AUGUST NEANDER AND THE RELIGION OF HISTORY IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY 'PRIESTHOOD OF LETTERS'[*]

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The Berlin ecclesiastical historian, August Neander (1789-1850), developed a religiously-driven conception of history which excited contemporaries across the Protestant world. This article reconstructs the impetus which Neander gave to the creation of a religiously cosmopolitan historical imagination in Germany, Britain, and America. At a time when Hegelian and 'scientific' models of historical progress foretold a post-Christian future for civilisation, Neander's alternative idea of world history, centred on the leavening spread of the invisible church through contrasting forms of Christianity and culture, exercised a powerful sway over Protestant historians everywhere. His universalising historical philosophy offered an appealing mode of self-understanding to the networks which translated his ideas to new settings. Appearing to afford a mode of securing Protestantism from the twin dangers of sectarianism and unbelief, Neander's 'unpartisan' philosophy simultaneously became an important instrument of Protestant nation-building in the hands of the historians drawn towards it. By considering the interaction between universal and national aspirations in the development and dissemination of Neander's historical philosophy, the paper examines the practical implications of historical thought, and connections between national and transnational scales of analysis, in modern religious and intellectual history.

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'Know ye not,' expostulated the Reformed preacher, Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher, in Berlin's Jerusalem churchyard on 17 July 1850, quoting King David, 'that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel!'[1] Krummacher, the awakened pastor of the city's high-society Dreifaltigkeitskirche, used these words to open the sermon he delivered to the grievers who had gathered to witness the interment of a professor of theology at Berlin's Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, the church historian, August Neander. The Prussian correspondent for an American Baptist newspaper reported that, early in the day, hundreds of Neander's students had gathered round his house on Markgrafenstrasse, eager to accompany their teacher's coffin to its final resting-place.[2] Crowds of spectators thronged the cortege's winding route past his former university on the Unter den Linden towards the cemetery. A host of academic and ecclesiastical notables marched behind on foot, while a line of coaches followed in their turn, headed by an equipage carrying King Frederick William IV. Lamentations sounded far beyond Berlin. Discoursing beside Neander's body at his home in the morning, another fashionable preacher, the Lutheran Friedrich Strauss, told the assembled company that they represented 'the visible centre of a great, invisible mourning.'[3] Shortly afterwards, a contributor to the British Unitarian periodical, the *Prospective Review*, observed in a like spirit that 'the numberless hearts' Neander won were now 'mourning his loss all over Germany and England and America.'[4]

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[1] F. W. Krummacher, 'Rede am Grabe August Neanders', in [anon.], ed., *Zum Gedächtniss August Neanders*, 2nd edn. (Berlin, 1850), p. [20]; cf. 2 Samuel 3:38; P. Schaff, *Saint Augustin, Melanchton, Neander: three biographies* (London, 1886), pp. 162-3; O. Ranke, 'Krummacher, Friedrich Wilhelm (1796-1868)', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 17 (1883), pp. 243-6 <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118724797.html#adbcontent>.

[2] A. W. T., 'Funeral honors to Neander', *Christian Watchman and Christian Reflector*, 31:35, 29 Aug. 1850, p. 138.

[3] F. Strauss, 'Rede gehalten im Sterbehaus', in [anon.], ed., *Zum Gedächtniss August Neanders*, p. [12]; G. Frank, 'Strauss, Friedrich (1786-1863)', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 36 (1893), pp. 532-34 <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd117311936.html#adbcontent>. Strauss is to be distinguished from his freethinking namesake, the New Testament critic, David Friedrich Strauss.

[4] [Anon.], 'August Neander', *Prospective Review*, 24 (1850), p. 463.

Neander's obsequies attested to the renown he had obtained, in Prussia and around the world, for elaborating and defending a pioneering Christian historical philosophy. This article reconstructs that philosophy, together with the reasons why, in the middle part of the nineteenth century, it became a powerful narrative of modernity which contributed to the work of Protestant nation-building in Prussia, Britain, and the United States: the two foreign territories where Neander's impact was most pronounced. Nineteenth-century intellectual life was replete with competing conceptions of historical 'progress'. Of these, only a relatively small and notably secular number retained the regard, or at least the attention, of twentieth-century posterity. But amidst the same ferment which gave rise to the better-remembered phenomena of Comtean Positivism, evolutionary naturalism, and the materialist trajectory within the Hegelian tradition which ultimately issued in Karl Marx's communist mystification of species-being, Neander developed an anti-Hegelian and, for a time, comparably widely-disseminated alternative to secular theories of history.[5] Neander grounded world-historical progress neither in science, nor in political economy, but in the history of the universal and invisible church. In an age of religious revival, his belief that the gospel had entered and transformed every type of human culture seemed to give scientific confirmation and an historical identity to the evangelical belief that the earth was on the verge of a millennial age of gathering unity under Christ.[6] Neander thus adumbrated what Wolfgang Hardtwig has called *Geschichtsreligion*: a 'religion of history'. Hardtwig, in an early challenge to the secular conceptions of historicism

[5] For an outstanding survey of nineteenth-century intellectual history, organized around secular waymarks, see F. M. Turner, *European intellectual history from Rousseau to Nietzsche*, ed. R. A. Lofthouse (New Haven, CT, and London, 2014).

[6] M. Spence, *Heaven on Earth: reimagining time and eternity in nineteenth-century British evangelicalism* (Eugene, OR, 2015). Evangelical constructions of world space should be regarded as a part of global history: cf. D. Bell, 'Making and taking worlds', in S. Moyn and A. Sartori, eds., *Global intellectual history* (New York and Chichester, 2013), pp. [254]-79. In this article I use the word 'evangelical' to denote the biblically-centred, Christocentric Protestantism that existed across different nations and communions. To minimize confusion between this concept and the German term *evangelisch*, which came into widespread use to refer to the movement to unite Lutherans and Reformed in a shared structure, I indicate the latter by referring, except when translating its formal designation, to the United Church: J. E. Wilson, *Introduction to modern theology: trajectories in the German tradition* (Louisville, KY, 2007), p. 4 n.

which have recently undergone substantial scholarly revision, has conceived of nineteenth-century German *Historismus*, or the belief that the past consisted of autonomous individualities, as having elevated history into the expression and mediator of metaphysical truths. In an environment where the relationship between *Historismus* and specifically Christian commitment nevertheless often proved to be an ambivalent or distant one, Neander's religion of history was remarkable for the way in which it sought positively to synthesize the sovereign and organic movement of history with the truths of the Christian revelation.[7] What made Neander's conception of history both distinctive and appealing in its Prussian context, and why did it prove so peculiarly attractive, and useful, to Anglo-American Protestants?

The article approaches this problem, not by offering a reception history of the writings of a today little-remembered historian, but by following the ways in which Neander gave the decisive impetus to a species of religious historicism which, though extinct today, spread rapidly, and with creative results, within and beyond Germany through the agency of a Protestant international.[8] To an extent that growing though mutually inattentive historical interest in modern religious internationalism and transnational scholarly networks has underestimated, religious internationals were inherently also networks of intellectual dissemination and transfer.[9] A focus on Neander and his acolytes can render visible the

[7] On *Geschichtsreligion*, see W. Hardtwig, 'Geschichtsreligion-Wissenschaft als Arbeit-Objektivität: der Historismus in neuer Sicht', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 252 (1991), pp. 1-32. I am grateful to Herman Paul for this reference. On *Historismus*, see J. Rüsen, *Konfigurationen des Historismus: Studien zur deutschen Wissenschaftskultur* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993); G. Iggers, *The German conception of history: the national tradition of historical thought from Herder to the present*, 2nd edn. (Middletown, CT, 1983); F.C. Beiser, *The German historicist tradition* (Oxford, 2011). On religion in historical culture in Britain, Germany, and America, see J. Kirby, *Historians and the Church of England: religion and historical scholarship, 1870-1920* (Oxford, 2016); J. Bennett, *God and progress: religion and history in British intellectual culture, 1845-1914* (Oxford, 2019); J. C. Schnurr, *Weltreiche und Wahrheitszeugen: Geschichtsbilider der protestantischen Erweckungsbewegung in Deutschland, 1815-1848* (Göttingen, 2011); E. A. Clark, *Founding the fathers: early church history and Protestant professors in nineteenth-century America* (Philadelphia, PA, 2011).

