, much more than Lutheranism, was the child of humanism.[735] It was in the popular religious life of late-medieval Germany, evident in pious households and the spread of popular preaching, that the real spiritual origins of the Reformation lay.[736] Lindsay's ascription of a Protestant character to Christian domesticity was significant. Just as some historians of Catholicism thought of it as having contributed necessary femininity to civilised life, Lindsay privately thought of this religious power of the Reformation as representing a masculine principle, ever necessary to safeguard

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[732] T.M. Lindsay, *A history of the Reformation*, 2nd edn (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1907-1908), i, 426-452, ii, 473 n. 2; first edition 1906-1907.
[733] Lindsay only treats Calvin directly in one chapter: ibid., ii, 92-135.
[734] Ibid., i, 42-78.
[735] Ibid., ii, 473-474
[736] Ibid., i, 114-157; cf. his 'Family and popular religion in Germany on the eve of the Reformation', *LQR*, 10:2 (October, 1903), pp. 209-238

religion from becoming overly feminised. Writing to the Anglo-Florentine author Janet Ross in 1907, Lindsay expressed his gratification that the Archbishop of Canterbury had praised his *History* in these terms at a recent public meeting.[737] Lindsay's ease with natural life and experiential individuality recorded a changing sense of what evangelical tradition involved; but it never became the doctrine of human self-sufficiency promoted by the Renaissance's more single-minded exponents.

The impact of the late-Victorian fashion for the Renaissance on Protestants' understandings of their Reformation inheritance was both disruptive and creative. High churchmen and conservative Protestants, as well as doctrinaire liberals, became accustomed to the idea that the Reformation ought to be placed in relation to the values of the Renaissance which preceded and accompanied it. The question of whether that relationship was complementary or antagonistic was understood to form an important part of a conversation about whether, and in what sense, Protestantism was suited to the intellectual and societal conditions of the nineteenth century. Apologetic historians, and even anti-puritan critics such as Symonds, sought to preserve a place for Protestantism within the trajectory of historical progress which connected it both to the past, and to what they perceived their own future to be. Religious historians' attempts to bring the Reformation into constructive relation with the Renaissance inescapably altered how they depicted the true nature of Protestantism. But more secular critics' awareness that the Renaissance had not wholly satisfactorily transformed the basis of selfhood and ethics could also leave them open to the claims of religion on modern intellectual and cultural attention. Important barriers still remained to secularised, post-theological conceptions of the importance of the Reformation and the Renaissance in European history by 1914.

[737] T.M. Lindsay to J. Ross, 19 October 1907, in his *Letters of Principal T.M. Lindsay to Janet Ross* (London, Bombay and Sydney, 1923), p. 27.

IV) Conclusion

Debate about the origins and meaning of the Reformation and its legacies was an important component of broader Victorian discussions concerning the role of Protestantism in creating modern culture, and its continuing authority within it. Distinctive ways of assessing the Reformation, and whether it should be brought into relation with the Renaissance, also relied on and were intended to bolster particular ideas of how religion had functioned as an historical force; and of the spiritual nature, or otherwise, of historical development. Evangelicals looked to Reformation and post-Reformation history as a vehicle for self-definition in the face of assaults from popery and latitudinarianism. More positively, it also became a canvas onto which the deeds and experiences of Protestant heroes and martyrs might be etched so as to give visible shape to evangelicals' Atonement-centred scheme of redemption. Religious liberals, who in common with many late-Victorian religious conservatives held the view that doctrinal reform was a way of protecting religious fundamentals, variously-defined, used an idea of the Reformation's progressive significance in order to justify, and limit, changes to the creeds and received understanding of the bible. John Tulloch's considered statement of this position, versions of which spread widely in the later Victorian public sphere, prioritised the continuing operation of the divine spirit in history over the incapacity imposed on historical man by human sinfulness.

The idea that history was animated by a transcendent spirit, sometimes understood in ascertainably Idealist terms, became attractive to Victorian critics sympathetic to the values of the Renaissance, yet who wished to resist the secularising imputations placed upon it by Arnold, Pearson, Pattison and, in a sense, Burckhardt. The idea that the Reformation and the Renaissance might be held together in a kind of solution, by a loosely idealist and

consciously sacralised vision of human time, became attractive to thinkers as otherwise opposed as Creighton and Symonds. Thus the Reformation, which together with the early church and the middle ages had once been isolated and made absolute by certain kinds of religious actor, became part of a progressively-evolving spiritual order in the eyes of a group of later critics. It was upon this order, visible in history, that late-Victorian vindications of providence often came to rely.

Chapter five. Reason and religion in modern history

I) Introduction

In the evolution of Victorian debate over the early church, medieval religion, and Reformation Protestantism, historical agendas proceeding from evangelical or high church sectarianism lost their attraction as religious historians became more concerned to use history to vindicate the importance of religion in historical progress, and the credibility of theology in modern culture. Liberal religious thinkers, together with an increasing number of relatively conservatives ones, became more unsettled by what appeared to be deliberate attempts to secularise the understanding of historical development, than by rival confessional histories. Explanations of early church history which seemed to dispel the Holy Spirit; accounts of medieval society which neglected its function as a stage in the providential moral government of the world; and the derivation of modern values from the Renaissance, rather than the Reformation, were all understood – not always correctly – as involving deliberate, historically-articulated challenges to the cultural authority of Christianity.[738] Alongside these disturbances, and sometimes underpinning them, was the broader challenge to theologically-driven conceptions of progress and human experience represented by the development of sociological interpretations of history. This chapter considers the different ways in which the authority of religion and its role in the creation of intellectual and social modernity were discussed in rival philosophies of history, both secular and religious. History became a vital part of wider Victorian debates over whether religion and theological claims were compatible with the intellectual and social conditions of the modern age.

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[738] See chapters two, three and four above.

The chapter considers how, in the second half of the nineteenth century, this central question generated arguments concerning the relationship between historical interpretation and the power and limits of mind. Rick Rylance and Sandra den Otter have shown the considerable extent to which debate amongst late-Victorian psychologists and social theorists was coloured by a widespread reaction against associationism and explanatory models drawn from scientific naturalism, which together posited that human motivation derived from contact with external sense-data in ways discoverable and perhaps controllable by scientific method, in favour of the primacy, or at least independent authority, of the reasoning consciousness. The desire to preserve space for a God, even if one understood in a radically heterodox sense, was often an important influence behind this resistance.[739] A comparable and largely unremarked movement took place simultaneously in historical thought. Many sociologists believed that to extend the domain of positive law into human history was to remove providence from history. Progress, in their eyes, mandated and depended upon the retreat of theology.[740] But these contentions generated a vigorous response. The claim that the relationship between religion and history could be represented in terms of invariable law raised the question of whether the historian, and the historical subject, could claim a relationship with transcendent divinity. In this context, many historical thinkers remained determined to see the historian's vocation both as a scientific and as a religious one; and they refused to regard the sources of progress as essentially secular. Debate over whether religion was a progressive or regressive force, and whether modern history was more a story of secularisation or one of Christian purification, constituted a discursive node at which historical thought became entwined with new forms of epistemological and psychological argument. Secular liberal characterisations of progress were to have a long afterlife in

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[739] Rylance, *Victorian psychology*; den Otter, *British Idealism*.

[740] Chadwick, *The secularization of the European mind*, pp. 229-249; G. Hawthorn, *Enlightenment and despair. A history of sociology* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 112; L. Goldman, *Science, reform, and politics in Victorian Britain. The Social Science Association 1857-1886* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 313-315.

twentieth-century secularisation theory. But this should not obscure the fact that in the period of their incipience, theologically-driven and historically-articulated conceptions of the relationship between religion and modernity often appeared equally plausible.[741]

In order to establish the contours and wider significance of that discussion, the chapter draws into dialogue thinkers who, though they have often been the subjects of admirable individual studies, have not been analysed in the context of this long-running controversy. The pioneering sociologist Auguste Comte's 1830-1842 *Cours de Philosophie Positive* and his 1851-1854 *Système de Politique Positive*; the independent man of letters Henry Thomas Buckle's 1857-1861 *History of Civilization in England* (*HCE*); and the Anglo-Irish historian William Lecky's 1865 *HRE* all offered totalising histories of the sociological and intellectual origins of modernity, which helped to force this question onto the attention of British learned society in the years after 1850.[742] The second section of the chapter examines how and why this was so. Lecky had read and admired Buckle and Comte, as Buckle had learned from Comte before him. But these historical thinkers and their admirers significantly differed on the question of the role of religious ideas and impulses in progress. Comte's pioneering argument that human history was subject to a law of progress in which empirically verifiable science, reaching new heights in Comte's own sociological theory, pushed mankind towards the Positivist millennium was immensely influential. Yet the subtle differences separating

[741] The polemical origins of secularisation theory were noticed as long ago as 1987 by J.K. Hadden, 'Towards desacralizing secularization theory', *Social Forces*, 65:3 (March, 1987), pp. 587-611. On analogous European debates, see Borutta, *Antikatholizismus*.
[742] *HRE*; on Lecky's *HEM*, see chapter three above; A. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive* (6 vols, Paris, 1830-1842), trans. H. Martineau as *The positive philosophy of Auguste Comte* (2 vols, London, 1853); Idem., *Système de politique positive; ou, traité de sociologie instituant le religion de l'humanité* (4 vols, Paris, 1851-1854), trans. J.H. Bridges et al. as *System of positive polity, or, treatise on sociology, instituting the Religion of Humanity* (4 vols, London, 1875-1877); *HCE*. Important secondary studies of these writers and their influence include E. Fuchs, *Henry Thomas Buckle. Geschichtsschreibung und Positivismus in England und Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1994); McCartney, *Lecky*; B. Stuchtey, *W.E.H. Lecky (1838-1903): historisches Denken und politisches Urteilen eines anglo-irischen Gelehrten* (Göttingen, 1997); M. Pickering, *Auguste Comte. An intellectual biography* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1999-2009); Wright, *Religion of humanity*; C. Cashdollar, *The transformation of theology, 1830-1890: positivism and Protestant thought in Britain and America* (Princeton, 1989).

Comte from even his closest British followers, here represented by the sometime Oxford don Frederic Harrison, on the question of how Christianity had shaped and might continue to shape civilisation pointed to deeper disagreements among advanced thinkers as to the normative relationship between religion and action.

Buckle, though he shared Comte's faith in the capacity of sociological science to map out the future of the race, certainly did not internalise Comte's belief that human advancement had been promoted by religiosity, and would continue to need a quasi-Catholic form of it. Still less than Comte's works, Buckle's *HCE* was not an account capable of reassuring Victorian readers eager to hear of a place for ethicised Christianity in the development of the progressive mind. Lecky's *HRE*, though close to Comte's and Buckle's conceptions of historical law at several points, was seen by some to meet this demand by elevating the free, Protestant conscience as the ideal goal of the historical process in a way neither Buckle nor Comtist figures stressed. By making the waning influence of theology into a law of progress, Lecky antagonised many conservatives. But he was also an early instance of how, under pressure from materialist or rigidly inductive approaches to the past and past claims to knowledge, spiritual readings of the development of the modern mind and the rationality of the universe gained broader purchase in the closing decades of the century.

Over time, Buckle and Comte came to be seen by many as the expression of a cultural tendency, rooted in associationism and scientific naturalism, which sought invalidly to foreclose the range of argumentatively admissible human experience. The second half of this chapter argues that, in the face of such assaults, religious apologists came to see historical philosophy as an essential mode of vindicating the divine character of mind and intellectual progress.[743] Whereas Buckle and the Positivists had privileged gathering empiricism and

[743] This is a point noticed, but only partially developed, by Charles Cashdollar in his excellent study of the impact of Positivism on nineteenth-century theology: *Transformation of theology*, esp. pp. 329-372.

secularisation in their narratives of progress, in ways that prioritised certain strands of eighteenth-century thought, the third section of the chapter considers how the liberal Presbyterian John Tulloch and the broad church Anglican John Hunt, among others, constructed alternative narratives of the emergence of intellectual modernity. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in their accounts, became significant for the ways in which they had witnessed the steady growth of rational theology: living waters which supposedly fed the Victorian liberalism that, if rightly mapped, lay downstream. Tulloch made historical philosophy his preferred answer to materialist conceptions of man on the one hand, and John Henry Newman's supposedly irrational subjectivism on the other; Newman's theory of religious knowledge, first developed in patristic study, recurrently surfaced as an anti-type to liberal conceptions of religious rationality later in the century.[744] Another major contemporary pioneer of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century intellectual history, the agnostic man of letters Leslie Stephen, was however notably unmoved by these adventures in apologetic. His 1876 *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* revealed his desire to work beyond agnosticism to find a more positive basis for knowledge. In common with a number of contemporary thinkers, he thought that he saw it in psychology. But whereas religious liberals interpreted the intellectual history of the eighteenth century as leaving the fundamentals of Christian belief untouched, or even as having given them a more rational appeal, Stephen took the period to have been marked by the slow unwinding of theistic fallacies. The death of religious belief was history's bequest, which modern thought had no rational choice but to accept.[745]

As the question of the roots of historical progress became more acutely combined with that of the limits of the human mind, and partly prompted by the search for spiritualised intellectual lineages, a second answer to different kinds of historical materialism became attractive.

[744] See chapter two above.
[745] L. Stephen, *History of English thought in the eighteenth century* (2 vols, London, 1876).

Discussed in the fourth section of the chapter, this was the deliberate attempt, under Idealist influence, to interpret the development of the universe as an expression of a divine and absolute mind. This universal mind supposedly bore a connection and resemblance to the individual religious mind such a conception of the universe participated in, and thereby helped to legitimise. In this way, Idealist historical philosophy fed a marked growth of interest in the psychology of religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This development was exemplified in the later writings of John Tulloch and his fellow Church of Scotland professor Robert Flint, and especially in the early writings of the future dean of St Paul's, William Inge. Inge represented a strand of contemporary psychological criticism which strongly opposed the seeming abandonment of absolute rationality as an intellectual ideal entering into wider late-century criticism. He rejected the 'pessimism' of Schopenhauer, the fideism of Ritschl, or the insidious 'pragmatic' argument of William James and others. To Inge, as for earlier liberal Victorian theologians, the rationality of the subjective thinker and the rationality of the objective universe stood or fell together. The fact that Inge became less convinced of the ultimate reality of progress during the First World War, and accordingly felt the need to adjust the emphasis of his religious apologetic, symbolised a wider discursive change which provides an appropriate end-point for this study.