[8] The fullest modern essay on Neander is K.-V. Selge, 'August Neander – ein getaufter Hamburger Jude der Emanzipations- und Restaurationszeit als erster Berlin Kirchenhistoriker', in G. Beiser and C. Gestrich, eds., *450 Jahre evangelische Theologie in Berlin* (Göttingen, 1989), pp. 233-76.

[9] C. Clark and M. Ledger-Lomas, 'The Protestant international', in A. Green and V. Viaene, eds., *Religious internationals in the modern world: globalization and faith communities since 1750* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 23-52; N. M. Railton, *No North Sea: the Anglo-German evangelical network in the middle of the nineteenth century* (Leiden, 2000). Compare L. Tournès and G. Scott-Smith, eds., *Global exchanges: scholarships and*

international constellation of religious and literary leaders who made up the nineteenth century's 'priesthood of letters': an alignment which was, in many respects, the successor to the Enlightenment's republic of letters.[10] Viewed through these protagonists, Prussia, Britain, and the United States emerge as having belonged to a Protestant intellectual zone characterized more by reciprocal interaction than by the unidirectional German influence upon the Anglophone world prioritized in classic accounts.[11] By fixing three points of a transatlantic triangulation in analytical perspective, it becomes possible to think comparatively about why a conceptually unified complex of theological and historical discourse acquired different practical and political implications as it moved into new national contexts.[12] This article accordingly responds to what David Armitage has called 'the international turn in intellectual history' by offering a scalar and applied intellectual history. Focusing on Neander and his influence as a case in point, it explores the interaction, and suggests the inherent interdependence, of transnational and national planes in the dissemination and practice of intellectual traditions.[13]

The article pursues these themes in three further parts. The first section situates Neander in his Prussian environment. A Jewish convert to Lutheranism who became a professor of theology at the new University of Berlin in 1813, Neander's organicist idea of Christian history ultimately turned this originally unpolitical German into a constructively critical friend of Prussia's Christian state as the perceived dangers of left-Hegelian radicalism intensified during

transnational circulations in the modern world (New York and Oxford, 2018); H. Ellis and U. Kirchberger, eds., *Anglo-German scholarly networks in the long nineteenth century* (Brill, 2014).

[10] I borrow a phrase coined by the British Congregationalist, Robert Vaughan, 'The priesthood of letters', in idem, *Essays on history, philosophy, and theology* (2 vols., London, 1849), I, pp. 141-89; reprinted from the *British Quarterly Review* for 1846.

[11] Excellent studies along these more unidirectional lines include R. Ashton, *The German idea: four English writers and the reception of German thought, 1800-1860* (Cambridge, 1980); M. Jay, *Permanent exiles: essays on the intellectual migration from Germany to America* (New York, 1985).

[12] On the relationship between the religious and the political as categories of historical analysis, see S. Shortall, 'Lost in translation: religion and the writing of history', *Modern Intellectual History*, 13 (2016), pp. 273-286.

[13] D. Armitage, 'The international turn in intellectual history', in D. M. McMahon and S. Moyn, eds., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), pp. [232]-52.

the 1830s and afterwards. The second section asks why British and American students became interested in Neander in this period; and why their mentor himself started to become invested in Anglo-American religious life. Neander's commitment to free religious development, ultimately stymied in Prussia, found greater opportunities for realisation in the English-speaking world. The article's third section follows the work of John Tulloch in Scotland, and Philip Schaff and Henry Boynton Smith in the United States, in applying the idea of religious history which Neander had kindled to the task of building Protestant futures for their home nations. More enduringly than his particular stances on critical questions, it was Neander's historical philosophy, above all, which lent modish intellectual heft to their attempts to challenge what they regarded as the parochialism of their co-religionists. These authors hoped that, in so doing, they could lead their churches to unite around common essentials; and so to brace themselves against a broader range of infidel opponents than Neander had himself faced. Although Neander's star began to wane in Germany soon after his death, he remained a talisman for English-speaking Protestants' efforts to reconcile progressive historical criticism with orthodoxy, and so for an influential if still-underestimated current of nineteenth-century thought, down to the end of the century.

(I)

Neander was born in the year of the French Revolution. Political upheaval in Germany overlapped with the consequences of the end of the Enlightenment and the beginnings of religious revival to shape the country in which he lived, and the wider atmosphere which would lead so many foreign students to seek communion with him. From 1815, the crumbling of Napoleon's empire left behind it a greatly-expanded Kingdom of Prussia, religiously pluralistic and territorially disparate, whose unity subsisted not in nationhood, but in its strong monarchy and centralized bureaucracy.[14] The reforming state looked to the university and to the church

[14] C. Clark, *Iron kingdom: the rise and downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (London, 2006), pp. 386-387, 427-435.

– the two institutions which would dominate Neander's life – to project and cultivate its authority. Two major cultural forces meanwhile transformed the conditions of German intellectual life, in ways that would bring it into a newly creative relationship with analogous developments in Britain and the United States. The twin forces of post-Kantian Idealism and religious revival, which in distinct but overlapping ways sought to anchor human experience in a sense of continuity from the past, energized German national awakening. The historically-minded search for lost religious purity fractured older ecclesiastical consensuses, whilst also fostering new intellectual endeavours and religious alignments, across Christendom and within the countries that comprised it. In this environment, Neander's historicism became the keystone to the *Vermittlungstheologie*, or 'mediating theology', through which Protestant divines of the *Vormärz* sought to reconcile orthodoxy and speculation, especially the form of the latter represented by Friedrich Schleiermacher's subjective epistemology.[15] Neander's historical philosophy offered a religious vision of the future which the study of the past made seem practically tangible; and which alternative trajectories in the Idealist tradition made politically urgent, both within Prussia and beyond it.

Neander's life-course took shape from the consequences of his rejection of the Judaism of his childhood. Born to struggling, lower-middle-class parents as David Mendel on 17 January 1789, he spent his early years in Göttingen, Hanover. The youngest of six children, his mother – a distant scion of the Mendelssohn family – subsequently left their apparently improvident broker father and raised her offspring in Hamburg.[16] The home of a significant Jewish community, Hamburg was also a centre of the Lutheran religious and nationalist awakening which began to seize hold of Germany in the era of the Revolutionary and

[15] On mediating theology in the United States, see A. G. Aubert, *The German roots of nineteenth-century American theology* (Oxford, 2013).
[16] On Neander's early life, see D. C. K. Kling, 'Nachtrag: Neander's Familienverhältnisse, frühere Jugendzeit, Uebertritt zum Christenthum, Universitäts- und Candidatenleben', *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* (1851), pp. 516-538; Schaff, *Three biographies*, pp. [128]-167.

Napoleonic wars. Under the influence of his intensive reading of Plato's dialogues, Friedrich Schelling, and Schleiermacher, and perhaps also hoping to conform to his school friends at the Johanneum Gymnasium, Mendel began to conceive of Christianity as realising, inwardly and permanently, truths which Judaism had sought to grasp ritualistically and transiently.[17] On 25 February 1806 he received Lutheran baptism, and took the name of Johann August Wilhelm Neander. Seeking, in common with so many other gifted nineteenth-century converts from Judaism, to invent a new identity capable of replacing or displacing the old, Neander found it in a strongly anti-Judaic conception of the universal church.[18]

Neander's conversion developed into a resolution to read theology at university, and then a vocation to the study of church history. In 1806 he enrolled at Halle, where Schleiermacher had been a professor of theology and university preacher since 1804. His teacher's enchanting addresses called time on what they both felt to have been the blandly ethical 'neology' and 'rationalism' of Enlightenment-era German theology, latterly ascendant in the originally Pietist university.[19] In its place Schleiermacher accorded epistemological priority to the religious consciousness, arising from feeling and shaped by context, as an autonomous and dynamic sphere of religious life.[20] He also called for church history to incorporate the organicism which Schelling had developed from late-Enlightenment vitalism, and so to situate the church within evolving world history.[21] After Napoleon's forces overran Halle in the autumn of 1806, Neander repaired to Göttingen, where he completed his undergraduate studies in 1809. A university which Johann Lorenz von Mosheim had made into

[17] Ludwig Schulze, *August Neander: ein Gedenkblatt für Israel und die Kirche* (Leipzig, 1890), pp. [6]-25. Neander does not appear to have been affected by the work of Jewish missions: on which subject, see C. Clark, *The politics of conversion: missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728-1941* (Oxford, 1995).
[18] Cf. I. Berlin, 'Benjamin Disraeli, Karl Marx and the search for identity', in idem, *Against the current: essays in the history of ideas* (London, 1979), pp. 252-286.
[19] On what rationalists sought to achieve, see A. Beutel, *Aufklärung in Deutschland* (Göttingen, 2006), pp. 287-305.
[20] O. Krabbe, *August Neander: ein Beitrag zu seiner Charakteristik* (Hamburg, 1852), p. 24.
[21] G. A. Benrath, 'Evangelische und katholische Kirchenhistorie im Zeichen der Aufklärung und der Romantik', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 82 (1971), p. 211.

a centre of orthodox but critical church-historical scholarship, there Neander encountered this so-called *Pragmatismus*, which united source-criticism with an analytical prioritisation of the psychological motives and fallible actions of individuals in accounting for historical change, from the historian Gottlieb Jacob Planck.[22] A period of intense gospel study meanwhile induced a second conversion experience, leaving Neander in the consciousness of having been saved from sin.[23]

Neander's exposure to organicist historical philosophy, the techniques of source criticism, and a romantically undogmatic kind of evangelical awakening combined to give him an equivalent importance, within the study of ecclesiastical history, to Leopold von Ranke in political history. The academic preferment that enabled him to distil the fruits of his formation in voluminous historical studies, and so to attain his widely-acknowledged status as 'the father of modern ecclesiastical history', soon flowed.[24] Appointed to the University of Heidelberg as a *Privatdozent*, or unsalaried lecturer, in 1810, two years later he published his first book, *The Emperor Julian and his Age*. It considered the intellectual contexts and inner life of a fourth-century emperor who, led by his love of classical lore, renounced Christianity – the ordained future of the ancient world - in favour of his ancestral deities, in a curious inversion of Neander's own religious journey.[25] The tome won him the admiration of Schleiermacher, who had meanwhile lobbied for the founding of the new University of Berlin in 1810.[26] Schleiermacher had particularly moulded its pioneering theology faculty, built on the

[22] J. A. Wangenmann, 'Planck, Gottlieb Jakob (1751-1833)', in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 26 (1888) <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz74536.html#adbcontent>; Krabbe, *Neander*, pp. 26-8; K. Hagenbach, 'Neander's Verdienste um die Kirchengeschichte', *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* (1851), pp. 556-60; F. C. Baur, 'The epochs of church historiography', in *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the writing of church history*, ed. and trans. P. C. Hodgson (New York, 1968), pp. 168-202; first edition 1852.
[23] A. Wiegand, *August Neanders Leben dargestellt für Studierende der Theologie und jüngere Geistliche zum 100jährigen Geburtstage Neanders* (Erfurt, 1889), pp. 22-25.
[24] I. A. Dorner, *History of Protestant theology particularly in Germany*, trans. G. Robson and S. Taylor (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1871), II, pp. 448-49.
[25] A. Neander, *Ueber den Kayser Julianus und sein Zeitalter: ein historisches Gemälde* (Leipzig, 1812).
[26] T. A. Howard, *Protestant theology and the making of the modern German university* (Oxford, 2006), pp. [130]-211.

assumption that theology, properly a philosophical and historical branch of *Wissenschaft*, must refine *Kirchenleitung*, or church doctrine and teaching, by discerning and applying the progressive principles at work in history.[27] He invited Neander to join him there as a full professor.[28]

Neander's arrival at Berlin in 1813, where he remained until his death in 1850, ensconced him at the heart of Prussia's modernising 'Christian state'.[29] Frederick William III, a Calvinist who found himself ruling over a majority and traditionally Lutheran kingdom with newly enlarged Reformed and Catholic minorities, sought to submerge the uneasy artificiality of his territories in shared religious purpose. After his 1812 decree of limited emancipation, he enthusiastically sponsored initiatives for Jewish conversion. In 1817, the king as *summus episcopus* invited the divided Protestants of his domains to come together to form the 'evangelical church of the Prussian union', or 'United Church'.[30] It was the Prussian manifestation of a union movement which the commemorations of the three-hundredth anniversary of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses in that year had galvanized across Protestant Germany.[31] But Frederick William's unhappy attempts to impose a consensus liturgy on a church governed through state-controlled consistories would precipitate 'Old Lutheran' schisms during the 1830s, along with the growth of neo-Lutheranism, which placed renewed dogmatic emphasis upon the Reformation-era confessions, within the establishment. Evincing a wider European tendency for an increasing sense of historical traditionalism to manifest itself in ecclesiastical fragmentation, sectaries and neo-Lutherans alike rejected the king's attempts

[27] M. Rössler, *Schleiermachers Programm der philosophischen Theologie* (Berlin and New York, 1994).
[28] Wiegand, *Neanders Leben*, pp. 40-41.
[29] T. Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck 1800-1866*, trans. D. Nolen (Munich, 1996), p. 376; C. Clark, 'The "Christian" state and the "Jewish citizen" in nineteenth-century Prussia', in H.W. Smith, ed., *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1800-1914* (Oxford and New York, 2001), pp. 67-93.
[30] J. Wallmann, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands seit der Reformation*, 4th edn. (Tübingen, 1993), pp. 209-211.
[31] T. A. Howard, *Remembering the Reformation: an inquiry into the meanings of Protestantism* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 35-58.

to enforce a shared Protestant identity.[32] Berlin's theology faculty acquired a particular importance in this context. Sharing the university's general, state-sponsored purposes of institutionalising the Humboldtian ideal of self-emancipation through reason and the training of loyal and useful citizens, the faculty's potential role in shaping the consciousness of the United Church, and exporting it to wider Prussia, was clear both to its government backers and its professorial members.[33]

Whilst Neander loyally supported the United Church and its ecumenical ideals from its foundation, the implications of his religious and intellectual position for Prussian cultural politics were, at first, latent rather than explicit.[34] An absent-minded bachelor, whose spiritual and poetical nature admirers often likened to that of an earlier Jewish convert, St John, Neander's scholarly energies at first tended to exclude worldly interests.[35] The great work of his life at Berlin was his *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, published in five volumes from 1825 to 1845, with a sixth, posthumous instalment compiled by devoted pupils appearing in 1852.[36] It was this project, above all, that earned Neander his reputation. To his German admirers, Neander had absorbed all that was favourable in the critical astuteness of Enlightenment-era pragmatic historians, and their supersession of polemically confessional approaches to church history. But he made a new epoch in the subject by pushing far beyond their perceived limitations, to conceptualize historical time itself as recording mankind's organically-developing response to Christ's calling.[37] The *General History* traced the