II) Religion and the laws of progress

The question of the role of religion in the evolution and maintenance of the modern intellectual and social order lay at the heart of Victorian debate concerning the promise, and the limitations, of sociological understandings of history. For the Comtists, Buckle, and Lecky, discovering the laws of progress necessarily involved understanding the historical

effects of forms of Christianity in history, Protestant or Catholic, and whether those effects could ever be positive. If the effects of religion could in principle be progressive, it raised the further question of whether such consequences could be attributed in particular to Christian doctrine, or else somehow separated from it. The ways in which it was thought admissible for a 'scientific' historian to discuss theology pointed to contrasting notions of what it was possible or desirable for the mind – the mind of the historian, and also the mind of the historical subject – to know. Whereas Comtists and Buckle dismissed all metaphysical claims – and Buckle went a notable step further by also scorning the outward apparatus of religion – Lecky, by affirming the reality of recognisably Christian moral progress, the power of conscience, and intuitive morality, was seen by many contemporary commentators to have avoided the error of a materialist interpretation of the history of religion and society. The problems raised by the early sociological historians thereby helped to frame later debates over the development of religious thought, and what such development signified about religious reality. The recurrent problem of the view of mind which the religious historian ought to take helped to stimulate the later development of direct interest in the psychological study of past religious phenomena.

It was difficult for Victorian sociological historians of religion to escape the founder of sociology and erstwhile Saint-Simonian, Auguste Comte. Contact with his positive philosophy made an epoch in the minds of many Victorians. It supplied ideas and phrases to a broader spectrum of those otherwise less awestruck by it; and even those seekers after historical law with decidedly slight intellectual debts to Comte found themselves associated with his philosophy by reviewers in the periodical press. Comte's central category of historical analysis was the law of three stages.[746] It encapsulated what he took to be the invariable progression of human thought and action both as a whole and in its individual

[746] Pickering, *Comte*, i, 199.

departments. The first rung was the theological stage, in which imagination overruled observation and spontaneous, self-supporting fiction interpreted the small range of observed facts. The second, metaphysical stage was a transitional period of dissolution and incipient creation. Personified abstractions, such as the idea of causation, came to be used to arrange and explain the increasing number of observed facts. It was only at the third, positive stage – the never-quite-present millennium announced by Comte - when the truth of the basis of positive knowledge in the universal reign of law came to self-consciousness. Truth was seen to rest not on imagination, or discussion, but on demonstration. The positive stage dismissed the search for causes and essences, or for God, and denied the possibility of knowing things in themselves. Knowledge was taken to be knowledge of the relations of things as governed by discoverable law.[747] Comte's notion that metaphysical claims were not plausible enough even to be disputed, by virtue of their relegation to a prior stage of mind, provoked the opposition of many Victorian commentators. Yet Comte's mistrust of the capacity of scientism to answer every human need guided his sympathetic interest in religion, both past and present, and his wish to construct a ritualistic Religion of Humanity to replace surpassed theological religions.[748]

Comte's system attracted numerous advanced thinkers in Britain, chief among whom was the sometime fellow of Wadham College, Oxford, Frederic Harrison, whose initiation into the circle of London practitioners of the Religion of Humanity was complete by 1870.[749] He agreed with Comte that the essence of religion was a life of rationally-directed work for social improvement and love.[750] Yet Harrison understood the development of religion in such a way as to preserve a significantly larger space for the progressiveness of Christianity and its place in the modern Positivist system than Comte had done. Comte seldom mentioned Christ

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[747] Comte, *Positive polity*, i, pp. 6-45; Pickering, *Comte*, i, 201-203; Wright, *Religion of Humanity*, pp. 18-19.
[748] Ibid., pp. 18-39.
[749] M.S. Vogeler, *Frederic Harrison. The vocations of a Positivist* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 18-27, 92-97.
[750] F. Harrison, *The present and the future. A Positivist address* (London, 1880), p. 16.

or Christianity, as distinct from theologism and Catholicism, in his account of ethical history. He thought Christianity egoistical, and regarded Catholicism essentially as a product of Greco-Roman history founded by St Paul.[751] Although Harrison saw Catholicism as a religion, and Christianity as an unsystematic moral idea, he departed from Comte by declining to focus on the former to the relative exclusion of the latter in his discussion of the basis of ethics.[752] He stressed that Positivism was closer to Christianity than 'any other phase of religious or non-religious thought', promising to enhance the comfort, tenderness, purity and self-sacrifice it fostered in millions of hearts by placing these sentiments on a rational basis.[753] But Harrison later resisted the efforts of a number of his contemporaries to turn the difficulties encountered by sociological scientism in fully accounting for human motivation, and societal advance, into an occasion for reviving superseded theology. He was to be markedly hostile towards what he faulted as mystical tendencies in modern thought, and the risks these posed to the positive status of Positivism.

Henry Thomas Buckle relished Comte's anti-metaphysical bent and scientific boldness. But his *HCE*, the fruit of a precocious but perhaps excessively isolated and protected intellectual upbringing away from universities and contradiction by others, owed more to Enlightenment conjectural history, John Stuart Mill, and still more to Buckle's own theorising.[754] Unlike Comte, for whom moral progress was characteristic of the human race and attained its earthly apotheosis in the Religion of Humanity, Buckle's deeply unsentimental mind regarded ethics as stationary – the New Testament, he thought, often reprised pagan philosophy – and referred all progress to the intellectual march of mind.[755] Progress could be studied without reference to providence or to any alleged human capacity for spiritual discernment, either on

[751] Comte, *Positive polity*, ii, 92-96; Wright, *Religion of Humanity*, pp. 25-27.
[752] F. Harrison, *The positive evolution of religion. Its moral and social reaction* (London, 1913), pp. 105-107.
[753] Ibid., pp. [1]-4.
[754] On Buckle's relationship to Positivism, assessed somewhat rigidly, see Fuchs, *Buckle*, passim.
[755] Comte, *Positive polity*, i, 84-85; *HCE*, i, 164 and n.

the part of the historian or that of the historical subject. In a manner reminiscent of Comte's argumentative foreclosure of metaphysics, Buckle first removed theological or metaphysical judgements about the determinative uniformity of the human world from historical consideration.[756] Just as the realisation of the uniformity of nature had produced great advances in the natural sciences and hence human society over the preceding two centuries, Buckle argued, so could the same realisation in relation to human affairs foster the study and practical benefits of truly scientific history.[757] Buckle lamented that the inadequately scientific state of historical understanding left scope for the intrusion of the 'theological spirit' and particularly, in recent years, the idea of 'the moral government of the world.'[758] True history did not involve attempts at transcendental intuition, but instead the study of those forces conducing to 'virtuous' or 'vicious' behaviour in a species whose minds were *tabulae rasae*, a foundational idea in Buckle even if he did not himself use the phrase.[759] In this, as in his deistic sympathies, Buckle can be situated in an Enlightenment conjectural tradition which never entirely died out in nineteenth-century Britain, sealing off historical interpretation from transcendental intuition.[760]

Thus Buckle defined human cognition, and the laws of European intellectual development, in a way that led him constantly to depict dogmatic theology and the institutional church as barriers to progress. Ever hostile to medieval Catholicism, Buckle admired Protestantism insofar as he supposed it to have been a sceptical and secularising movement.[761] But he repeatedly insisted that progress had little to do with the Protestantism or Catholicism of a country; it was instead inversely related to the power of the inherently intolerant clergy over

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[756] Ibid., i, 11-15 and 13n., 14n.
[757] Ibid., i, 6.
[758] Ibid., ii, 598-599.
[759] Ibid., i, 19-20. Buckle called J.S. Mill 'one of the greatest thinkers of our time': ibid., i, 37n.
[760] G. St Aubyn, *A Victorian eminence. The life and works of Henry Thomas Buckle* (London, 1958), p. 86.
[761] *HCE*, i, 463-465.

political and intellectual life.[762] Scepticism, as operative in Catholic as in Protestant countries, was the origin of religious toleration as it was the beginning of scientific advance.[763] Buckle's untiring hostility towards organised religion, whether as an historical force or as a present necessity for moral elevation, separated him both from Positivism, and from the gathering currents in mid-Victorian thought which sought to blend orderly history with a spiritualised teleology.

Buckle's periodical reviewers, as well as finding his opinions on religious history offensive, often recognised that these views rested on a particular view of cognition. The implications of Buckle's work for theology and Protestantism drew more attention than the questions he raised about historical method, except insofar as those questions related to religious or metaphysical ones. Many of Buckle's critics unflatteringly regarded him as a follower of Comte, made still more objectionable than Comte by his contemptuous refusal to recognise the services of religion to civilisation.[764] They generally faulted him for denying the reality of moral progress and underestimating the historic power of Christianity in advancing political and social freedom, as flippant *philosophes* had once done.[765] Behind the frequent objections, there were often underlying disagreements between Buckle and his critics on the relationship between historical interpretation and religious commitment, and fundamentally different assumptions about the origins and scope of human knowledge. Buckle's critics often saw him as attempting to effect a radical severance between historical analysis and the providential government of the world. He presumptuously plumbed mysteries of historical movement known only to God.[766] Robert Vaughan recoiled from Buckle's spiritual pride in

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[762] Ibid., i, 504-505.
[763] Ibid., i, 317-318, 473-505.
[764] For example [W. Frederick Pollock], 'Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*', *QR*, 104:207 (July, 1858), pp. 71-72; [W. Smith], 'Mr Buckle on the Civilisation of Scotland', *NBR*, 35:69 (August, 1861), p. 254; 'Buckle's Civilisation in England', *CHR*, 35:100 (April, 1858), pp. 331-332.
[765] [H. Reeve], 'Buckle's *Civilization in Spain and Scotland*' , *ER*, 114:231 (July, 1861), p. 184.
[766] 'Buckle's History of Civilization', *DUM*, 51:301 (January, 1858), pp. 26-27.

presuming to exhibit the effects of physical conditions on mental development.[767] The then-Unitarian, later Anglican theologian and journalist, Richard Holt Hutton, thought of civilisation as a state of becoming, not as self-sufficient being; it was moved by its trust in and openness to God, which laws of intellect facilitated but could not supplant.[768] One writer saw that Buckle's rejection of the moral force of Christianity rested on his dismissal of the power of consciousness, which amounted, he thought, to a wider view 'that man may be regarded, not as a *person*, but simply as a *thing* whose individual consciousness is of no moment.'[769]

Buckle's antipathy to the role of spirit in the history of civilisation released an unnerving spectre into the Victorian historical imagination. To many British readers, Comte's and Buckle's brushing aside of metaphysical questions in favour of what seemed a particularly cramped form of empiricism neither answered human aspirations, nor corresponded to the trumpeted facts of positive experience. The question of the nature and goals of intellectual and moral progress would, in after years, lead back to the question of the mental source of intellect and morals. The evidence of the mind itself, and the analogy between the individual mind and a transcendent mind within or beyond the universe, gradually worked their way to the centre of religious historians' apologetic preoccupations in the succeeding years. Positivists, notably Harrison, were to sound a distinctly counter-cultural note in those decades.

William Lecky's *HRE* played an important role in initiating this new phase of discussion. Lecky's biographers have connected his conception of history to his admiration for Buckle and Comte, whilst also recognising that Lecky did not simply recapitulate the views of

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[767] [R. Vaughan], 'Buckle on Civilization – destiny and intellect', *BQR*, 28:55 (July, 1858), pp. 14-16.
[768] [R.H. Hutton], 'Civilisation and Faith', *NR*, 11 (January, 1858), pp. 198-228; H. Orel, 'Hutton, Richard Holt (1826-1897)', *ODNB*.
[769] [Smith], 'Civilisation of Scotland', p. 257.

either.[770] Relating Lecky's work to a broader discursive environment helps to indicate more clearly where contemporaries took him to depart from the opinions of these formative contacts. It also suggests the limitations of Jeffrey Paul von Arx's interpretation of Lecky's histories as primarily the political treatises of a gratifyingly frustrated anti-Catholic whose estimate of Christianity was at best ambivalent.[771] Lecky's understanding of the historical conditions of the growth of rationalism, the scope this left for individual intellectual freedom and the ultimate effects he took to ensue from the process marked him out as more favourable to religiously-derived views of mind and ethics than either Buckle or Positivists tended to be. Although conservatives lamented his latitudinarianism, liberal theological commentators often saw Lecky's approach as offering, if not quite a solution to materialism, then at least a way in which scientific history need not succumb to it. Lecky made the positive side to the story of law-governed progress one of the purification and empowerment of free conscience, theistically understood. He therefore seemed to provide a satisfying alternative to Comte's or Buckle's supposed constriction of human experience, both individually and collectively, to advances in the inductive understanding of sense-data. Comparable attempts to broaden the meaning of mankind's historical experience, distinct but deriving from the same basic argumentative concern, were to be frequently heard in the later decades of the century.

The transformation Lecky examined in the *HRE* was not the spread of 'any class of definite doctrines or criticisms, but rather a certain cast of thought, or bias of reasoning, which has during the last three centuries gained a marked ascendancy in Europe.'[772] Together with Comte and Buckle, he believed that that change followed a 'law of orderly and progressive transformation to which our speculative opinions are subject'.[773] Changes of opinion in one department inevitably wrought connected changes in others. Lecky's was more an intellectual

[770] McCartney, *Lecky*, pp. 12, 26-32; Stuchtey, *Lecky*, pp. 67-69.
[771] von Arx, *Progress and pessimism*, pp. 64-123.
[772] *HRE*, i, xviii-xix.
[773] Ibid., i, 317-318.

than a social history. He adduced the increasing complexity of civilisation, the growing systematisation of scientific conceptions and, above all, the decay of dogmatic theology since the sixteenth century as the primary explanations for the decline of belief in witchcraft and the miraculous; the end of persecution; the 'secularisation of politics'; and the spread of industrial rationality as manifested in the spread of political economy. Lecky worried that the progress of rationalism was sometimes impeded by religious reaction; but in truth, even religious conservatism could not escape its sweep.[774] He noted the telling reluctance of recent medievalisers, such as the high church philosopher Henry Longueville Mansel, to rely on miraculous testimony.[775] Although primarily concerned with the history of Reformation and post-Reformation thought, his stated if undeveloped view that the changes of the twelfth century lay behind the Reformation may have derived from Comte.[776]

Despite these similarities, Lecky was always resistant to the materialist psychology he supposed to be latent in Comte and Buckle, which was decidedly at odds with the epistemological theory undergirding his own conception of progress.[777] One of Lecky's preoccupations, in common with liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, was the difficulty of reconciling the general laws which regulated the greater movements of history with the historic and present importance of heroism and individual moral freedom. Buckle apparently did not see the tension between the laws governing prevalent intellectual conditions and the moral position of the individual as significant, while Positivists thought it rested on a misconception remediable through the Religion of Humanity. Lecky never quite worked out this balance to his satisfaction. The decay of loyalty, the destruction of asceticism, and the restriction of the sphere of charity that followed from advancing rationalism had 'given our age a mercenary, venal, and unheroic character'. It was not rationalism, but 'the moral or

[774] Ibid., i, xxi.
[775] Ibid., i, 177-179, 194-195 and 194 n.; on Mansel, see chapter two above.
[776] Ibid., i, 52.
[777] Ibid., ii, 407-408.

religious faculty' that yielded the conception of the purely disinterested and 'the impress of the divine image, the principle of every heroism.'[778] With greater ambivalence about progress than Buckle ever showed, Lecky regretted that the advance of utilitarianism on the basis of sensationalist psychology had restricted the powers of human nature.[779] In other parts of his work, however, he took the development of distinctively moral freedom to be a laudable normative outcome of rationalism, provided its historical course were free from disturbing influences. The 'central conception' of rationalism, Lecky argued, was 'the elevation of conscience into a position of supreme authority as the religious organ, a verifying faculty distinguishing between truth and error.'[780]