[32] C. Clark, 'Confessional policy and the limits of state action: Frederick William III and the Prussian Church Union 1817-40', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 985-1004.
[33] A. W. Daum, '*Wissenschaft* and Knowledge', in J. Sperber, ed., *Germany, 1800-1870* (Oxford, 2004), pp. [137]-61.
[34] Wiegand, *Neanders Leben*, pp. 107-8.
[35] [D. W. Simon], 'Dr. August Neander', *British Quarterly Review*, 96 (1868), p. 331; cf. Strauss, 'Rede'. For identification of anonymous contributors to nineteenth-century British periodicals, I rely in this article upon the online edition of W. E. Houghton, ed., *The Wellesley index to Victorian periodicals, 1824-1900* (5 vols., Toronto and London, 1966-89) <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4400/home.do>.
[36] A. Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche* (6 vols., Hamburg, 1825-1852).
[37] K. R. Hagenbach, 'Neander's Verdienste um die Kirchengeschichte', *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, (1851), pp. [543]-94.

animation given by the Christian spirit, originating supernaturally[38] yet transcending all dogmatic trammels, to the successive and richly diverse forms of religious consciousness, embedded within individuals and the cultural types they collectively constituted, by which, Neander believed, the world was slowly but surely being returned to God. He made the extent of his ambitions clear in the preface to the first volume:

> To represent the history of the Church of Christ as a speaking proof of Christianity's divine power; as a school of Christian experience; as a voice of edification resounding down the centuries; as a teaching and a warning for all who wish to hear it – this was from an early point a main goal of my life and studies.[39]

Neander's authorial purpose united an explicitly apologetic, even devotional intent with a commitment to submit the church's past to rigorous historical *Wissenschaft*. His presiding metaphor drew on a parable from Matthew's gospel, which likened the kingdom of God to a leaven, spreading with wider and deeper knowledge of God's supernatural revelation in Christ and its reconciliation of sinners to the Father.[40] Through his histories he hoped to kindle the hearts of other members of the universal church with words that came from his own. 'The heart makes the theologian' was his widely-quoted motto.[41] Yet Neander also wrote as an 'unpartisan' and scientific historian, who professed – as did his friend, Ranke, in his works of political history – to eradicate his own subjectivity before God's sovereign revelation in history.[42] This revelation stood as a reproach to 'every papacy': whether Erastian or sectarian,

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[38] Neander preferred the term *uebernatürlich* to *supranaturalistisch*; the latter had mechanistic, eighteenth-century associations in his mind: A. Neander, 'Christliche Dogmengeschichte', ed. J. L. Jacobi, in A. Neander, *Theologische Vorlesungen*, ed. J. Müller (5 pts. in 2 vols., Berlin, 1857-1864), I, pp. 2-3.
[39] Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte*, I, pt. 1, [vii]. [My translation.]
[40] Ibid., I, pt. 2, frontispiece.
[41] D.C.K. Kling, 'D. August Neander: ein Beitrag zu seinem Lebensbilde', *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, (1851), pp. 477-78.
[42] Though Neander and Ranke were on good terms – Ranke attended Neander's birthday parties – Neander did not invoke his counterpart as an historical model: Wiegand, *Neanders Leben*, p. 95.

heretical or orthodox.[43] Crucial to this element of Neander's scholarly identity was his organicist conviction that history unfolded through orderly *Gegensätze*, or oppositions, where *Pragmatismus* had known only accident.[44] In a way that recorded his formative contact with Schleiermacher, Neander conceived of these *Gegensätze* above all as types of subjective consciousness, developing through such contrasting figures as the idealist Origen and the realist Augustine. The life of history thus integrated every form of Christianity, whether orthodox or heretical, into a whole whose internal unity demonstrated the fundamental truth of the religion.[45] It raised the world higher than it was capable of reaching through its own, unaided powers. Judaism, in Neander's analysis, had made the mistake of making religion depend upon an external system. Christianity, which he almost regarded as more akin to Platonism than to the Judaism he had rejected, was by contrast essentially free from externalities of ritual or doctrinal definition. It represented a divine life capable of assimilating itself to all cultural forms, whilst silently transforming them from within.[46]

In accordance with these principles, Neander's massy volumes traced the slow, dialectical victory of the invisible church across nations, churches, and sects. Breaking with the post-Reformation convention for separating church history into centuries, Neander divided his work into thematic chapters, treating doctrine, Christian life, ecclesiastical polity, and schisms, within organic periods in the history of the early and medieval church. He maintained that the objective and hierarchical church of the middle ages, representing a reversion to an Old Testament priesthood, possessed the forcefulness necessary to implant the Christian leaven into the subjective consciousness of unruly European barbarians; but it allowed inward spirit to become lost in an external system.[47] On the other hand, the occasional resurgence of Hellenistic

[43] Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte*, II, pt. 2, viii.
[44] Idem, 'Christliche Dogmengeschichte', p. 12.
[45] Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte*, I, pt. 2, p. 495, II, pt. 2, pp. 753-755.
[46] Ibid., I, pt. 1, pp. 31-90.
[47] Ibid., V, pt. 1, pp. 153, 374-77.

principles in the mind of the church, as in the Alexandrian fathers or medieval schoolmen, drew out the religion's subjective reasonableness; but in its extreme forms it also ran on to esoteric doctrine; speculation destabilising simple faith; and the denial of divine personality.[48] Only the leaven of Christian life, which fed the poor, sacralized marriage, and secured 'general human rights,' could correct these cyclical aberrations from Christ's ideal, and raise the pre-Christian forms of human culture above their own natural capacities.[49] In Neander's posthumously-published sixth volume, he traced out scriptural and mystical reactions against the Judaising tendencies of the medieval church, in which Germanic peoples figured prominently, such as John Wycliffe in England, and the mystical Friends of God in Germany. These were the heralds of the Reformation, the essential function of which was to restore Christianity to its original dependence on Christ alone.[50]

Though the *General History* ended at the Reformation, the slow and transformative interactions between the ideal and the real in Christian history which its author glimpsed had not. In an address on the German Chinese mission occasioned by a visit of its leader, Karl Gützlaff, which Neander delivered shortly before his death, he anticipated that the inward workings of the Christian leaven would soon save that society from its quasi-Mosaic outward legalism.[51] The spiritual forces of divine government breathed life into the nineteenth century, no less than they had animated the first. Contemporary history remained the earthly testament to supernal counsels. The present called for reordering in the light of the divine image which history made visible.

Neander's historical philosophy had first consolidated in contradistinction to the neology which he had encountered in his youth. As he laboured at his *General History*,

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[48] Ibid., I, pt. 3, pp. 862-66, 924-44, V, pt. 2, pp. 814, 1006-7.
[49] Ibid., I, pt. 1, p. 122, pt. 2, pp. [409]-97.
[50] Ibid., VI, pp. [252]-330, 728-790.
[51] [A. Neander], 'Neanders Rede über die chinesische Mission', in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für christliche Wissenschaft und christliches Leben*, 1 (1850), pp. [241]-244; [P. Schaff], 'Recollections of Neander', *Mercersburg Review*, 3:1 (1851), p. 86.

however, a new and, to his mind, more dangerous element began to seep into the *Wissenschaft* which he had attempted to evangelize. Although Neander's narrative relied on the idea of historical *Gegensätze*, he had always grounded these in the struggles of free historical personalities touched by divine life, rather than the self-unfolding of reason. He therefore kept his distance from the logical dialectic of Hegelianism, which began to creep into theology after Hegel's arrival at Berlin as professor of philosophy in 1818.[52] He became the system's outright and prominent opponent, however, once the 1835 publication of David Friedrich Strauss's *Leben Jesu* appeared to him to unveil Hegelianism's true results. Going beyond what earlier rationalists had dared to avow, Strauss argued that the gospels' status as mythic productions rendered the Christ of faith a phantasm. The true significance of the idea of Christ, he supposed, lay in its constitution of one stage in the realisation of divine-human unity. The controversy over the book convoked the radical Tübingen School into existence, whilst it also stimulated the development of the left-Hegelian radicalism which, alienated from the monarchist belligerence of the Christian state, began more and more to relocate divinity away from Christ's person, to the universal essence of mankind.[53]

Neander replied to the threat, at one level, through theological science. He published a *Leben Jesu* of his own which defended the narrative integrity of the gospels and the historicity of Christ's miracles.[54] He also revised the first volume of his *General History* for an 1842 second edition, partly in order to respond to the accelerating volume of critical studies from an emerging rival in early church scholarship: the Hegelian sympathizer, and Strauss's former

[52] Neander was probably alluding to Hegelianism when he deprecated 'the so-called scientism [*Wissenschaftlichkeit*] of certain parties' in an 1827 preface: *Allgemeine Geschichte*, I, pt. 3, xii.
[53] D. F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* (2 vols., Tübingen, 1835-1836); H. Harris, *The Tübingen School: an historical and theological investigation of the school of F.C. Baur* (Leicester, 1990); J. E. Toews, *Hegelianism: the path toward dialectical humanism, 1805-1841* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 203-326; W. Breckman, 'Politics, Religion, and Personhood: the left Hegelians and the Christian German State', in D. Moggach, ed., *Politics, religion and art: Hegelian debates* (Evanston, IL, 2011), pp. 96-117.
[54] A. Neander, *Das Leben Jesu in seinem geschichtlichen Zusammenhange und seiner geschichtlichen Entwickelung* (Hamburg, 1837).

Tübingen tutor, Ferdinand Christian Baur.[55] Although Baur's and Neander's conceptions of church history partially overlapped, in that both construed it as the outcome of dialectical interplays between universalising and residually Jewish tendencies, Baur's approach was much more radical. He treated the New Testament canon as the result of strife between opposing parties within the early church; and regarded Christianity itself as conterminous with the self-realisation of the divine in human history.[56] Neander's own conception of *Gegensätze*, expressing commitment both to a Christian revelation which originated outside the historical process, and to the purposeful unfolding of the latter in response to revelation, would become increasingly valuable to theologians, within and beyond Germany, unhappy with the spread of sciences of the past which appeared to insist upon its godless or pantheist self-sufficiency.

Neander's activism in *Wissenschaft* began to draw him more and more into the official cultural politics of the Prussian state, now directed squarely against the Hegelian scourge. In 1841, at the state's invitation, Schelling, an inspiration of his youth, arrived in Berlin to take Hegel's former chair. From it he unveiled an anti-Hegelian 'philosophy of revelation' which grounded historical progress in the free will of divine personality. It was an argument that harmonized with the philosophical personalism sponsored by Frederick William IV's new government as a mode of vindicating divine personality, and the political hierarchy it illuminated.[57] Neander dedicated the new edition of his *General History*'s first volume to Schelling, in whose philosophy he recognized an identity with his own.[58] Now aiming to make his ideal of the invisible church visible, and durable, in his homeland, Neander also began to

[55] A. Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche*, vol. 1, 2nd edn. (Hamburg, 1842).
[56] On Baur, see M. Bauspiess, C. Landmesser, and D. Lincicum (eds), *Ferdinand Christian Baur und die Geschichte des frühen Christentums* (Tübingen, 2014).
[57] J.E. Toews, *Becoming historical: cultural reformation and public memory in early nineteenth-century Berlin* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1-16; Breckman, 'Politics, Religion, and Personhood'; D. E. Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy, 1840-1861* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 75-98.
[58] Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte*, vol. 1, 2nd edn, [dedication].

look beyond Germany, to press the relevance of British and American experience to the cause of dispelling the pantheistic miasma hanging over German Protestantism.

(II)

Over the long years that Neander laboured on his *General History*, and as his struggle against Hegelianism intensified, he came into contact with thousands of pupils at his lecture room and in his Berlin home. In a Christian hagiographical twist on the Humboldtian cult of the heroic researcher, former students described how he would kick the walls, tear quill pens, and fly into mesmeric extemporisations as he relived the spiritual revolutions of history, in lectures that were also a kind of sermon.[59] The Jewish student who had been led, through Plato, to Christianity appeared to embody and vindicate in microcosm the religion of history which he taught. Many of the pupils drawn towards his arresting intellectual and pedagogical personality were intending British and American ministers. Those with scholarly aspirations came to see a period of study in Germany, including attendance at Neander's lectures and often a personal meeting at his home, as a rite of passage during the 1830s and 1840s.

This growth of interest expressed two intellectual wants, in particular, which students' experiences at the ancient English and Scottish universities, or at the more unstable religious academies which proliferated among English nonconformists and in the antebellum United States, had stimulated, but which established scholarly resources could not satisfy.[60] The first was orthodox Protestants' general wish for an account of ecclesiastical history which built on the proliferation of eighteenth-century erudition in the subject, but which integrated such learning with an evocation of the vital unity of Christian time. One text that proved especially important in awakening this desire was Mosheim's 1755 *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*,

[59] W. F. [Farrer?], 'Prefatory Note' to 'German Sacred Oratory – no. II. Dr August Neander', *Biblical Review*, 6 (1849-50), pp. 55-62; [J. Nelson], 'Neander', *North British Review*, 14:28 (1851), pp. 423-4.
[60] J. R. Thelin, *A history of American higher education*, 2nd edn. (Baltimore, MD, 2011), pp. 41-73; D. A. Johnson, *The changing shape of English nonconformity, 1825-1925* (New York and Oxford, 1999).

which embodied the Lutheran 'pragmatism' with which Neander came into contact at Göttingen. Mosheim's general survey of ancient and modern church history, laden with references to original sources, had a long life before it as a students' textbook in the English-speaking world. But as one of Neander's approving reviewers would remark, Mosheim's decision to organize his history into centuries, rather than holistic periods, and his division of events into 'internal' and 'external' influences upon the church, more and more seemed to break up rather than represent the whole life of the past.[61] In the words of one of Mosheim's later editors, 'reference … is the end for which his work will ever be most used'.[62] His nineteenth-century readers increasingly looked to Neander for the depiction of the life of history which recognized both its internal unity, and its sustaining contact with a divine personality.

This historical desideratum also expressed an intensifying philosophical inclination. It became common for Neander's Anglophone admirers to argue that Mosheim and other Enlightenment historians, typically indifferent or even hostile to mysticism and doctrinal speculation, had shown a kind of secular indifference to the church's inward life. Neander, on the other hand, offered a history which did justice to the energy of that inner mental activity, and its participation in divine reason.[63] His emphasis on the infinite reflective vitality, yet internal orderliness, of the history of Christian consciousness appeared to overcome the limitations of Enlightenment historiography. Contact with Samuel Taylor Coleridge often kindled the desire for such a supersession on the part of those Anglophone theologians who went on to find it in Neander. Rather as Schleiermacher had initiated Neander into a psychologically-richer spiritual epistemology than that which neologians had promoted, Coleridge distinguished between transcendent 'Reason' and phenomenal 'Understanding'

[61] [Anon.], 'Ecclesiastical history', *Christian Review*, 1:3, 1 Sept. 1836, pp. 422-3.
[62] H. Soames, 'The editor's preface', J. L. v. Mosheim, *Institutes of ecclesiastical history, ancient and modern*, trans. J. Murdock, ed. H. Soames (4 vols., London, 1841), I, viii.
[63] [Anon.], 'Neander's Church History', *Christian Review*, 1:4, 1 Dec. 1836, pp. 575-7.

within the mind's operations: a manoeuvre which appeared to open up new layers of ethical and philosophical truth in historic doctrines.[64] Coleridgean divines, prepared for German Idealism by the Platonist variety which Coleridge instantiated, saw Neander as a writer who by evoking the reflectiveness of Christian doctrine seemed simultaneously to vindicate its eternal truth. As will be seen, Neander's idea that the dialectical evolution of Christian consciousness in response to objective revelation constituted a kind of evidence for the divinity of the progressive Christian mind, to the reproach of traditionalists and unbelievers alike, was an insight which Neander's followers proved able to extend in new settings.