Lecky's concern to establish the power of conscience as the source of beneficial action helps to explain why the first chapter of his later *HEM*, published in 1869, was dedicated to proving the 'intuitive' as against the 'utilitarian' theory of morals. Taking issue with Buckle and his narrow view of induction, among others, Lecky argued that the existence of the 'moral faculty' could be proved inductively by a rigorous classification of different elements of moral judgement.[781] Utilitarians, Lecky argued, did not see that their favoured theories of what conduced to the greatest happiness of man could not in fact be separated from the predispositions established by the moral intuition. He thought that they confused the process of framing theories of what conduced to happiness with the basis of morals, a distinction also made – and also used to leave space for the religious belief for which he longed – by Henry Sidgwick.[782] 'If the excellence of virtue consists solely in its utility or tendency to promote the happiness of men,' wrote Lecky, 'a machine, a fertile field, or a navigable river would all possess in a very high degree the element of virtue.'[783] While it was true that particular

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[778] Ibid., ii, 403-406.
[779] Ibid., ii, 406.
[780] Ibid., i, 182.
[781] *HEM*, i 75-76 and 75 n., 76 n.
[782] Cf. H. Sidgwick, *The methods of ethics* (London, 1874), pp. 472-473.
[783] *HEM*, i, 38, 50-75.

conceptions of duty and virtue varied with time and tradition and so were not intrinsically infallible, human ethics at least universally acknowledged the importance of duty and virtue.[784] The progressive working of morals was thus the progressive elevation of the benevolent affections over the selfish; Lecky insisted, against Buckle, that morals had a history. In that history, Christianity, in tandem with advancing civilisation though not with dogmatic theology, had been the fundamental force in the elevation of morals above the level of a pagan world that had enjoyed gladiatorial murder and accepted infanticide.[785]

It was only with the decline of the theological spirit after the Reformation that Christian morality had been able to escape ecclesiasticism and ascetic constriction to return to its original breadth, though Lecky criticised the sexual hypocrisy still fomented by prohibitions on divorce and fornication.[786] He repeatedly ascribed recognisably Protestant origins to agreeably rationalist modern trends. 'There certainly has never been a movement which, in its ultimate results,' he wrote, 'has contributed so largely to the emancipation of the human mind from all superstitious terrors as the Reformation.'[787] Just as dogmatic theology had underpinned irrationalism, the erosion of dogmatic theology which Lecky supposed to have been implicit in the Reformation created space for progressive thought. He was not a confessional determinist, seeing scepticism at work in undermining exclusive ecclesiastical claims in Catholic countries, but Protestantism appeared to offer a positive rather than a purely negative principle of criticism.[788] The Reformation rested on the right to interpret particular creeds by 'the principles of universal religion'.[789] Controversial imperatives first caused Protestant divines to repudiate the ecclesiastical miracles claimed by the Roman

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[784] Ibid., i, 93-103.
[785] Ibid., i, 156-157 and passim; Idem., *rationalism*, i, 337.
[786] Ibid., ii, 18-19, 365-368.
[787] *HRE*, i, 62.
[788] Ibid., ii, 62-63.
[789] Ibid., i, 400-402.

church.[790] Lecky proceeded to point to the religious origins of the Enlightenment in the work of English rational divines such as Chillingworth, who softened traditional views of the guilt of error by making pregnant distinctions between certain and probable opinions.[791] Rationalism did not properly seal off the world of spiritual value, but instead regarded Christianity 'as designed to preside over the moral development of mankind' as an ever-more 'sublimated and spiritualised' idea.[792]

Thus Lecky consciously left greater space for the moral government of mankind by providence which Comte and Buckle had scorned. He distanced historical analysis from theological value judgements by saying that progressive rationalism did not necessarily spread because it was true, only because it became, at root somewhat mysteriously, a general tendency. But in places he was content to regard the law of advancing rationalism as itself an outworking of the divine mind, as though the advance of rationalism were itself a judgement in its favour.[793] He also claimed that it was no contravention of rationalism to believe that the New Testament miracles had in fact occurred, as a means of providential demonstration to an early age as yet ignorant of natural laws.[794] Lecky's was the historical vision of one who identified with the Christian rationalism of Joseph Butler and Richard Whately.[795]

The *HRE* attracted some of the objections previously levelled against earlier sociological histories of religion. The Catholic *Dublin Review* faulted Lecky for applying 'to religious the more advanced method of secular history'; his one-sided dedication to the newly fashionable scientific history pushed to one side crucial questions of the evidence for particular doctrines.[796] A writer for the *Christian Remembrancer* surmised that Lecky had derived his

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[790] Ibid., i, 161.
[791] Ibid., ii, 79-80.
[792] Ibid., i, 182.
[793] Ibid., i, xvi-xviii, 9-10, 316.
[794] Ibid., i, 198n.-199n.
[795] Lecky, 'Formative influences', pp. [90]-103.
[796] 'Lecky's History of Rationalism', *DR*, 7:13 (July, 1866), p. 53.

views of theology and metaphysics from Comte, but consoled himself that in time 'rationalism will reveal the cloven foot, and from that how its doom is sealed'.[797] The *British Quarterly Review* thought that Lecky, by adopting a term conventionally given to a destructive type of biblical criticism and making it synonymous with the great achievements of civilisation, made insinuations against the Christian religion all the worse for not being propositionally stated.[798] He reduced all human phenomena into 'one grand process' governed by a law under which dogmatism inexorably decayed.[799] If the ultimate tendency Lecky supported was objectionable, nor did it especially reflect what was in fact happening to modern religious culture, in which high church ecclesiasticism was if anything hardening.[800] Though the reviewer noted that Lecky consciously did not exclude the supernatural from history, the abandonment of any definite dogmatic result of that operation necessarily put the moral elements of Christianity in question.[801]

One strand of progressive commentary on Lecky viewed him more favourably, as having avoided a materialist interpretation of the development of modern European thought and ethics; this pointed forward to the strand of apologetic afterwards developed by John Tulloch and John Hunt. William Kirkus in the *Journal of Sacred Literature* praised Lecky for offering a Christianised antidote to Newman's theory of development.[802] Henry Reeve, the long-serving editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, of Unitarian extraction, wrote an essay for the journal which admiringly placed Lecky next to Buckle in his power of synthesising human affairs.[803] Reeve preferred Lecky. 'Whilst Mr. Buckle's view of human history tended to degrade the nature of man, by representing him as the mere slave of the physical

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[797] 'Lecky's History of Rationalism', *CHR*, 51:131 (January, 1866), pp. 216, 225.
[798] 'Lecky's History of Rationalism', *BQR*, 84 (October, 1865), pp. 405-406.
[799] Ibid., p. 403
[800] Ibid., pp. 421-422.
[801] Ibid., pp. 405-406, 432-433.
[802] W. Kirkus, 'Rationalism in Europe', *JSL*, 8:15 (October, 1865), p. 185; on Newman's theory of development, see chapter two above.
[803] [H. Reeve], 'Lecky's *Influence of Rationalism*', *ER*, 121:248 (April, 1865), p. 426.

circumstances that control his destiny, Mr. Lecky refuses to enthral the human mind by arithmetical averages and a material origin.' The 'furthest consequences' of Buckle's argument 'would have reduced the world to a mechanical creation of the Gods (if Gods they be) of Epicurus'. Lecky, though also opposed to theological errors and superstitions, 'sees in the great principles of religion an indispensable element of civilization' and the enlightened application of Christian precepts as 'the consummation of all that the human race can hope to attain to.'[804] The Unitarian minister and historian, Charles Beard, similarly saw a welcome contrast in Lecky's high view of mind and conscience to 'the ignoble theory of the materialist and the statistician'.[805] Beard nevertheless criticised Lecky's inclination to view rationalism as an unconscious tendency and so to distance himself from more forthright endorsement of it. Theology and history were, as Lecky himself seemed to see, not wholly separable. Conscious rationalism was needed in the present, as in the past, to arrive at clearer statements of updated 'dogmas' than Lecky himself made.[806]

There were, however, advanced thinkers who doubted that Lecky really had offered a satisfying way to incorporate Christianity within a rational framework. Pointing forward to Leslie Stephen's later rejection of supposedly rational theology, some criticisms of Lecky alleged that his seeming elevation of fundamental religious ideas above the sphere of law, including historical law, was simply untenable. James Fitzjames Stephen, who by 1865 was advanced on his way to agnosticism, found it curious that Lecky (on Stephen's reading) treated true rationalism as synonymous with a view of conscience as an infallible private guide to fundamentals. For that was not the rationalism of John Locke or even Jeremy Taylor, who had insisted on evidence before accepting the determinations of conscience. Conscience had no specific power to prove that given facts, such as good God, did or did not exist.

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[804] Ibid., pp. 426-427.
[805] [C. Beard], 'Lecky's History of Rationalism', *TR*, 2:9 (July, 1865), p. 436.
[806] Ibid., pp. 440-448.

Stephen, whose assessment of Lecky appears to have been coloured by his own horrified fascination with Newman, thought that Lecky's preferred test of truth 'fits in perfectly with the slight importance which he attaches to evidence and specific argument, and with the value which he sets upon general impressions and states of mind.'[807] George Eliot also faulted Lecky for want of clarity, from a more Positivist direction. She complained of the 'fatiguing vagueness' of abstractions such as 'modern civilisation', 'spirit of the age' and 'tone of thought'. Lecky seemed to ascribe primary importance in developments in these phenomena to changes in religious conceptions. The weightier factor, in Eliot's view, was in fact 'the gradual reduction of all phenomena within the sphere of established law'. Lecky's failure to see this, she suggested, was of a piece with his ignorant view of 'philosophers of the sensational school'.[808] In one way, Lecky's *HRE* heralded the new, rationally theological understandings of the emergence of the modern mind that were soon to be put forward by liberal divines. The challenge from materialist history, reliant on a view of mind as a space for the arrangement of external sense-data, invited histories of thought which rested on the assumption that thought witnessed to more than the sum of inputs. Eliot's reply to Lecky indicated that those who opposed the rehabilitation of metaphysical vagueness would also need to find support in the laws and recent history of mental progress; a view with a long after-life in twentieth-century sociology.

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[807] [J.F. Stephen], 'Mr Lecky on Rationalism', *FM*, 72:431 (November, 1865), pp. 559-560; K.J.M. Smith, 'Stephen, James Fitzjames (1829-1894)', *ODNB*.
[808] G. Eliot, 'The influence of rationalism', *FR* (May 15, 1865), pp. 54-55.

III) Rational theology?

The debate over the origins of intellectual progress stimulated by Lecky and Buckle had helped to focus attention on the theological and anti-theological innovations of the post-Reformation period. Not everyone shared Buckle's insistent construal of progress in modern intellectual history as consisting in the rise of empiricism and scepticism. R. H. Hutton criticised Buckle for lumping together the scepticism of Hume and Montaigne, which denied the possibility of knowing absolute truth, with that of Chillingworth and Locke, which did the reverse.[809] Also aiming to separate more clearly strands of past thought that were at the time little known or understood, Lecky's 1869 essay on the origin of the moral sense noticed that on the fundamental question of whether morals arose from external sanction or from the mind itself, the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists had opted for a doctrine of innate ideas which, in the meantime, 'has almost disappeared'.[810] These gravid observations, made often but at first incidentally so, were the premonitory signs of what in the later 1860s and 1870s would become a striking growth of interest in the history of modern religious thought in clerical and even anticlerical circles. John Tulloch's 1872 *Rational Philosophy and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*, his most sustained work of scholarship, should be understood in the context of the opposition to materialism and religious irrationalism, including Newman's, which increasingly preoccupied him in his later years.[811] John Hunt's *Religious Thought in England*, published between 1870 and 1873 and deliberately more 'scientific' and detached, represented an analogous Anglican effort in the

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[809] [Hutton], 'Civilisation and Faith', *NR*, p. 225.
[810] *HEM*, i, 127-128.
[811] Reference here is to the second edition: J. Tulloch, *Rational theology and Christian philosophy in England in the seventeenth century*, 2nd edn (2 vols, Edinburgh and London, 1874).

field of eighteenth-century history.[812] But such attempts to present modern intellectual history as amounting to the steady purification of Christian theology, leaping over the associationist and sociological thought privileged by secularising historians, were not universally persuasive. Leslie Stephen's *History of English Thought* treated attempts to purify that which intellectual development had established to rest on unprovable claims as essentially fruitless. While David Hume, William Warburton and Joseph Butler all epitomised the century for Stephen, in only Hume's case was this clearly a favourable judgement. But the lines of inquiry pursued by Stephen and the advocates of rational theology converged at one important point. As with recent sociological histories of religion, attempts to write its intellectual history pushed attention back onto the foundations and limits of mind. Judgements about whether the modern history of religion was favourable or unfavourable to its long-term prospects proved to be inseparable from value-judgements about the origins of knowledge and the limits of consciousness.

It was no accident that John Tulloch's interest in the rational theologians of the seventeenth century grew as he became more preoccupied by the fundamental dangers to the objective validity of religious thought posed by Comtism, scientific materialism and Newman. It has been seen how Tulloch, full of admiration for Augustus Neander, had first elaborated his progressive conception of the development of Protestant truth in opposition both to rationalism and Calvinist traditionalism in a post-Disruption situation.[813] Tulloch's criticisms of Protestant sectarianism had evinced his inclination to subordinate internal Protestant debates to his felt need to vindicate the reality of objective religious truth against external assailants. That tendency became more pronounced with time. As Tulloch saw new distortions of rationalism emerging in the shape of Comte, Buckle, and scientific naturalism,

[812] J. Hunt, *Religious thought in England. From the Reformation to the end of the last century. A contribution to the history of theology* (3 vols, London, 1870-1873).
[813] See chapters one and four above.

and religious conservatism – quintessentially Newman's – reacting by a retreat into subjectivist make-believe, his conception of the promise of history widened. Tulloch's notion of what was truly essential to Christianity, a point on which he was perennially diffident, grew notably broader as his determination to vindicate the objective, spiritual witness of history to some extent superseded his older, specifically Scottish concerns. In his 1850 essay on Neander, Tulloch distinguished the Apostles' Creed from later creeds as fundamental to Christianity; it was only subsequent formulations that could be purified by theological science.[814] By 1879, Tulloch took 'the essentials of religion' to consist of a 'conscious relation to a Divine Personality' and 'the revelation of eternal life'.[815] Doctrinal debate, even in the sense of countering definite doctrines, grew less important than the vindication of the reality of the spiritual consciousness which animated that debate. History, he came to believe, supported the claims of conscience to be a window into the progressively self-manifesting spiritual world, whilst it also offered the objective, publicly-discussable guiding authority in religion which he found wanting in Newman's thought.