The first notices of Neander and his compellingly original approach began to appear in English-language magazines in the 1820s and 1830s, as travelling students reported on the striking impression his lectures had made upon them.[65] Professors in nonconformist academies began to update their textbooks, overlaying references to Mosheim and early-modern authorities with citations of Neander.[66] The *General History* soon began to appear in English translations, first at the hands of the Cambridge Anglican, Henry John Rose, and, later, by the Vermont Congregationalist, Joseph Torrey, both of whom showed pronounced Coleridgean inclinations.[67] As he became better-known overseas, Neander even began to acquire a frisson of foreign celebrity. This made its way into the writings of the future British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, who was himself searching for an identity to succeed the Judaism away from which he had been baptized into Anglicanism as a child. Disraeli had Sidonia, the Sephardic mentor to the eponymous hero of his fashionable novel of 1844, *Coningsby*, declare

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[64] S. T. Coleridge, *Aids to reflection in the formation of a manly character on the several grounds of prudence, morality and religion* (London, 1825).
[65] For example, [E. Robinson], 'Theological education in Germany', *Biblical Repository*, 1:1-4 (1831), pp. [1]-51.
[66] J. P. Smith, *First lines of Christian theology*, ed. W. Farrer (London, 1854), [vii]-xiv, pp. 222, 480, 622n.
[67] [H. J. Rose], 'The translator's preface', to A. Neander, *The history of the Christian religion and church during the first three centuries*, trans. H. J. Rose (2 vols., London, 1831-1841), II, [iii]-xxvii; A. Neander, *General history of the Christian religion and church*, trans. Joseph Torrey (9 vols., Edinburgh, 1847-1855). Torrey was a friend and colleague of Coleridge's American editor, James Marsh: J. Torrey, *The remains of the Rev. James Marsh, D.D.* (Boston, 1843).

in the course of a discourse on the Jewish contribution to European civilisation that 'Neander, the founder of Spiritual Christianity, and who is Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Berlin, is a Jew.'[68]

As he laboured to articulate a mediating course for German Protestantism, Neander himself began to see new, world-historical promise in the young English-speaking divines who flocked to his home and lecture-hall. To his left, he saw the rise of the left-Hegelian denial of a personal God endangering religion and the social order which rested upon it. To his right, he perceived the growth of neo-Lutheran dogmatism within the United Church. Rooted in discontent with the union settlement, it now became further inflamed by the Straussian menace; and derived popular strength from historical commemorations of traditional Lutheran symbols, such as that of the Augsburg Confession in 1830. The neo-Lutheran leaders, such as Neander's Berlin colleague, Ernst Hengstenberg, looked to the Christian state to enforce dogmatic authority.[69] With its reliance on the historical outward letter rather than the abiding inward spirit, however, this tendency appeared to Neander to represent a stereotyped traditionalism which threatened to cut Christianity off from the divine progress of mind.[70] Britain and America, with their active social evangelicalism, and religiously pluralistic climates in which independent Protestant groups thrived without fear of state persecution, now appeared to him to contain the healthy spiritual elements which Prussia lacked.

In this fragmented present, Neander came to identify the beginnings of a new historical *Gegensatz*, whereby orthodox German science, and Anglo-American religious freedom, might combine to rout the combined dangers of infidelity and religious reaction, and so to push history on to a new, more spiritual stage. 'The present age may be considered an epoch of transition in the development of the kingdom of God,' he declared in the opening of the preface

[68] B. Disraeli, *Coningsby, or, the New Generation* (London, 1911), p. 208; cf. Berlin, 'Benjamin Disraeli'.
[69] H.-J. Reese, *Bekenntnis und Bekennen: vom 19. Jahrhundert zum Kirchenkampf der nationalsozialistischen Zeit* (Göttingen, 1974), pp. 40-67.
[70] A. Neander, *Worte des Friedens unter den Gegensätzen* (Berlin, 1845).

he wrote for the English translation of his *Leben Jesu*, which a Coleridgean-inclined Methodist Episcopal minister from Pennsylvania, John M'Clintock, had prepared with the assistance of a colleague. Neander interpreted the work as a prophetic sign of 'a new Catholic Church' which would span the Atlantic. He hoped that it would augment Coleridge's influence in encouraging American Christians to turn away from internecine ructions, as German scholars had already begun to do, in order to rally against 'the common foe' which Strauss represented.[71] In the 1830s and 1840s, he began increasingly to praise the voluntarism and religious humanitarianism which marked British and American Christianity to German audiences. Giving a liberal edge to the widespread interest within the German awakening in British religious activism, Neander stressed his sympathy for English nonconformists, and induced a pupil, Hermann Uhden, to write a history of Independency in seventeenth-century New England.[72] In the preface which he supplied to the work, Neander drew a subtle moral from the story of how the Congregationalist theocracy had ultimately generated a reaction in favour of the separation of church from state. Whereas such a separation had produced living Christianity in America, he reflected, it should admonish Germany of the radical consequences that might flow from too close an 'intermingling of the Ecclesiastical and the Political' in its own, afflicted circumstances. It must therefore work to give 'free development' in religion its rights, as America had learned to do: 'this is the genuine, this is CHRISTIAN LIBERALISM.'[73] For inoculation against what he called the 'false modern liberalism,' on the other hand, Neander urged his countrymen to think on the example of William Wilberforce. In a collection of

[71] A. Neander, [preface], in idem, *The life of Jesus Christ in its historical connexion and historical development*, trans. J. M'Clintock and C.E. Blumenthal (London, 1852), [vii]-ix. The first (American) edition of the translation was published in 1848. G.R. Crooks, *Life and letters of the Rev. John M'Clintock, D.D., LL.D.* (New York, 1876), pp. 58-60, 85, 121-2.
[72] A. Kloes, *The German awakening: Protestant renewal after the Enlightenment, 1815-1848* (Oxford, 2019), p. 225.
[73] [A. Neander], 'Dr Neander's preface to the first edition', in H. F. Uhden, *The New England theocracy: a history of the Congregationalists in New England to the revivals of 1740*, trans. H. C. Conant (Boston, 1859), [vii]-x; H. F. Uhden, *Geschichte der Congregationalisten in Neu-England bis zu den Erweckungen um das Jahr 1740* (Leipzig, 1842). On the church authorities' suspicions of separatism, see Clark, *Politics of conversion*, pp. [212]-241.

popular biographies, he explained how the unpartisan evangelical campaigner's success in ending slavery in the British colonies, which had inaugurated 'a new epoch in the history of humanity,' showed how true progress came from the gospel, and not from the materialistic socialism that treated man as though he were 'a reasoning ape.'[74]

As the needs of the invisible church began to require a more earthly policy, Neander began to endorse new ecclesiastical departures that would plant seeds of free religious development, and so Christian renewal, in Prussia's salinized soil. Together with other mediating theologians, Neander looked to the 1846 Prussian synod, convened by Frederick William IV to promote Protestant consensus, to empower individual congregations over the state in church government. This strengthening of the priesthood of all believers would, he hoped, secure Germany from infidelity on the one hand, and religious reaction on the other.[75] Co-founding the middlebrow *Deutsche Zeitschrift for christliche Wissenschaft und christliches Leben* in 1850 in order to cultivate mediating principles in civil society, he even hailed the approaching prospect of German unification as affording an opportunity for Protestants ultimately to reunite with Catholics before the higher *Gegensatz* of political atheism.[76]

Neander's religious hopes for Germany were, however, to end in disappointment. Neo-Lutheran divines such as Hengstenberg denounced the work of the 1846 synod; and the king, made suspicious of synodalism's democratic flavour, vetoed its proposed reforms.[77] As confessionalism continued to strengthen within the United Church, Neander's death in Berlin on 14 July 1850 gave a symbolic ending to the period of mediating theology's greatest promise in Germany. His gentle hymns to the historical process had not elicited the creation of a more

[74] A. Neander, 'William Wilberforce', in idem, *Das Eine und Mannichfaltige des christlichen Lebens* (Berlin, 1840), pp. [128]-52.
[75] Wiegand, *Neanders Leben*, p. 102.
[76] A. Neander, 'Der verflossene halbe Jahrhundert in seinem Verhältniss zur Gegenwart', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für christliche Wissenschaft und christliches Leben*, 1 (1850), pp. 3-29.
[77] J. E. Groh, *Nineteenth-century German Protestantism: the church as social model* (Washington DC, 1982), pp. 206-209.

participatory Prussian church settlement.[78] In the growing wistfulness of Neander's descriptions of British and American religious life there were signs that, in his final years, he was coming to regard the prospects for religious regeneration overseas more favourably than those of his own distracted country. He remarked to an American visitor of his pleasure that pantheism had made so little progress further west, and spoke of his love for Coleridge.[79] In a similar spirit, he told a British evangelical visitor to his home that he had profited greatly from historic English divinity, which was mercifully free from the Kantian philosophy that had spread with such ill effects in Germany.[80] The fear that precisely these evils were in fact spreading in Britain and America, however, powerfully motivated his Anglo-American students to transmit and apply his ideas to environments where ecclesiastical innovation was less constrained by state authority.

(III)

Though Neander's ideas came to irrigate large swathes of Anglo-American Protestantism, the nature of his underlying purpose placed limits around his appeal analogous to those which had solidified in Germany. Rather as Neander's domestic opponents had been conservative Lutherans and Hegelian-influenced radicals, he attracted pungent criticism, in his new habitations, from scholars who identified either with doctrinal traditionalism or an anti-supernatural conception of theological science. Among religious conservatives, Neander faced hostility from disciples of the Church of England's Oxford Movement, which stressed the church's visibility and doctrinal fixity; he even entered into a combative pamphlet exchange

[78] K. Kupisch, *Die deutsche Landeskirchen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 51-101. A system of elected synods was instituted in the eight historic Prussian provinces in 1876, but elections tended to strengthen neo-Lutheranism within the church. The union between church and state, by then a symbol of monarchist reaction, was dissolved by the 1919 constitution: Wallmann, *Kirchengeschichte*, pp. 218-219.
[79] [Anon.], 'Literary men of Germany', *The Literary World*, 4:119, 12 May 1849, p. 410.
[80] [Anon.], 'An interview with Neander', *Sunday at Home*, 64, 19 July 1855, p. 462. Neander praised William Chillingworth and Richard Baxter in idem, *Das Eine und Mannichfaltiger*, pp. [26]-91.

on the subject with a Tractarian-influenced English chaplain, Edward Dewar, at Hamburg.[81] Whilst evangelical Protestants welcomed the sentiments behind Neander's defence of the facticity of Christ's miracles and Resurrection in the *Leben Jesu*, they objected to the way in which he conceded that aspects of the gospels' narration of Christ's life, such as the synoptic gospels' accounts of the Temptation, might have a symbolic rather than a literal character. They also disliked his inclination to interpret miracles' significance in subjective and psychological terms of spiritual rejuvenation, rather than as manifesting Christ's mission to meet the objective and divine requirements of satisfaction for sin.[82] More religiously or intellectually radical critics than Neander, for their own part, faulted him for the different reason that he sacrificed critical acuity for the sake of making vague compromises with dogmatic authority. The Oxford classicist and biblical scholar, Benjamin Jowett, accordingly described Neander's *General History* as 'uninteresting and uncritical' in a letter of 1850.[83] A sceptic towards the historicity of scriptural miracles, he entertained notably greater respect for Baur.[84]

Between these polarities, nevertheless, Neander's principles resonated deeply with the broad centre of Protestant thought which yearned to reconcile tradition and criticism. His anti-formalist and anti-hierarchical emphasis on the invisibility of the church, and his voluble if undogmatic commitment to the saving power of a supernatural Christ, ensured that his closest followers emerged from within the Reformed traditions. In Scotland and the United States, especially, conditions were ripe for the transplantation of Neander's historicism to resolve problems akin to those which Neander had faced in Prussia. Whereas Prussia's close integration of monarchical authority, academic preferment, and the United Church tended to compress religious disagreement within the establishment, the more negative character of

[81] A. Neander, *Antwortsschreiben an den Herrn Mag. Edward H. Dewar, britischen Gesandtschaft-Caplan zu Hamburg* (Berlin, 1845).
[82] Neander, *Life of Jesus Christ*, xiii, pp. 133-49.
[83] B. Jowett to A.P. Stanley, 1847, in E. Abbott and L. Campbell (eds), *The life and letters of Benjamin Jowett* (2 vols., London, 1897), I, p. 142; B. Jowett to A.P. Stanley, 22 Aug. 1850, ibid., p. 220.
[84] P.B. Hinchliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian religion* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 84, 182-3.

Scottish and American public law gave greater scope for contention to express itself in formal separations. But that dissent, expressing in different ways the search for purer forms of doctrinal authority, drew intellectual reinforcement – as neo-Lutheranism had done - from the encouragement which rising historical consciousness gave to the articulation of self-conscious traditionalism. In the 'Disruption' of 1843, the Free Church left the established Church of Scotland, thereby joining older secessions from the supposed laxity of the 'residuary' in championing the seventeenth-century Calvinism of the Westminster Confession.[85] The consolidation, division, and westwards expansion of American Protestant churches, many of which shared roots in the several permutations of New England Calvinism, were also accompanied by a rising sense of their historical distinctiveness.[86] Among the many new denominational formations of the period, ethical Edwardsian 'New School' Presbyterians, who stressed the moral and voluntary over the natural and necessary inability of the sinner, separated from the classically sovereigntist 'Old School' in 1837. British and American religious leaders began to recognize in such events a call to find a means of drawing divided Protestants closer together in shared belief. The inherent attractiveness of ending schisms acquired new and pressing urgency in a situation where, after 1850, scientific naturalism and Comtean Positivism joined the left-Hegelian infidelity which had been Neander's *bête noire* in spreading lamentably secular visions of progress in the English-speaking countries.[87] Neander's idea of history, marking out the divine current running through the history of mind whilst simultaneously vindicating an unsectarian ideal of the church, gave Protestant leaders a flexible way to challenge, and perhaps to modify, their followers' idea of what Protestant tradition

[85] S. J. Brown, *The national churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1801-1846* (Oxford, 2001).
[86] D. W. Kling, 'Presbyterians and Congregationalists in North America', in T. Larsen and M. Ledger-Lomas, eds., *The Oxford history of Protestant dissenting traditions: volume III: the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 2017), pp. [177]-210.
[87] C. D. Cashdollar, *The transformation of theology, 1830-1890: positivism and Protestant thought in Britain and America* (Princeton, NJ, 1989).

involved. This critical, even liberalising impetus simultaneously expressed the more defensive and sometimes exclusionary aim of securing Protestant futures for their home nations.

Three figures, above all, gave outstanding expression to these lines of dissemination and implementation. Henry Boynton Smith, one of nineteenth-century America's greatest church historians, had converted to Calvinist evangelicalism from Unitarianism in 1834, before studying at the Congregationalists' Andover Seminary. He became a professor at Bowdoin College, Maine, in 1836, where he published a paper expressing sympathy with Coleridgean philosophy.[88] Thus initiated into idealist stirrings, in 1839 he arrived at Berlin during the first of several academic sojourns to Germany. In the same year that Marx began his doctorate defending Epicurus from the 'theologizing intellect' in the philosophy faculty, Smith heard Neander's lectures on doctrinal history in the theology faculty, and became personally well-acquainted with the man he called 'the father of a new era in church history'.[89] In 1851 he became professor of church history at the New School-aligned Union Theological Seminary in New York. In the words of a memorialist, there he 'led the way in naturalizing among us the historic spirit and method of the learned, devout, and Catholic Neander.'[90] Smith's inaugural lecture, arguing that church history represented 'the true philosophy of human history' in its reproach to those 'universal or pantheistic schemes' which neglected religious forces, acknowledged its author's 'indebtedness for a right view of church history to … the venerated and beloved Neander.'[91]

In 1847, John Tulloch, a twenty-four-year-old Church of Scotland minister in Dundee, travelled to Germany to master the language. As he did so, Neander became his favourite