Tulloch had ended his 1854 inaugural lecture at St Andrews by warning against the tendency to abandon a scriptural point of reference in favour of what he called a '*subjective arbitrariness*' of any kind.[816] He came to see that 'subjective arbitrariness', synonymous in his mind with any kind of religious or irreligious exclusive dogmatism, as the greatest threat to common religion. He set out the peril at greater length in periodical essays of the 1860s and afterwards. This was an important moral of Tulloch's reply to John Tyndall's notorious Belfast address to the British Association of 1874, in which the physicist had maintained the right of science to test all theological claims, insofar as they extended into science's domain, fully and freely. The extremist imputations placed upon Tyndall by Tulloch and others were

[814] [Tulloch], 'Augustus Neander', pp. 319-320.
[815] Idem, 'The essentials of religion', *GW*, 20 (January, 1879), p. 141.
[816] Idem, *Theological tendencies*, pp. 13, 27.

belied by his admiration for Carlyle and high view of the place of imagination in physical inquiry.[817] But Tulloch, alarmed by a series of simultaneous and distinct challenges to revealed religion, was inclined to group them together as particular instances of a general repudiation of reasonableness and intellectual holism. Men like Tyndall, Spencer, Huxley, even Darwin, excelled in their powers of narration and observation, but 'the very keenness of vision which traverses rapidly the superficialities of things,' wrote Tulloch, 'often becomes blunted when trying to penetrate below the surface.' Tyndall's magnification of the cultural authority of natural science, involving sweeping rhetorical attempts to subordinate other forms of discussion to its claims, and an abandonment of truthful historical perspective, furnished what Tulloch called

> conspicuous evidence of an increasing vice in contemporary literature. It is bad enough that the intellectual world should be divided into so many schools as it is. It narrows intellectual work, and sectarianises culture. Our scientific and literary coteries jostle one another like so many sects in the religious world, each often with a jargon of its own, and a *mission* in comparison with which nothing else is of any consequence.[818]

Tulloch's essay on 'dogmatic extremes' likened contemporary Roman Catholicism to 'Straussism', and Evangelicalism to Darwinism, in the sense that all showed an unwelcome tendency to abandon reasonable intercommunication in favour of a sectarian proclamation of the all-absorbing truth of their own fetishised principles. The advance of free discussion during the nineteenth century had fuelled a habit of complacent dogmatism.[819]

Tulloch saw pseudo-scientific presumption as of a piece with the totalising traditionalism of John Henry Newman. Tulloch was among those Protestant critics, studied in chapter two, whose deepest objection to Newman came from what he took to be the hopelessly subjective and sceptical implications of his refusal to seek a foundation for religious belief in publicly

[817] W.H. Brock, 'Tyndall, John (1820-1893)', *ODNB*.
[818] [J. Tulloch], 'Modern scientific materialism', *BEM* 116:709 (November, 1874), esp. pp. 520, 529-530.
[819] Idem, 'Dogmatic extremes', *CR*, 23 (January, 1873), pp. 182-196.

debatable rational enquiry. Newman's 1870 *Grammar of Assent* had elaborately argued that assent to a given proposition, in this case that of an infallible church, depended on feeling complete and indefectible certitude in it; as always with Newman, conscience guaranteed the truth of assent.[820] In reply, Tulloch wrote that Newman's 'mind, while intensely dogmatic and authoritative in expression, is yet in spirit and essence really sceptical, seeing difficulties although refusing to own them, and from the depths of its very restlessness casting itself forcibly into the arms of authority.'[821] Tulloch believed that Newman had evaded the question of how men might know spiritual truth at all in favour of an insular apology for truth already dogmatically held, raising up an edifice no more durable than an elaborate sandcastle at a time when the real danger to all revealed religion was an advancing tide of materialistic scepticism. 'What the world needs is a *Rationale* of belief in the face alike of scepticism and superstition. The latter, still more than the former, is independent of intellectual vindication.'[822]

Tulloch considered that the best reply to contemporary intellectual sectarianism lay in a correct interpretation of the meaning of human experience in religious and intellectual history. Inspired by Neander and Coleridge, Tulloch's views also took shape in reply to Comte, Buckle and to a lesser extent Lecky. While Tulloch was editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, he accepted an anonymous essay on Buckle, published in 1880, accusing the hapless coxcomb of having made a mental history of humanity out of the mean and mercantile assumptions he inherited from his family.[823] Tulloch believed that mind, in truth, was animated by larger, providential forces, as he made clear in his own review of Lecky's *HRE*. To Tulloch, Lecky was an improvement on Buckle in that he was open to a just conception of the province of theology, which had evidently informed Lecky's treatment of the 'rational

[820] J.H. Newman, *An essay in aid of a grammar of assent* (London, 1870).
[821] [J. Tulloch], 'Dr. Newman's *Grammar of Assent*', *ER* 132:270 (October, 1870), p. 392.
[822] Ibid., p. 412.
[823] 'Thomas Henry Buckle [*sic*]', *FM*, 603 (March, 1880), pp. 361-377.

divines' of seventeenth-century England. But he did not sufficiently clearly distinguish between the rationalism of the natural intellect, out of which the 'partial' Positivist philosophy had grown in recent times, and true rationalism. True rationalism started within the church and recognised Christian knowledge as a progressively growing insight based on the truth revealed in scripture and the spiritual consciousness; Neander was its model.[824]

Real rationalism presented a truer, or at least a clearer, conception of the reign of law than Lecky presented. Lecky's view of the causes of intellectual or moral change at least left open the possibility that these occurred accidentally or unaccountably. But Tulloch did not believe this could be so. 'The "spirit of the age" is a mere expression, and has no power, save in so far as it represents some real growth of enlightenment, some expansion of man's powers of comprehension of the world around him, or of the world of thought within him.'[825] Tulloch made essentially the same point in the reply to Comte he wrote for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1868. Tulloch did not object to the idea that social phenomena should be regarded as subject to law. But the supposititious law of three stages, which ruled out theology and metaphysics altogether, begged the whole question of how mankind could have real knowledge. The Positivist was negative in that he opposed will to order. The theist claimed instead that there was 'Will *plus* Order … Intelligence *plus* Law.' To attain to the idea of law, Tulloch continued, we use 'Mind'; it relied on human self-consciousness, which itself, Tulloch supposed, bore the impress of the divine.[826]

Tulloch elaborated his alternative conception of the rational development of mind most fully in what he viewed as his greatest work, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*.[827] Earlier versions of various chapters had been appearing for several years beforehand in Dean

[824] Tulloch, 'Rationalism', pp. 361-384.
[825] Ibid., p. 364.
[826] J. Tulloch, 'Auguste Comte and Positivism', repr. In his *Modern theories in philosophy and religion* (Edinburgh and London, 1884), pp. 56-65.
[827] Oliphant, *Memoir*, pp. 270-277.

Alford's *Contemporary Review*; Tulloch was reading the work of the dramatis personae, the so-called 'rational theologians' of early modern England running from Richard Hooker, via the early advocates of ecclesiastical latitude such as Jeremy Taylor and William Chillingworth, to the Cambridge Platonists, at the same time as he was penning attacks on contemporary intellectual extremism. In his estimation, the seventeenth century, like the nineteenth, had also been an age of dogmatism. It was when the Anglo-Catholic, Puritan and Hobbesian materialist sects had first emerged, and which were now once more, in different forms, shouting down the quieter voice of reasonable reflection which the rational tradition, from which Tulloch claimed a liberal descent, embodied. But once the din subsided, Tulloch mused pleasingly, it was not extremism that won out.

The intellectual context for the 1688 settlement, which Tulloch looked at in its religious rather than its political aspect, had instead been set by the central and silently spreading precepts of rational theology. These had been promoted by two broadly distinctive groups of thinkers who had defended religious liberty, a comprehensive church polity and the connection of theology to wider movements of philosophic and scientific thought. The first group, including Jeremy Taylor and (the young) Edward Stillingfleet, had argued for a conception of church polity which allowed for disagreement in inessentials. The second group – the Cambridge Platonists Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth and others – were more philosophical, concerned to elevate mind and moral freedom over materialism, albeit sometimes adducing magic and miracles in their favour. But Platonism was in truth only one phase of speculation, not its whole history, and so incapable of providing a solid foundation for religion in the present.[828] A new rational theology, starting not from principles of private interpretation but working to understand the common experience of humanity in history,

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[828] Tulloch, *Rational theology*, ii, 485-486.

would just as surely emerge to solve the crisis of the nineteenth century. It would be guided by the historic sense.

> The vast volume of religious experience will slowly unfold its characters to inductive and patient thinkers, as other volumes of experience have done. And as this volume is steadily read – its pages compared, and their facts co-ordinated and explained – the divine meaning will become clearer. A Religious Philosophy will at last become possible when it is sought in this way, - not in any favourite speculation of this or that thinker, however great – but in the comprehensive interpretation of the religious consciousness working through all history, and gathering light and force as it works onward.[829]

A. P. Stanley saluted Tulloch's volumes as 'the first systematic account of the long series of divines who, whether under the name of Rational, Platonist, Latitudinarian, or Liberal, have never ceased out of the Church of England from the days of Colet to the days of Milman.'[830]

It was not only liberal Anglicans who welcomed Tulloch's studies. In his preface to the second edition of *Rational Theology*, Tulloch expressed his gratification at the high church *Guardian*'s review of the work. For this was a forum 'where the tone and object of the volumes might have been supposed to be less likely than in some others to be welcome.'[831] The approbation given by the *Guardian* to Tulloch, and so to rather non-Laudian theology, signified a wider change among late-century high churchmen that was soon also to be manifested in signs of their diminishing hostility to eighteenth-century theology. High churchmen did not convert to latitudinarianism; but they did come to see more pronounced parallels between their own position, and that of anti-Hobbesian thinkers who had once rebutted rationalist assaults on religion with a supposedly larger view of reason. The thinkers whom Tulloch admired, according to the *Guardian*'s review, could never 'move the world'.

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[829] Ibid., ii, 487-488.
[830] [A.P. Stanley], 'The Church and Dissent', *ER*, 137:279 (January, 1873), p. 198.
[831] Tulloch, *Rational theology*, i, xv.

But they did supply ‘a deep and lasting undercurrent beneath the fierce and more powerful waves’.[832]

The reviewer’s sympathy with Taylor, Chillingworth, and Stillingfleet, while more pronounced than that of the first-generation Tractarians, related to their tendency to soften the excessive Calvinism of the Reformation; their resistance to methodical theology, however, was untenable. His admiration for the Cambridge Platonists was less qualified. The difference was between ‘rational theologians’ and ‘religious philosophers’. The earlier thinkers were concerned to promote an undogmatic and latitudinarian church theory. Whichcote and Cudworth, however, were more interested in vindicating the rightful province of religion itself: the reality of divine intelligence, the eternity of moral ideas, the reality of freedom. These great principles were precisely the same as those which in the present day had to be upheld against the usurpations of physical science, pantheism, and utilitarianism.[833] The high church historian Samuel Cheetham likewise praised the Cambridge Platonists for freeing eternal principles from logical casuistry in his own *History of the Christian Church since the Reformation*, drawing on Tulloch to do so.[834] High churchmen also began to attribute progressive interests to their traditional heroes. In his contribution to an 1877 cross-party series of lectures on *Masters in English Theology*, Richard Church presented Lancelot Andrewes as the sounding board for Bacon’s inductive study of nature.[835] Bacon, normally a hero of sensationalist philosophers, was here brought into pacifying dialogue with a fondly-remembered forerunner of Archbishop Laud. Figures who had in the past seemed threatening to conservative thinkers could, by their incorporation into the history of rational theology, assist in meeting more recent dangers from scientific naturalism and other supposed forms of

[832] ‘Rational theology and Christian theology in England’, *Guardian*, 29 October 1873, pp. 1404-1405.
[833] Ibid.
[834] S. Cheetham, *A history of the Christian Church since the Reformation* (London, 1907), pp. 63-64, 63 n.
[835] R.W. Church, ‘Lancelot Andrewes’, in A. Barry (ed.), *Masters in English theology; being the King’s College lectures for 1877* (London, 1877), pp. 64-65.

materialism. The development of mind, it increasingly appeared, contained its own witness against the claims of modern empiricism to sit at its summit.

The rehabilitation of eighteenth-century theology was perhaps inherently harder than renewing interest in the more tentative reasonableness of the earnest century of Milton and Cromwell. The revolt against the eighteenth century had been a central feature of the evangelical revival.[836] Early Romantics who could not bring themselves to profess forms of doctrinal evangelicalism had vehemently attacked the century that had so greatly strengthened the sceptical and associationist intellectual obstacles to their doing so. Frederic Harrison, in an essay of 1883, blamed ‘the stormy antipathies of Thomas Carlyle’ for that ‘miscarriage of historical justice’ which had seen the eighteenth century as ‘the fraudulent-bankrupt century, the reign of Beelzebub, the peculiar era of Cant.’[837] Although there was a continuous and evolving Victorian tradition of engagement with Joseph Butler and his *Analogy of Religion*, a token of the generalised clerical hostility to Butler’s contemporaries was the fact that the first major nineteenth-century scholarly engagement with Deism was written, perhaps unsurprisingly, by a Tübingen-educated *evangelisch* minister and scholar, Gotthard Lechler.[838] Clerical hostility to the eighteenth century was alive and well during the time at which Lecky and Tulloch were writing. The high churchman G. H. Curteis, preaching before the University of Oxford in 1871 on dissent, declared that ‘there is no one, probably, now living who does not congratulate himself that his lot was not cast in the Eighteenth Century.’[839]

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[836] See chapter one above.
[837] Quoted by F. Harrison, ‘A few words about the eighteenth century’, repr. In his *The Choice of Books and other literary pieces* (London and New York, 1891), p. [351].
[838] G.V. Lechler, *Geschichte des Englischen Deismus* (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1841); J. Garnett, ‘Bishop Butler and the *Zeitgeist*: Butler and the development of Christian moral philosophy in Victorian Britain’, in C. Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler’s moral and religious thought. Tercentenary essays* (Oxford, 1992), pp. [63]-96.
[839] Quoted in K. Hillebrand, ‘England in the eighteenth century’, *CR*, 37 (January, 1880), p. [1].

There were, however, clerical commentators who desired to detoxify enlightened theology as an element of wider late-century efforts to present the history of modern thought as a story of religious purification, not secularisation. Two notable contributions in this direction emerged from different sections of the Church of England in the 1870s. John Hunt's minute, professedly neutralist yet markedly broad-church *Religious Thought in England* took its theme, Hunt later remembered, from Mark Pattison's much more sceptical essay on eighteenth-century theology in *Essays and Reviews*.[840] Apart from Hunt's favourable estimations of pantheism, it was the main fruit of the course of theological study he had undertaken since 1859 and in which he had been encouraged by F. D. Maurice at an early stage.[841] In common with Pattison, Hunt consciously aimed at a scientific exposition of successive layers of thought; Pattison, welcoming Hunt's decision to focus on complex interactions of thought rather than a narrow history of theology, likened him to Buckle.[842] Hunt departed from his model by setting up an explicitly theological value-judgement as the overall bearing of the work. It was 'intended to be a record of progress'. 'It will show how cautiously, and yet how surely, the naturally conservative English mind has been working out its own religious position.'[843] By examining the steady accretion of English religious thought from the Reformation until the late eighteenth century, Hunt hoped to confirm Frederick Temple's theory, elaborated in *Essays and Reviews*, that Christianity was an education of the race; the only consistent alternative was Romanism.[844] Enlightened Christianity therefore had to be underpinned by a 'theology of experience'.

[840] J. Hunt, 'Mr. Leslie Stephen on English thought in the eighteenth century', *CR*, 29 (February, 1877), p. 415; M. Pattison, 'Tendencies of religious thought in England, 1688-1750', pp. [387]-430.
[841] Hunt, *Religious thought*, iii, [v]-vi; Idem, *An Essay on Pantheism* (London, 1866); Idem, *Pantheism and Christianity* (London, 1884).
[842] Idem, *Religious thought*, iii, vii; M. Pattison, 'Religious thought in England from the Reformation to the end of the last century', *Academy*, 3:49 (June, 1872), pp. 210-211.
[843] Hunt, *Religious thought*, i, viii.
[844] Ibid., i, [v]-vii; cf. Temple, 'The education of the world'.

The deists were notably prominent in Hunt's work. As in Tulloch's *Rational Theology*, the kernel of this element of Hunt's *Religious Thought* had been essays contributed to the *Contemporary Review* under Alford's editorship. The revival of the memory of the deists had, Hunt later recalled, attracted the hostility of fellow churchmen.[845] The terms on which Hunt encouraged this revival indicate why. Having hailed Hobbes' *Leviathan* as 'a great work of rational theology', Hunt laboured in his second and third volumes to show how Christian the deists truly were. He accepted at face value Toland's claim to be defending Christianity by ridding it of all obscurity. The deists, thought Hunt, were right to do away with superstitious awe before the title-deeds of antiquity; an absurdity did not become less absurd by virtue of being traditional.[846] Even Shaftesbury was only really a rational Christian.[847] As Leslie Stephen was to do, Hunt stressed that the deists and orthodox critics such as Butler were in many ways indistinguishable.[848] But for Hunt this attested the post-Reformation gathering-up of a great cloud of witnesses to broad-church Christianity, in favour of which Stephen did not think the orthodox-deist affinities could seriously be pleaded. Hunt's future patron, A. P. Stanley, welcomed Hunt's work as a large-minded antidote to the ecclesiasticism and misrepresentations of Nonconformity heard in G. H. Curteis' lectures.[849]

Even the moderate high churchmen Charles Abbey and John Overton, writing in the last quarter of the century, sympathised with the view that the eighteenth century had witnessed a progressive, and enduring, expansion of religious thought. In their jointly-written *English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, Abbey and Overton could not sympathise with deism as Hunt did. While this text has rightly been seen as an example of Victorian ecclesiastical self-

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[845] Hunt, 'Mr. Leslie Stephen', p. 414. On Hunt and the *Contemporary Review*, see chapter one above.
[846] Idem, *Religious thought*, i, 396, ii, 237-238.
[847] Ibid., ii, 342-343.
[848] Ibid., iii, 159.
[849] [Stanley], 'The Church and Dissent', pp. 196-198. Stanley nominated Hunt to a living in Kent in 1877: Universitätsbibliothek München / 4^{0} Cod. ms. 917 m (181), 38: John Hunt to Jakob Frohschammer, 20 November 1877.

distancing from the eighteenth century, when its tone is compared to that typically adopted by the Oxford Movement towards the Hanoverian period, the sympathy evoked with eighteenth-century theology (though not church practice) is quite striking.[850] Abbey introduced the work by claiming, in by-then characteristic high church style, that the church had slid into an 'unseemly slumber' after the accession of George I. It was less conventional to say that 'this listlessness in practical religion' came partly from that 'which gives the history of religious thought in the eighteenth century its principal importance': the fact that Reformation-era controversies had worn themselves out, and new questions 'far more profound and fundamental' rightly took their place.[851] Was there such a thing as a revelation from God? If so, what was its nature? Was there a future life? To answer these questions, bishops retired to their libraries rather than trundle round their dioceses; in consequence they produced 'much good fruit for the future'.[852] The deist challenge called out, among other texts, 'the immortal work of Bishop Butler'.[853] The deists themselves wrought a valuable service. 'Toland failed to prove that there were no mysteries in Christianity'; but they showed the danger of theologians using scholastic 'words without knowledge'. If Tindal was not correct to say that Christianity was as old as the creation, 'there was an aspect in which it is undoubtedly true'.[854] Deism nevertheless collapsed in the mid-century, successfully answered by clergy who knew their ground.

There were similarities between this line of thinking and that which the more consciously rationalist William Lecky adopted in his *History of the Eighteenth Century*. Less dispassionate than Hunt, Lecky presented the deists as intellectually marginalised.

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[850] C.J. Abbey and J.H. Overton, *The English Church in the eighteenth century* (2 vols, London, 1878); Cf. B.W. Young, 'Knock-kneed giants: Victorian representations of eighteenth-century thought', in J. Garnett and H.C.G. Matthew (eds), *Revival and religion since 1700. Essays for John Walsh* (London and Rio Grande, 1993), pp. 79-93.
[851] C.J. Abbey, 'Introductory', in Abbey and Overton, *English Church*, i, 2-4.
[852] Ibid., pp. 4-6.
[853] J.H. Overton, 'The Deists', in Abbey and Overton, *English Church*, i, 213.
[854] Ibid., pp. 234-235.

Bolingbroke offered 'pretentious and verbose inanity'; 'Woolston was probably mad'. Collins, Tindal and Toland were more serious, but inferior to their orthodox opponents.[855] While insincerity and indifference abounded in the church, its theology was characteristically masculine, practical and opposed to superstition. 'The evidences of Christianity were elaborated with a skill and power that had never before been equalled' by Berkeley, Butler and other clergy inclined to place more emphasis on reason than on any sacerdotal pretensions.[856] Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy* had been 'of late years very unduly depreciated'.[857] Lecky tellingly criticised Buckle for exaggerating clerical resistance to the earlier foundation of the Royal Society.[858] The eighteenth century, in his estimation, had taken important steps towards the rationalisation of Christianity, rather than its supersession.

Unbelievers traced rather different ancestries in the thought of the preceding century, which emphasised its secularising effects rather than downplaying them. Frederic Harrison's essay on the eighteenth century counted its chief blessings for the nineteenth century to have lain in the idea of law; the 'genius for synthesis'; and the idea of social reconstruction that had produced the American and French Revolutions and the reformed Parliament. Theologians were conspicuously absent from his accompanying list of consecrated proto-Positive worthies.[859] Leslie Stephen, though sharing certain starting-points with Harrison, was on the other hand deeply preoccupied with the failure of reasonable theology in his *History of English Thought*. He shared the growing desire of his contemporaries properly to historicise a century ignorantly maligned for its 'frigidity and formality'. His desire was given a personal and familial poignancy by the final death, in Leslie and his brother James, of the

[855] W.E.H. Lecky, *History of England in the eighteenth century*, (8 vols, London, 1878-1890), ii, 528.
[856] Ibid., ii, 544-545.
[857] Ibid., ii, v, 170-172.
[858] Ibid., ii, 525n.
[859] 'In philosophy the century numbers – Leibnitz, Vico, Berkeley, Montesquieu, Diderot, D'Alembert, Condorcet, Kant, Turgot, Hume, Adam Smith. In science, it counts Buffon, Linnaeus, Lavoisier, Laplace, Lamarck, Lagrange, Halley, Herschel, Franklin, Priestley, Black, Cavendish, Volta, Galvani, Bichat, and Hunter. To interpret its ideas, it had such masters of speech as Voltaire, Rousseau, Swift, Johnson, Gibbon, Lessing, Goethe, and Burke.' Harrison, 'A few words about the eighteenth century', pp. 370-371.

evangelicalism ebulliently promoted by his grandfather and inherited, somewhat diminished, by his father.[860] Stephen treated the essential inadequacy of eighteenth-century religious thought, almost by prolepsis, as lying in its failure to realise that the rationalist premises adopted by deists and orthodox alike unavoidably ran on to the agnosticism into which Leslie Stephen and his brother, James Fitzjames Stephen, eventually settled. Unlike Hunt or Lecky, he did not regard deists and orthodox as essentially dissimilar; they were alike overpowered by their age.

The preface to the *History of English Thought* announced the tone of the whole. The idea of the work was to give a fuller account of the movement of ‘Tendencies of Religious Thought in England from 1688 to 1750’ that had been ‘so admirably characterised’ in Pattison’s essay.[861] Stephen thought Lechler’s *Geschichte des Englischen Deismus* the best account of that subject; but he added that it neglected the telling relations between the Deists and more orthodox writers, ‘who in reality represent a superficial modification of the same general tendencies of thought.’[862] Though Hunt’s *History of Religious Thought* showed ‘candour and industry’, Hunt was ‘rather an annalist than a historian of thought’. Stephen confessed to differing ‘widely from his estimate – so far as he has revealed it – of the true significance and relative importance of many of the writings concerned.’ Given the differences between their starting principles, ‘it would be strange, indeed, if I were in this respect quite satisfied with his performance.’[863]

Stephen began his *History* with a reflection on why the importance of Hume, whom Stephen foregrounded as an epochal eighteenth-century thinker in the way others looked to Butler, was so little recognised at the time he published his philosophical treatises. This opened a general discussion of the laws of the history of thought. Stephen was notably concerned with

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[860] B.W. Young, *The Victorian eighteenth century. An intellectual history* (Oxford, 2007), pp. [103]-147.
[861] Stephen, *English thought*, i, [v].
[862] Ibid., i, [v].
[863] Ibid., i, vi.

why thought did not advance historically in the ways it logically should. Beneath the succession of great thinkers who really formed only a part of the history of ideas, complex causes operated to etherise past certainties without direct assault; while old superstitions, 'apparently suppressed, break out anew in slightly modified shapes'. Although thought, by Stephen's day, was at 'the scientific stage', there was no neat outwards sweep from the known to the unknown. Childlike conceptions dissolved only very slowly. The imagination was stronger than reason. The connections between an advance in one area and the pious halos surrounding another became evident confusedly and hesitatingly, often following developments in society rather than the thoughts of leading minds. Stephen's argument showed traces of Comte, whose reasoning powers Stephen admired, and whom a few years later Stephen was positively to contrast with Buckle's unhistorical 'English empiricism' and shallow Macaulayan complacency.[864] 'Actual decay may alternate with progress, and even true progress implies some admixture of decay.'[865]

So it was with the history of eighteenth-century religious thought. Theology was one of those imaginative forces which had long outlived its underpinnings in philosophy; the Cambridge Platonists were the last expression of their unconscious and spontaneous union.[866] Stephen took eighteenth-century thought to have begun with Descartes, who resolved to doubt everything, elevating reason above tradition as the source of authoritative belief. Such a position might, Stephen thought, be most obviously turned against elaborate dogmatic systems; but there was no inherent reason why it might not also dissolve those primary axioms Descartes supposed to have discovered in his own mind: God, self, the opposition of soul and matter. While Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hobbes and Locke all did not openly question received doctrine, but only the method of arriving at it, this was not a secure resting-

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[864] L. Stephen, 'An attempted philosophy of history', *FR*, 27:161 (May, 1880), pp. [672]-695.
[865] Stephen, *English thought*, i, 17.
[866] Ibid., i, 79-80.

point for theology.[867] Spinoza was ‘unpardonably thoroughgoing’ in his projection of Cartesian principles, clothing ‘pure Being’ in stated reverence for ‘the concrete Person of popular theology’. Stephen suggested that theologians should be more hostile to the alliance of the Spinozist than to the outright opposition of the atheist. Spinoza pointed to ‘the natural euthanasia of theology’, in which ‘every theological system tends to glide into pantheism’ by so ‘exalting and widening the conception of deity to render it nugatory.’[868] Though Cartesian philosophy was never completely naturalised in England, similar assumptions underpinned both orthodox and deist criticism in the following century. ‘The orthodox divine fears to become a mere deist, and the deist fears lest his theology should fade into pantheism.’[869] More daring seventeenth-century thinkers saw further than later Christian or deist ever did. The latter took their stand upon a philosophy which had already decayed. In its fundamentals, eighteenth-century religious thought was over before it began. Stephen left it to his journalistic essays to make the implications for liberal theologians such as Hunt explicit. Hunt, for his part, recognised and rejected them in an essay on Stephen for the *Contemporary Review*. Hunt supposed that the very fact that the ethical power of Christianity had outlived philosophical assaults and orthodox defences witnessed to its truth; Joseph Butler, the precursor to Maurice, offered more to modern thought than Hume.[870]

For Stephen, this was merely fuzziness, and as such characteristic of the normal course of human thought. Stephen first laid out his views of the course of eighteenth-century English philosophical criticism and its limits, before entering into a detailed history of the controversy between deists and orthodox, calculated to make clear that they both lagged some considerable distance behind Hume’s severance of the chain of reasoning, particularly the

[867] Ibid., i, 21-29.
[868] Ibid., i, 32.
[869] Ibid., i, 33.
[870] Hunt, ‘Mr. Leslie Stephen’, pp. 423, 427.

idea of causation, on which they relied.[871] It was not so much Hume, as Thomas Reid's characteristically 'English' common sense philosophy, avoiding difficult conclusions by converting the *vox populi* into the *vox dei*, which emblematised the religious thought of the century. Stephen consistently stressed the affinities between deist and orthodox. They made farragoes of credible religion by assuming that theology had some meaning, delimited according to personal predilection and subordinated to reason, but without probing its foundations too carefully. The debate between orthodox and deists over the internal evidences – the question of whether unaided reason was adequate to construct a religion - amounted to investing arbitrarily selected traditional conceptions, whether derived from orthodoxy or natural religion, with an appearance of logical and practical necessity.[872] That controversy showed that it was impossible to reconcile the Christian deity with metaphysical optimism, and that religious emotions could not be transferred to abstract nature. In the argument over the 'external' or historic evidences for Christianity, no orthodox answer successfully refuted Hume's contention that no evidence could prove a miracle and Conyers Middleton's that miracle stories proved only the credulity of the narrator.[873] The two sides wore each other out. Whereas Abbey, Overton and Lecky supposed the orthodox to have defeated the deists, to Stephen all that had in fact happened was that the orthodox had met them 'more than half way.'[874] In the second half of the century, the deists fell quiet, and the orthodox became 'drowsy'. Politics in America and France absorbed speculative intellects, and political dissent more often went to Wesley than to Voltaire. 'The rationalist tendencies of the Church rendered it little obnoxious to sceptics'.[875]

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[871] Stephen, *English thought*, i, 34-54.
[872] Ibid., i, 91-191.
[873] Ibid., i, 255-273.
[874] Ibid., i, 169.
[875] Ibid., i, 372-375.

The inadequacies of eighteenth-century thought, according to Stephen, did at least clear the ground for more lasting nineteenth-century solutions. James Cotter Morison, leisured Positivist son of the inventor of the Morison's pills memorably denounced by Carlyle, agreed that this was the main contribution of the deist controversy to which he otherwise ascribed no intrinsic importance: it unravelled yet more of the medieval intellectual world.[876] To Stephen, Hume could not be undone; but absolute scepticism need not be the only result of the demolition of metaphysics. Stephen often referred the inadequacies of the eighteenth century to its want of the historical method, which the nineteenth century had supplied. Whereas Tulloch and Hunt had lauded an historical method understood as confirming the abiding force of innate ideas of God and spirit, Stephen thought history capable of explaining how religious ideas supposed to be universal and objective had arisen. A supposedly innate idea, in truth derived unconsciously from earliest childhood, 'might easily pass itself off as implied in the very structure of the mind.' Locke, illogically, did not entirely free himself from them; and while Hume saw that his own mind on its own proved nothing, he lacked the means of rising out of absolute scepticism to more positive conceptions. It required the comparative method, 'which enables us to trace their origin and development in minds different from our own', to indicate the limits of reasoning upon the contents of what the private philosopher's self-examination revealed.[877]

To Stephen's mind, the historical task was related to a psychological one. Hume's scepticism, for all its power, rested on an illusion. Hume made no essential distinction between perceptions made by active, reasoning man and the perceptions of a polyp. But the mind had an undeniable organising power. Even if the metaphysical reality of causes could not be known in the sense assumed by philosophers before Hume, it was knowable that similar

[876] J. Cotter Morison, 'Leslie Stephen's history of English thought', *MM*, 35:208 (February, 1877), pp. 327-328, 335.

[877] Stephen, *English thought*, i, 23, 30.

conditions produced similar effects. Kant showed that the idea of cause was implied in the subjective faculty of the mind which corresponded to the perceived regularity of the external world; the conditions of mind moulded what was known about experience. The subjective was not inherently unreal, as Hume assumed. Hume was unable to give a basis for the primary elements of knowledge, because he referred only to individual experience. But the faculties of the individual had been built up by the experience of the race. Only by distinguishing perceptions peculiar to the individual from those common to the race could the primary distinction between subject and object be formed.[878] Stephen's judgement of how to move beyond the end-points of eighteenth century thought reflected how agnostics and liberal theologians alike increasingly looked to wider conceptions of induction than Buckle had worked from in order to find the basis of knowledge. Experience was not something that happened to the mind understood as a unitary and passive receptacle, but was more a phenomenon within it.

IV) History and mind

In arguing about the laws of religious change, or in constructing alternative ancestries for modern intellectual positions in the thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, historians had repeatedly come up against the question of what it was possible to know. The problem of whether theology had improved or become discredited since the Reformation could not be answered without taking a position on the sources of knowledge. Was the mind a witness to spiritual realities? Was it merely the passive receptacle for sense-impressions? What was rationality? More started to doubt whether rationalism and empiricism were in fact

[878] Ibid., i, 48-60.

such dominant forces in shaping prevailing ideas, or whether they really were the only way of obtaining truth. In a footnote to his *HRE*, Lecky had disclosed that one of the incidental doubts he entertained about the ultimate power of his favoured historical phenomenon was that the religious conceptions of childhood might overpower the mature judgement of reason, citing recent studies of 'latent consciousness' and 'unconscious cerebration'.[879] Attempts by Buckle and the Positivists to define experience in terms of the impression made by external sense-data on mind construed passively, or physiologically, never won widespread acceptance.

In the latter decades of the century, a number of critics, often under Idealist influence, began to treat personal religious experience as an integrated dimension of transcendent rationality. John Tulloch, the orthodox Church of Scotland historian and philosopher, Robert Flint, and the late-century Anglican pioneer of the psychology of religion, William Inge, made significant connections between historical interpretation, historical experience and the powers of mind.[880] They may be taken to represent a wider change. Towards 1900, doctrinal conservatives became more receptive to the idea of an analogy between the human and divine minds, as the dangers from new philosophical movements which denied the reality or knowableness of absolute truth became more pronounced. Inge's historical study of 'religious experience', to some extent taking its cue from the broadly-diffused Idealism that characterised late-century British intellectual life, was directed against these dangers – among which he listed William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and its pragmatic argument for belief in God. Inge's marked loss of faith in Idealist progressivism in the twentieth century, yet his retention of interest in religious psychology and mysticism, made him a figure who bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as he did in other ways. His

[879] *HRE*, ii, 101n.-103n.
[880] Inge's twentieth-century writings have received more attention than his earlier career: M. Grimley, *Citizenship, community, and the Church of England. Liberal Anglican theories of the state between the wars* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 128-139; Green, *Passing of Protestant England*, pp. 95-134.

response to a changing intellectual environment, though idiosyncratic, witnessed to one way in which the new apologetic challenges of the twentieth century acted to displace the nineteenth-century argumentative patterns examined in this thesis.

Inge was an Anglican, but prior interest in the theological significance of mind, and how this could be demonstrated by historical study of the continuity and development of mental types, was notably marked in Scotland and the products of its universities. John Tulloch here bears comparison with Robert Flint, a younger and more doctrinally conservative Church of Scotland historian and philosopher. Consecutively professor of moral philosophy at St Andrews from 1864 and of divinity at Edinburgh from 1876 to 1903, Flint established a popular reputation as a late and strong defender of Scottish common sense philosophy and of a relatively conservative view of the Church of Scotland's traditional doctrine.[881] Tulloch had supported him in his candidature for the chair of moral philosophy at St Andrews.[882] Both undertook their philosophical trainings, as part of the broad Scottish undergraduate curriculum, before the transformation of Scottish academic philosophy, substantially emanating from the Caird brothers' ascendancy at Glasgow, began in the 1860s.[883] Flint and Tulloch both showed marked loyalty to the 'common sense' tradition of Scottish philosophy which they had learned as undergraduates, and which they tended cautiously to blend with German transcendental conceptions of mind as they advanced in age.

That tendency reflected the general nineteenth-century history of the 'school'. Inaugurated by Thomas Reid in reply to Hume, this egalitarian, anti-intellectual and intuitive philosophical approach proposed that the best answer to scepticism lay in accepting the conclusions of 'common sense'. In practice, this involved both an appeal (though not automatic deference) to the common wisdom of the people, and especially to a descriptive psychology of the

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[881] Obitts, 'Robert Flint'; A.P.F. Sell, 'Flint, Robert (1838-1910)', *ODNB*.
[882] Oliphant, *Memoir*, p. 199.
[883] Macmillan, *Robert Flint*, pp. 225-226.

process of belief-formation, both of which were taken to reveal things in themselves and so prove traditional religious truth-claims.[884] This tradition was taken in a new and, for a time, wildly popular direction by Sir William Hamilton between the publication of his *Edinburgh Review* essay on 'the philosophy of the unconditioned' in 1829 and his death in 1856. Hamilton aimed to show, with the Reidians, that absolute knowledge was possible, but also to reconcile this position with an acceptance of Kant's argument for the inaccessibility of things in themselves. It was a hard task. Anticipating Mansel, Hamilton could not escape arguing that because humans became so hopelessly lost when trying to fathom questions of God, freedom and immortality, they were compelled to accept those postulates: a position famously savaged by John Stuart Mill.[885] Flint and Tulloch both stayed more loyal to the older, 'realist' version of common sense philosophy than Hamilton, who teetered on the edge of agnosticism. To confirm it, they both looked to history.

Tulloch often claimed that the very fact that an overwhelming number of past higher thinkers and spiritual heroes had drawn inspiration from what they regarded as an objectively-knowable divine plane itself furnished a powerful argument, if not the most powerful argument, for the external reality of the spiritual sphere. He admitted that the 'the mere satisfaction that a religion gives to its votaries could never be held as evidence of its divinity.'[886] But the nature of mind could attest the truth of religion in general. He followed Neander's admiring treatment of Pascal, for Pascal recognised the incapacity of man to demonstrate all things known to be real. 'There is, as he believes, a primitive endowment of spiritual instinct in man, which looks forth upon a higher world of reality.'[887] Only religion, and not the contemporary gospels of science or Arnoldian culture, could have inspired the

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[884] See Rylance, *Victorian psychology*, pp. [21]-39.
[885] A. Ryan, 'Hamilton, Sir William Stirling (1788-1856)', *ODNB*; G. Graham, 'A re-examination of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy', in Graham, *Scottish philosophy*, pp. [47]-66.
[886] Tulloch, *Beginning life*, pp. 126-127.
[887] Idem, *Pascal* (Edinburgh, 1878), pp. 187-188.

action of Xavier, Heber, Livingstone or Selwyn. Religious intuition could not be other than a real testament to that which was intuited.[888]

Tulloch's undimmed respect for Scottish philosophy helps to explain why he found this argument so convincing. Together with the common sense philosophers – and despite their large differences, with Newman - he made a bogey-man out of Hume.[889] In fairly classical form, Scottish common sense provided a central part of his early treatise on *Theism*.[890] But he was open to developments within the tradition. Tulloch admired James Ferrier, Flint's predecessor at St Andrews, for offering what he took to be a sounder defence than Hamilton of the essential point of the common sense tradition, albeit not of the particular arguments of Reid and Thomas Brown. Ferrier did this by making a defence of religious truth, informed by German critical philosophy, on the basis of the reality of consciousness, as distinct from the semi-physical and potentially materialist investigation of mind on which early common sense philosophers had relied. Tulloch approved of Ferrier's view that consciousness marked man off from animals, and far from emerging directly from sense-experience, often asserted itself against mere experience.[891] The subjective witnessed to the objectively spiritual. Agnosticism was not man's normative condition. Tulloch's essay on Kant and his categories of understanding presented the originator of that 'tangled mass of confusion' as 'an agnostic before the birth of Agnosticism' and 'a positive philosopher before Positivism'.[892] Neander's studies of the historical realisation of progressive Christian thought easily resonated with one socialised as Tulloch had been. Even Hegel came to seem preferable to pessimistic philosophers such as Leopardi and Schopenhauer, who denied the existence of ultimate value,

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[888] Idem, 'The essentials of religion', pp. 139-144.
[889] For example idem, 'Modern scientific materialism', p. 523.
[890] Idem, *Theism. The witness of reason and nature to an all-wise and beneficent creator* (Edinburgh, 1855), pp. 6-7.
[891] Idem, 'Professor Ferrier and the higher philosophy', in his *Modern theories*, pp. 337-374; on Ferrier, see J. Keefe, 'James Frederick Ferrier. The return of Idealism and the rejection of common sense', in Graham, *Scottish philosophy*, pp. [67]-94.
[892] J. Tulloch, 'Back to Kant; or, Immanuel Kant and the Kantian Revival', in his *Modern theories*, pp. 414-415, 423-424.

and whom Tulloch painted as reviving the intellectually prehistoric creed of Buddhism. Hegel at least pictured 'a *rational* world, of which "consciousness" was not an accident, but the essence'; he 'sought the solution of existence in some form of Reason; Schopenhauer sought it in *unreason*.'[893] There could be no progress, Tulloch thought, unless it was also believed that progress was real, by virtue of belonging to a rational order grounded in providence.

Tulloch's unsystematic transmutation of common sense principles of knowledge into a Christianised philosophy of history found a parallel in the writings of Robert Flint. Flint laboured throughout his life to prove that man was capable of attaining real and adequate knowledge of self and God; this preoccupation unified his philosophical, theological and historical interests. In common with Tulloch, he admired Ferrier for showing that the roots of knowledge lay in consciousness, whose powers could not be constrained by the limits of Kantian phenomenalism.[894] But in the course of vindicating the inferential attestation of the divine by and in consciousness, Flint – despite his doctrinal conservatism - became more open to German transcendentalism. His first biographer, Donald Macmillan, claimed with some truth that Flint never quite resolved the inherent tension between the old, descriptive psychology favoured by traditional Scottish philosophy; and the twofold impact of Kantianism and evolutionary ideas. A true Scottish theological professor, in Macmillan's view, Flint considered that the task of the philosophy of religion was primarily to relate the truths of God's word to the fundamental principles of human nature. That did not, however, effectively touch upon the ultimate question of the limits of the understanding.[895]

Macmillan's picture did quite not convey Flint's range of interests and their development over time, which evolved in relation to significant contemporary disagreements over how to

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[893] Idem, 'Pessimism. Leopardi, Schopenhauer, Hartmann', in his *Modern theories*, p. 196.
[894] Obitts, 'Robert Flint', p. 52.
[895] Macmillan, *Robert Flint*, pp. 218-227.

interpret the religious implications of consciousness and how a true philosophy of mind should comprehend and interpret past human religious experience. Flint's Baird Lectures on *Theism*, published in 1877, testify to his early period of relatively uncomplicated allegiance to common sense principles. There were clear rational proofs of God's existence, he supposed, which were inferences from the 'facts' of God's works. The mind could only rise to God by the exercise of all that was most essential to its constitution: God was the perfect expression of causality, will, and intelligence.[896] The order of nature implied a superintending mind.[897] The presence of a moral law in the conscience implied a law giver, which was confirmed by the historical record of righteousness exalting nations and sin destroying them.[898] Flint interwove these arguments with remarks targeted at a series of supposedly modish and pretentious targets. Kant's position that God could not be proved, yet still '*is*', was either obviously absurd or used 'the term proof in some extraordinary sense, fitted only to perplex and mislead.'[899] Schleiermacher's decision to rest religion on feeling showed that he and his followers were 'destitute of a sound knowledge of psychology'.[900] Positivism was not a stage of religion; merely another form of its denial.[901]

By the time Flint published his major work on *Agnosticism* in 1903, the positions he had adopted in the 1870s, while by no means disavowed, had been adapted to incorporate some of the views he had formerly strongly and straightforwardly repudiated. New threats had emerged in the meantime. He adduced Ritschlianism among Kantianism's new tendrils, which effected a dangerous severance between the provinces of the intellect and faith by making the essence of Christianity lie in the moral impression produced by Christ on the apostles, seemingly making systematic theology and the historicity of revelation irrelevant

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[896] R. Flint, *Theism. Being the Baird Lecture for 1876* (Edinburgh and London, 1877), pp. 64-68.
[897] Ibid., pp. 131-143.
[898] Ibid., pp. 210-230.
[899] Ibid., pp. 59-60 and n.
[900] Ibid., p. 86.
[901] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

questions.[902] Flint now thought, however, that Kant had at least directed attention to how far theism and theology depended on 'a true criticism or science of cognition'. This criticism must adapt Kant's position that knowledge synthesises contingent impressions and necessary conditions. It must also circumvent the problem of Kant's insistence that we know only the conditioned, by affirming that the necessary conditions of thought were themselves unconditioned; that was to say, they were part of the idea of God. This view led Flint into endorsing, against Hamilton and Mansel, Hegel's and Schelling's argument that there must also be an Absolute that was the ground of all relationship. The Christian Absolute would incorporate all that was true in pantheism, whilst excluding its falsehoods. To help smooth the way to that argumentative outcome, Flint proposed that the apprehension of God should be understood as a dynamic movement of all mental faculties. The immanence and many-sidedness of divine activity – as cause, as shaping evolutionary order, as underpinning human progress – helped to confirm the truth of Trinitarianism over Unitarianism to him. It was becoming increasingly clear, Flint contended in common with several of the critics examined in chapter two, that Trinitarianism satisfied a more comprehensive view of reason and better explained the dynamic aspects of man's religious experience in time than simple monotheism.[903]

To Flint, historical experience vindicated and witnessed to his evolving epistemological views. The theistic inference derivable from the elements of human consciousness suggested ways to interpret history as a religious whole. Flint's most substantial works were his studies of *The Philosophy of History*, in which he critiqued past attempts at totalising interpretations of the past as a prelude to his own projected effort to determine the true law of historical

[902] R. Flint, *Agnosticism* (Edinburgh and London, 1903), pp. 580-581. Flint was one of the last Church of Scotland divinity professors to maintain strong opposition to Ritschlianism: Obitts, 'Robert Flint', p. 4.
[903] Flint, *Agnosticism*, pp. 581-595.

development: a goal which he died before he could even begin to accomplish.[904] In the first instalment, published in 1874, Flint noted Victor Cousin's argument that the wants of the human mind were reducible to five fundamental elements, manifested both in individual life and in the history of the race. The idea of the useful corresponded to mathematics, physical science, industry and political economy. The idea of the just gave rise to civil society, the state and jurisprudence. The idea of the beautiful fostered art. The idea of God expressed itself in religion and worship. The idea of truth in itself produced philosophy. These views earned for Cousin an admiration which Flint usually denied to highly speculative historical philosophers. For 'M. Cousin had the great merit of seeing distinctly how psychology and the philosophy of history are related.' He realised that the science of history was properly psychological, presupposing a view of the fundamental powers and affections of the human mind. 'Historical analysis', Flint agreed, 'may supplement and correct, but can neither be severed from nor substituted for, psychological analysis.'[905]

Flint built on that assumption in his own apologetic writing. In a lecture to divinity students published in 1903, Flint argued that just as all science started from experience, so must theology begin from the history of religion. While the Positivist did study the history of religion, Flint argued, he did so beginning from the polemical assumption that religion was false. But the more the course of philosophy, art and moral life were studied, the less likely it was that they could be viewed as illusory. Religion was verified by its capacity to sustain piety, virtue and purity. 'If the history of the world be, as has been said, the judgement of the world, it is incredible that that judgment should be the condemnation of a fact so permanent and universal as religion.' To believe the reverse was not empiricism, but pessimism. It was a sign of the pressure Flint felt to be pressing in on revealed religion that such a defence of

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[904] Idem, *The philosophy of history in France and Germany* (2 vols, Edinburgh and London, 1874); Idem, *Historical philosophy in France and French Belgium and Switzerland* (Edinburgh and London, 1893).
[905] Idem, *philosophy of history*, pp. 174-175.

human spiritual powers should have come from one who, unlike Tulloch, counted himself an orthodox Calvinist.[906]

Flint was thus increasingly drawn from old-fashioned common sense into Idealist modes of thought, though not Idealism proper, as he worked out the implications of his position that there was an analogy between the individual consciousness and the divine mind that underpinned – suffused would still be too strong a word - the world-process. Tulloch, more doctrinally liberal but a temperamentally less systematic thinker than Flint, was not drawn that far. Tulloch and Flint were among those who applied themselves to showing that religious subjectivity had its own sphere, sealed off from Positivist or agnostic encroachment. Their concern was to prove that God's existence and attributes could be inferred from the constitution of the mind. But common sense philosophers, even those who registered contact with post-Kantian thought, always left themselves open to the objection that the psychological phenomena they described did not in fact warrant the inferences they supposed to be necessary; subjectivity witnessed only to itself. The Idealism upon which Flint came to look favourably was, to its more thoroughgoing advocates, a way of avoiding the problems involved in supposing that mind was essentially separate from divinity.

The first and second chapters showed how, in the later decades of the century, Idealism increasingly provided doctrinal conservatives with new reasons for urging the necessity of old formulations. Authority and deductive logic gave discursive way to intuitive reason and the validity of spiritual as well as phenomenal experience in history. By bridging the particular and the universal, Idealism also offered ways of avoiding the potentially subjectivist implications of a focus on the internal contents of the religious consciousness and what they revealed. William Inge, the most important late-century British student of

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[906] Idem, 'Tendencies of the age with reference to the Church and Clergy', in his *On Theological, Biblical, and other Subjects* (Edinburgh and London, 1905), pp. 95-105.

mysticism and religious psychology, pursued these interests on the basis of Idealist premises. Inge was a fellow of Hertford College, Oxford, from 1888 and, after a brief spell in parish ministry, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge from 1907 until his appointment to the deanery of St Paul's in 1911. His widely influential research, which he later combined with well-paying journalistic assaults on democracy, socialism, and all forms of sentimentality, was essentially historical.[907] He investigated the components of religious consciousness, and the normative views of religion they suggested, from the writings of past mystics. He posited that mysticism, far from being occult or mad, was in fact truly rational. To establish the fact, he argued that historically-approachable mysticism was the closest possible expression of the fundamental Christian truth of the unity, though not the identity, of the divine and human natures. He never departed from this view. In his early writings, he combined it with what was by then a conventional belief that historical progress was a real and necessary implication of the presence of the divine reason in mankind. But under the shocks of the twentieth century – Inge died in 1954, at the age of 93 – early hints became resolute statements that God should be placed absolutely beyond history. Inge gave up the notion that all sides of reality were ultimately and rationally reconcilable in a religious principle, an idea central to late-Victorian Idealism, in favour of a more tentative and partial religious apologetic characteristic of the twentieth century.

Inge was convinced that mysticism brought together the elements of true reason. He set out the first major exposition of this contention in his 1899 Bampton Lectures on *Christian Mysticism*.[908] Inge first distinguished the true, proto-Protestant mysticism of northern Europe from Roman Catholic credulity and supernaturalism. Nor was it pantheism. Nor was it that occultism with which psychical research superficially obliterated the distinction between

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[907] M. Grimley, 'Inge, William Ralph (1860-1954)', *ODNB*.

[908] W.R. Inge, *Christian mysticism. Considered in eight lectures delivered before the University of Oxford* (London, 1899).

matter and spirit.[909] Rather, it began in 'that dim consciousness of the *beyond* which is part of our nature as human beings'.[910]

> Mysticism arises when we try to bring this higher consciousness into relation with the other contents of our minds. Religious Mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realise the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or, more generally, as *the attempt to realise, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal*.[911]

Mysticism rested on several propositions. The soul had the capacity to discern spiritual truth. To know God, man must partake of the divine nature, for he can only know what is akin to himself. Sensuality and selfishness blocked off that channel of the divine, of which the true hierophant was love. The practice of mysticism, to judge from its historical instances, involved several stages. It began in contrition and amendment. The 'illuminative life' followed, in which all faculties were concentrated on God. The final stage was 'the unitive or contemplative life', in which the mystic beheld God face to face. As the ideal limit of this process was union with God, the process was infinite. Inge played down the role of visions in the mystical life, claiming that no mystic attached any real importance to them. So the mystic, considered altogether, had no interest 'in appealing to a faculty "above reason," if reason is used in its proper sense, as the logic of the whole personality'. There was nothing supernatural or supernaturalist about mysticism.[912] But it did transcend that 'shallow rationalism' which regarded data as a fixed quantity known to all, to be worked on solely by formal logic. The real basis of mysticism, just as it was the basis of all true philosophy, was the Johannine doctrine of the Logos.[913] Mysticism, thought Inge, presumed the unity of all existence and took the human mind to be the throne of the divine reason that permeated God,

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[909] Ibid., vii-x.
[910] Ibid., pp. 4-5.
[911] Ibid., p. 5.
[912] Ibid., pp. 3-20.
[913] On the doctrine of the Logos, see chapter two above.

Christ and the history of the universe.[914] The reason spoke through conscience, which strove 'to convert the human organism into an organ of itself'. Inge was fond of Plotinus' maxim that man was a microcosm of the universe.[915]

Inge's respect for mysticism can be contrasted with the strong hostility to it of both old-fashioned churchmen and Positivists. Both, in their radically different ways, claimed to comprehend reality by syllogisms and offered clear-cut views of the relationship between the knowing subject and the known object. Frederic Harrison, with his physiological view of mind, had disparaged how 'the quietist, the mystic, the poetic temperament can all find shelter under a Theism which never seeks to be expressed in terms, and can seldom be treated as pointing to any practical issue.'[916] One can imagine the same words being spoken, on a different basis, by William Palmer of Worcester College, Oxford, who dismissed mysticism for its indifference to external evidences.[917] The certainty mysticism offered to Inge was very different, proceeding from a view of mind which assumed that the human subject found its end in the divine object, and which made sustaining an absolute distinction between the two problematic. Inge blamed Kant for the unreal and hardened binary between subject and object which had overtaken contemporary philosophy.[918] The study of religious psychology undermined it, and offered one way of arriving at 'the idea of a common Christianity' which earlier Victorians had also searched for; although Inge did not think a formal reunion of the churches ever attainable.[919]

In his earlier writings, Inge was inclined to assess progress and regression in the history of religion in terms of the success and retardation of the mystical principle. He associated

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[914] Inge, *Christian mysticism*, pp. 28-29.
[915] Ibid., pp. 33-34.
[916] Harrison, *evolution of religion*, p. 66.
[917] Palmer, *Doctrine of development*, viii.
[918] W.R. Inge, *Personal Idealism and mysticism. The Paddock Lectures for 1906 delivered at the General Seminary New York* (London, 1907), p. 97.
[919] Idem, *The church and the age* (London, 1912), pp. 63-64.

normal and rational mysticism with Protestantism *avant la lettre*, and rejected claims that it was un-English. The Brethren of the Common Life of late-medieval Germany offered ‘a mild and practical religion of experience’. The ‘gentle piety, simple inwardness, and personal devotion to Christ’ of Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* showed ‘the real tendencies of the movement of which it is the crown and chief glory.’[920] He conceived of the spiritual history of man as the authority of the inner light struggling against the efforts of false authorities to foreclose it.[921] Lecturing in 1912, he insisted that to deny ‘real progress’ in man was to deprive ‘history of all interest and the time-process of all rational meaning’; he understood it to mean the slow and often-interrupted teleological realisation of the God-consciousness in man, which marked him off from lower animals.[922] Inge only qualifiedly distanced mysticism from the act of historical interpretation. He said of Newman’s self-centredness in an essay of 1912 that ‘even his historical portraits are reconstructed from his inner consciousness; hence their historical falsity – all ages are mixed in his histories – and their philosophical truth’.[923] Mysticism itself, however, always cautioned Inge against identifying God or divinity with the world-process in the way that stronger Idealists were inclined to do. One of the ways Inge distanced mysticism from pantheism in his 1899 Bampton Lectures was by describing pantheism as anything that regarded the cosmic process as a process of God’s becoming.[924] There could be no progress in God. ‘As for the millennium of predicted humanity on this earth, which some Positivists and others dream of, - Christianity has nothing to say against it, but science has a great deal.’[925]

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[920] Idem, ‘Introduction’ to *The Life of blessed Henry Suso by himself*, trans. T.F. Knox, 2nd edn (London, 1913), xxvii-xxviii.
[921] W.R. Inge, *Authority and the inner light. Delivered in St. Peter’s Church, Liverpool, on June 3rd, 1912* (Liverpool, 1913), p. 23.
[922] Idem, *Church and the age*, pp. 28-30, 40-41.
[923] Idem, ‘Cardinal Newman’, in his *Outspoken Essays* (London, 1919), p. 182.
[924] Idem, *Christian mysticism*, p. 119.
[925] Ibid., pp. 323n.-324n.

Inge developed this conception of mysticism, accessing and participating in universal reason, in opposition to what he thought were misinterpretations of religious experience whose contemporary purchase indicated the onset of a wider malaise. He distanced his position from the 'pure metaphysicians', by which term he meant Hegel rather than the British Idealists he admired, who improperly read mysticism in the light of their own 'Pantheism and Determinism'. William James's 1901-1902 Gifford Lectures on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, treating mysticism in the context of a wider phenomenon, presented a target at the other extreme from panlogism. Inge appreciated James's observation that the evident neuroticism of many devout did not militate against the purported reality of their spiritual experiences. Many great intellects were mad; the origin of an idea did not affect its value.[926] But Inge came out firmly against James' 'pragmatic' argument, present in the *Varieties* but more fully developed in his *Pragmatism*, that the existential value of an idea was ultimately the question upon which the truth or otherwise of that idea turned.[927] Juxtaposing the rational certainty of Idealist philosophers to the dogmatic certainty of John Henry Newman, James insisted that universal reason, from the very fact of its failure to convince everyone, was in fact no such thing; reason took root in subjective experience.[928] Having denied that religious truth admitted full proof, James defended his lectures' presence in a series dedicated to natural theology by maintaining that this was not itself the pivotal issue. It was verifiable, on the basis of a science of religious experience, that religious experience fostered love and personal happiness. It was enough to say that 'the true is what works well'.[929]

Inge was unsettled by this line of reasoning, and associated it with the many other kinds of insurgent irrationalism he saw coursing through the intellectual atmosphere of the turn of the

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[926] W.R. Inge, *Light, life and love. Selections from the German mystics of the middle ages* (London, 1904), xlviii-xlix; W. James, *The varieties of religious experience. A study in human nature*, ed. M. Bradley (Oxford, 2012), pp. [11]-28.
[927] Idem, *Pragmatism, a new name for some old ways of thinking: popular lectures on philosophy* (London, 1907).
[928] Idem, *Varieties*, pp. 331-332.
[929] Ibid., p. [348].

century. Inge's formation owed more to his undergraduate contact with Plato and Aristotle than to William Hamilton or Thomas Reid, but he shared the keen resistance of Flint and Tulloch to incipient contemporary assaults on the ultimate significance of human rationality, the rationality of history, and curtailments of the province of Christian reason in favour of emotion or arbitrary will. William James was but one instance of a wider challenge. Leslie Stephen's agnosticism, to Inge, fixed the limits of verifiable human knowledge too narrowly, for it was impossible to maintain that religious experience was any more a dream than friendship or aesthetics. Agnosticism was, ultimately, a mere republication of unconstructive scepticism.[930] Inge was fonder of the Apollonian Germany of Goethe than that of Nietzsche or Herman Lotze, a Göttingen apostate from Hegelian rationalism who emphasised that feeling was the only genuine portal into reality.[931] Inge was pleased to remark in 1899 that 'while in Germany philosophy is falling more and more into the hands of the empirical school, our own thinkers are nearly all staunch idealists.'[932] Yet his own Idealist convictions, at least his presupposition that humanity was working its way towards a spiritual end in time, did not survive contact with the darker facts of the next century.

The experience of twentieth-century war and politics seems to have extinguished Inge's early if never wholehearted faith in progress and, apparently, his belief that all sides of reality could eventually be integrated within a Christian philosophical perspective. 'The period of expansion is over, and we must adjust our view of earthly providence to a state of decline', he wrote in 1919, after the guns had temporarily stopped.[933] In the aftermath of the next war, Inge wrote a new preface for his dyspeptic pen-portrait of *England*, first published in 1926. There he explicitly opposed the lamentable actual course of recent and more distant history to

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[930] W.R. Inge, 'Wisdom', in his *Faith and knowledge. Sermons* (Edinburgh, 1904), pp. 32-35.
[931] Idem, *Personal Idealism*, pp. 103-104, 122-124; Idem, 'Humility', in his *Faith and knowledge*, pp. 114-115. On Lotze in British Idealism, see Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 22-24.
[932] Inge, *Christian mysticism*, xii and n.
[933] Idem, 'Our present discontents', in his *Outspoken Essays*, p. 26.

the solace and promise of mysticism. Inge recalled how 'the modern version of millenarianism was evolutionary optimism', which even Bishop Creighton had come to extol. 'Kind-hearted humanitarians' had expelled the devil from the Christian system, 'and to their surprise God took His departure'. The churches were emptying; western civilisation, as Spengler saw, had outlived its creative phase. But if history no longer could be said to correspond to what Christians had convinced themselves they ought to expect, that did not mean that religion was futile. 'Church history is not an edifying story', but it was not true, as Chesterton had said, that Christianity had never been tried. 'The real apostolic succession has been in the lives of the saints', although they numbered in the thousands rather than the millions. Revelation could only be of truths, not events. The Catholic modernist George Tyrrell 'once predicted that the time may come when nothing will be left of Christianity except mysticism and the law of love'. Insofar as that described the religion of St Paul, the prospect did not leave Inge dejected.[934] The larger hope had to be scaled back, its projection onto the history of the race slowly drawn back into the experience of the individual. Inge's writings, spanning the intellectual worlds of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, recorded how one influential thinker's commitment to the role of mysticism in modern religious life and apologetic survived the relative eclipse of the historical idealism with which he had, in earlier life, associated it. Inge's development was highly individual; and there were many other ways, besides psychological argument, in which early-twentieth-century thinkers defended religious belief.[935] But by coming to privilege individual consciousness over historical process – the subjective over the objective – as the route to truth, Inge's development expressed an important aspect of the transition from nineteenth- to twentieth-century intellectual conditions. As the revolt of Coleridge and Newman against putatively

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[934] Idem, 'Preface' to his *England*, rev. edn (New York and Toronto, 1953), viii-xviii.
[935] On which, see Bowler, *Reconciling science and religion.*

external and mechanical Enlightenment philosophy had been before him, it was also a new iteration of an ancient intellectual-historical cycle.

V) Conclusion

Attempts to use scientific history to define and normalise rationality raised deep questions about what it meant to think historically, and what the sources of historical progress truly were. In historical Positivism and H. T. Buckle, an isolated child in more ways than one, theories of historical progression were predicated on a denial of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge in general and the importation of theological categories into history in particular. The result was not a victory for ‘objectivity’, but the laying down of the polemical roots of what was, in the era of mid-twentieth century high modernism, to become the sociological and historical orthodoxy of secularisation theory. Vigorous Victorian counter-narratives, stressing theological purification and the Christian or even Protestant character of modernity, took shape from Lecky onwards. Those challenges to the idea of religious or at least Christian decline were themselves dependent on ideas of admissible knowledge that were not unproblematic. Leslie Stephen’s backward projection of agnostic argument was one important contribution to a more general debate about the powers of the human mind to know God, which prompted deeper study, among anti-agnostics, of the religious consciousness and whether history, as a whole, could be understood as the outworking of a transcendent mind. The survival of Comte, Buckle and Stephen as points of reference in twentieth-century intellectual debates, while Tulloch, Flint and Inge fell into an obscurity which belies their contemporary resonance, shows which side had the greater long-term success. The reasons for that outcome lie, however, more in the ruptures of the twentieth

century than in the strangely foreign and religiously anxious world of Victorian public argument.

Conclusion

At one of those symbolic turning-points upon which autobiographies, perhaps more so than the lives they depict, often hinge, the Reverend Mark Pattison's *Memoirs of an Oxford Don* relate the moment at which their author resolved to take his leave of ecclesiastical history. It had been the reception accorded to his contribution to *Essays and Reviews* on 'Tendencies of religious thought in England, 1688-1750', he wrote, that finally drove him from the subject he had originally been induced to study by Newman. 'So wholly extinct is scientific theology in the Church of England' that 'our clergy knew only of pamphlets which must be either for or against one of the parties in the Church.' 'We were at cross purposes … I resolved to wash my hands of theology and even of Church history, seeing that there existed in England no proper public for either.'[936] Pattison's essay was offensive because, in common with his *Memoirs*, it was completely free from that highly-wrought *pietas* which has placed such a formidable barrier between twenty-first century minds and the typical patterns of Victorian thought and prose. Pattison's argument that religion, like all belief, could not exist apart from historical development was becoming a familiar, and not necessarily subversive assumption among his contemporaries. His further supposition that development had in fact rendered religious commitment less rather than more secure, however, made his argument unsettling. The way in which Pattison historicised historicism helps to encapsulate both the attraction, and the inherent limitations, of approaching the history of Christianity as though it were a vital raw material for the remodelling and fortification of Victorian religion.

'Tendencies of religious thought', suggestive for different reasons both to John Hunt and Leslie Stephen, offered a history of the rise and extinction of eighteenth-century deism. The

[936] Pattison, *Memoirs*, pp. 157, 159. Pattison's claim was untrue, for as has been seen, church history became a significant target in his later studies of the history of literature and scholarship.

high church Anglican, Pattison noted, omitted the period between 1688 and 1833 from church history altogether.[937] But it had inescapably established the limits of modern thought. The belief of one period was, he continued, inevitably conditioned by that of the phase preceding it. Religious truth was not simply discerned by the application of some favoured principle of an individual – whether along catholic or Protestant lines – but by what antecedent development had left thinkable.[938] The eighteenth century's prioritisation of reason as the proper test for religious claims had, to his mind, settled nothing. But its dissipation of the old assumption that biblical and ecclesiastical authority was self-evident was an historical fact, from which, he hinted, the nineteenth century could not escape. Perhaps that is why the high church historian, Alfred Plummer, remarked in a letter to the dissentient Catholic Ignaz von Döllinger that Pattison's essay was 'one of the most sceptical, though apparently most innocent of the essays in "Essays and Reviews."'[939] Pattison's was a polemical move at the time. But he pointed to an important truth when he positioned the nineteenth century as the heir of the 'rationalist' eighteenth, however reluctant it may have been to bear this mantle. Kant, he said, merely gave formal definition and recognised position to a situation that was by Kant's time generally prevalent. In demolishing the traditional assumptions of theology and metaphysics, and declaring that credible religion had to be grounded in moral self-consciousness or 'practical reason', Kant distilled the religious implications of Enlightenment-era epistemology.[940] However much Victorian religious thinkers resented this inheritance from their predecessor culture, they struggled to escape from it.

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[937] Idem, 'Tendencies of religious thought in England, 1688-1750', p. [387].
[938] Ibid., pp. 388-389.
[939] Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Doellingeriana II: Plummer to Döllinger, n.d., letter 83.
[940] Cf. Smart et al., *Nineteenth century religious thought*, i, 5, where the editors take Kant to mark the beginning of their subject.

Not everyone agreed with Kant, of course. But for those who accepted that logical deduction from self-authenticating scriptural texts or the self-disclosing power of tradition no longer provided authoritative bases for religious commitment, the history of religion often acquired a new interest. History might be understood as the evolving record of man's collective religious experience. In ways often connected to the filtration of post-Kantian German historical philosophy into British intellectual life, it increasingly was. Different writers looked to the conscience, or to the poetic or philosophical faculties as ways of making historical experience religiously intelligible in an environment where, as Pattison ended his essay by saying, an accepted basis of religious authority – whether on a text, an institution, an inward light, or on reason - was unclear, but widely sought-for.[941] 'Put not from you what you have here found', Newman wrote in conclusion to his *Essay on Development*. 'Regard it not as mere matter of present controversy; set not out resolved to refute it'.[942] What Newman thought of as his indefectible certitude appeared to others to amount to the wilful foreclosure of rational argument. But connections of the kind Newman drew between the historical interpretation of religion, the religious implications of history, and the province of the conscience became very widespread. Mandell Creighton insisted that the deliberate moralisation of past experience was inseparable from present-day determinations of value in the Hulsean Lectures, addressing the problem of religious persecution in church history, which he delivered before Cambridge University in 1893 and 1894.

> It is not history which teaches conscience uprightness, it is conscience which teaches it to history. The accomplished fact is corrupting: it is for us to correct it by persisting in our ideal. The soul moralises the past that it may not be demoralised by it. Like the alchemists of the Middle Ages, it only finds in the crucible of experience the gold which itself has poured in before.[943]

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941 Pattison, 'Tendencies of religious thought in England, 1688-1750', p. 430.
942 Newman, *Essay*, p. 453.
943 M. Creighton, *Persecution and Tolerance. Being the Hulsean Lectures preached before the University of Cambridge in 1893-4* (London and New York, 1895), pp. 29-30 and n.; he was quoting from the Swiss philosopher Henri-Frédéric Amiel's *Journal Intime*.

Such statements make it difficult to suppose that Victorian historical thought represented merely the abstracted and passive register of cultural and intellectual changes that really took place elsewhere. It is only possible to explain the seriousness with which contemporaries sought to understand and deploy the past by regarding history as inherent to how Victorians perceived, criticised and tried to change lived experience. Religion, and the apparent power of religion, were parts of that reality. Historical interpretation, and the dissemination of historical types, were intrinsic to liberal attempts to bring inherited religion into greater harmony with the authority newly ascribed to the subjective self, and to draw attention to the shared Christian foundations of religion and society beneath national and denominational divisions. 'The last was an objective age, at whose cool assumptions we have learned to smile; the present is a subjective and critical age, at whose rash denials the next will no less probably smile', John Tulloch wrote in his advice book for young men, *Beginning Life*.[944] The aim of religious philosophy was accordingly to unite the historical and objective with the inward and conscientious dimensions of Christianity; each must regulate the other. Tulloch made this observation in relation to the biblical record. In his own writings, however, he applied it much more often to the course of Christian history; and in his belief that post-apostolic history unignorably illuminated the true nature of religion, as to which Newman became for him a kind of Caliban, he was far from unusual. It was in no small measure as a result of these and analogous arguments, the attraction of which spread beyond the self-consciously liberal circles in which they first crystallised, that conventional understandings of doctrinal orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and the essence of Protestantism became notably less severe, scholastic and politically embedded, and more ethicised, idealised and personalised, between the 1840s and the 1900s. Positive reconstruction, more than internal

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[944] Tulloch, *Beginning life*, pp. 47-48.

secularisation and steady intellectual retreat, best describes what Victorian religious liberals believed they were accomplishing.

In this process there occurred a certain convergence between the ways in which late-Victorians discussed the histories of early orthodoxy, medieval Catholicism, and Reformation Protestantism. Victorian interest in these subjects had initially been provoked most strongly by a succession of interconnected alarms: dangers to the Church of England, the threat of 'Popery' or the blessings of medievalism, the apparent enervation of reformed religion. But by the 1900s, a large number of Victorian historical thinkers – ranging from high Anglicans to undogmatic enthusiasts for the Renaissance – had become more concerned to use religious history to vindicate, in different ways, a spiritual over a material conception of the bases and ends of human values, motivations and achievement. Deliberately idealist readings of the religious past offered something more to late-Victorians anxious about the direction of Positivism and scientific naturalism than Stanley, Milman or Hatch now provided. If this idealising trend amounted to a further stage in the slow dissolution of Christian authority in the west, beginning with Erasmus or Socinus and ending somewhere around 1968 – a proposition too large to be entered into here - most of those who promoted it during the Victorian period were unaware of and, indeed, directly opposed to such an ending. 'It is now generally recognised that an idea is best understood when thus unfolded along the whole line of its history', Tulloch announced in his 1876 Croall Lectures, administered by the Edinburgh divinity professors and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland for the purpose of expounding the evidences for natural and revealed religion. 'Nay,' he continued, it was now clear 'that the best verification of the idea, or proof of its being true and not false, is just the

manner in which it is seen from the beginning to cleave to the human mind and heart as a living possession.'[945]

Tulloch's confidence, as has been seen, was widely shared. Yet even among those most convinced of the power of the historical method to sift, dislodge and reconfirm religious claims, doubts surfaced about the capacity of historical thought to yield positive propositions that would not themselves be overborne by history in their turn. 'The historian of ideas is no more bound to constitute himself the judge of their truth or falsity,' wrote Robert Flint in a preface to a translation of the *evangelisch* Jena theologian Bernhard Pünjer's work on the *History of the Christian Philosophy of Religion*, 'than the historian of events is bound to pronounce on their wisdom or folly, rightness or wrongness'. The historian was not a critic, he wrote: their motto should be 'Darstellung, nicht Beurtheilung' - representation, not judgement. In Flint's work, as in that of many other professedly impartial critics, representation in practice invariably became a form of judgement: but his ideal of keeping them separate, by no means shared by all late Victorians, pointed to a certain instability in his and others' reliance on history to provide a form of spiritual epistemology.[946] Frederic William Farrar's *History of Interpretation* showed a similar duality. He simultaneously held that 'the History of Exegesis' – by tending towards the historical method - 'leaves us with a Bible more precious than the old, because more comprehensible', and also that no correct theory of biblical interpretation emerged from that history, even though it disproved many false ones.[947] The idea that history could save and purify belief, though it exerted an immensely powerful hold over the Victorian mind, often had something of William James's 'ever not quite' in relation to the aspirations of its bolder advocates. As historical argument about religion came to focus late-Victorian attention increasingly on the problem of mind, the

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[945] Idem, *The Christian doctrine of sin* (Edinburgh and London, 1876), pp. 23-24.
[946] R. Flint, 'Preface', to B. Pünjer, *History of the Christian philosophy of religion from the Reformation to Kant*, trans. W. Hastie (Edinburgh, 1887), ix-x; the publisher was T. & T. Clark.
[947] Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, xi, xix-xx.

ground was prepared for religious philosophers and their opponents to colonise and expand the psychology of religion in the first part of the twentieth century.

By 1914, the religious power with which the Victorians had invested history had not yet subsided; but its original impetus was receding into the past. Although many historical thinkers were sure that history undermined religious traditionalism, and could in principle replace it with something more durably rooted in human experience, they struggled to make history yield a positive and generally-agreed religious programme. There was also something inherently hazardous about the grateful enthusiasm with which so many Victorians embraced the idea that the progress of the world vindicated Christian claims. The twentieth century was not to prove favourable to that hypothesis. It may be that, in future attempts to understand when and why secularisation in the west has taken place, changing perceptions of mankind's moral past come to acquire a greater significance than they have so far held. But the idea that a fragmented society might find a kind of unity in a shared historical imagination has not altogether lost its relevance, even in a secular and forgetful age.

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