[88] L. Stearns, *Henry Boynton Smith* (Boston, MA, and New York, 1892), pp. 2-34.
[89] Marx is quoted in G. Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: greatness and illusion* (London, 2016), at p. 83; [E. L. Smith], *Henry Boynton Smith: his life and work* (New York, 1881), pp. 66-67. On Smith, see A. G. Aubert, 'Henry Boynton Smith and church history in nineteenth-century America', *Church History*, 85 (2016), pp. 302-27.
[90] [Anon.], 'The Union Theological Seminary: President Hitchcock's address', *New York Evangelist*, 56:14 (1885), p. 4.
[91] H. B. Smith, 'Nature and worth of the science of church history', in idem, *Faith and philosophy: discourses and essays*, ed. G. L. Prentiss (New York, 1877), pp. 61-3, 70-1.

theological author; but bashfulness, and a desire first to prove himself by translating his works into English, inhibited Tulloch from knocking on his front door when he paused to contemplate it.[92] Though he would not in the end become Neander's translator, this graduate of St Andrews University, who blended 'common sense' with Coleridgean inclinations, ultimately became his closest British emulator.[93] After his return to Scotland, he published an essay on Neander in the Congregationalist *British Quarterly Review* for 1850, in which he pronounced that his great achievement had been to represent scientifically 'the Christian Church as *the one great living element of progress in humanity*,' essentially exalted above heathenism, Judaism, and Hellenism. How pleasingly different this was, Tulloch stressed, to Hegelian attempts to reduce the church to a mere evolution from them: a characteristic of Neander's that would later commend him to Protestant critics of Baur's histories as these became better-known in Anglophone circles.[94] Tulloch became principal and primarius professor of theology at St Mary's College, St Andrews, in 1854.[95] His fondness for Neander did not wane with time. Writing in the liberal Protestant *Contemporary Review* for 1866, he explained that he had been 'in some respects the highest expression of the Christian reason in this century.'[96]

Where Smith and Tulloch were among the many British and American students who studied for periods in Germany before returning home, Philip Schaff, born in the German-speaking Swiss canton of Graubünden in 1819, furnished an example of the equally significant phenomenon of German academic emigration to the new world. Schaff completed his studies at Halle and Berlin from 1839 to 1840, becoming a *Privatdozent* in the Berlin theology faculty in 1842.[97] The next year he received a call from the synod of the German Reformed Church in

[92] [M.] Oliphant, *A memoir of the life of John Tulloch, D.D., LL.D.*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh and London, 1889), pp. 51-9, 66.
[93] J. Tulloch, 'Coleridge as a spiritual thinker', *Fortnightly Review*, 37:217 (1885), pp. [11]-25.
[94] [J. Tulloch], 'Augustus Neander', *British Quarterly Review*, 24 (1850), pp. 334-335; cf. [Simon], 'Neander', p. 333.
[95] Oliphant, *Memoir*, pp. 98-105.
[96] J. Tulloch, 'Rationalism', *Contemporary Review*, 1 (1866), p. 369.
[97] On Schaff's early life, see K. Penzel, *The German education of Christian scholar Philip Schaff: the formative years, 1819-1844* (Lewiston, NY, and Lampeter, 2004).

the United States to become a professor at its seminary in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, after Friedrich Krummacher, who would later preach at Neander's funeral, had refused it. There he became a leading church historian, always regarding Neander as the 'father' of the modern form of the subject.[98] He remained in contact with his mentor, who saw great promise in his pupil's relocation to America. In a letter which he wrote to Schaff shortly after the 1848 revolutions, Neander contrasted the state of 'freedom' in Germany, where the idea had become associated with 'self-worship' and 'one-sided logic,' with the healthful form it took in 'your America,' where it was rooted in 'the blossoming of English piety.' A conflict, he thought, had opened between 'true civilisation' and mere 'vandalism.' The world was now on the brink of an abyss, which would issue either in the downfall of the old Europe, or else in a wondrous new creation.[99]

Just as Neander's intellectual commitments had led him to press for ecclesiastical reform, so too did his diasporic pupils seek to realize the implications of the divinely-animated conception of history which they taught from their chairs through forms of religious leadership which sought to draw Protestants together to secure their nations against unbelief. This ambition worked itself out in different ways in contrasting national contexts. In common with Prussia, Scotland possessed a legally privileged establishment; whilst the last American establishments had disintegrated in favour of separation between church and state. John Tulloch was thus placed in a position, in some respects similar to Neander's, of seeking to vindicate the Church of Scotland's historic claim to embody the religious nation by urging it to heal the latter's divisions. For Tulloch, the best route to achieving this goal was for

[98] P. Schaff, 'preface' to idem, *History of the apostolic church with a general introduction to church history*, trans. E. D. Yeomans (New York, 1853), iv; D. W. Lotz, 'Philip Schaff and the idea of church history', in H. W. Bowden, ed., *A century of church history: the legacy of Philip Schaff* (Carbondale, IL, and Edwardsville, IL, 1988), pp. 1-31; J. H. Dubbs, *Historic manual of the Reformed Church in the United States* (Lancaster, PA, 1885), pp. 284-291.
[99] [A. Neander], 'Ein Brief Neanders', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für christliche Wissenschaft und christliches Leben*, 2 (1851), pp. 276, [285]. Schaff translated the letter as an appendix to his 'Recollections of Neander', p. 90.

Presbyterianism to become liberal and comprehensive; and instructing the Scottish public in the post-Reformation history of Protestantism became central to his own work in promoting that end. Tulloch conceived of that history as the progressively dialectical forwards movement of Christian thought: an interpretation which bore a marked structural resemblance to Neander's own approach to earlier periods. In a series of addresses on *The Leaders of the Reformation* which he delivered before the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution in 1859, Tulloch invited Protestants to look to the history of their own theology for the validation of a leavening 'principle of *moral individualism*' inherent to the Reformation. Martin Luther, John Calvin, Hugh Latimer, and John Knox, he explained, had performed valuable services in their time. But the same moral earnestness and independent-mindedness which had led them to rely on the bible instead of human tradition, he concluded, authorized their successors to depart from the scholastic forms into which their theology, in the temporarily-necessary combat against the counter-Reformation, had once hardened.[100]

In lectures to theology students, and as Moderator of the Church of Scotland's General Assembly in 1878, Tulloch applied this general framework to urgently practical questions, arguing that the inherent progressiveness of Christian life justified a reverent departure from the theology of the seventeenth-century Westminster Confession in the direction of an historical understanding of the bible and a more humane conception of the mode of divine government. It were better, he argued before the Assembly, to regard the symbol as an historical expression of 'our national Presbyterianism' than as a doctrinal norm.[101] Had the church recognized its native breadth at an earlier point, he supposed, it would have been spared the ruptures which had weakened it in the course of the present century.[102] By freeing up room for

[100] J. Tulloch, *Luther and other leaders of the Reformation*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh and London, 1883), pp. 163, 441-442.
[101] Idem, *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), p. 32; cf. idem, *Theological controversy, or, the function of debate in theology*, 4th edn. (Edinburgh and London, 1866).
[102] Tulloch, *Position and prospects*, pp. 7-10.

new shoots of Christian thought, moreover, it would be easier for 'Christian Protestantism' to answer the agitation over 'whether there be a divine order, and a higher Personal Existence at all' which had penetrated as far as popular newspapers and periodicals.[103] Rather as Neander had regarded the Augsburg Confession, Tulloch judged that to tie the mind of the church to any particular expression of its historical consciousness was tantamount to dissevering it from progressive intelligence. By his public criticism of the Confession, according to his biographer, 'the new departure of the Scotch church was fully established and declared.'[104]

Where Tulloch's development of Neander's historicism attached itself more to the latter's undogmatic side, Schaff's and Smith's doctrinally conservative variation on a theme focused relatively more on its interdenominational potential. American religious leaders perforce could not seek to Christianize their self-consciously young nation through establishments. Instead they found themselves in a situation of much greater religious diversity, stimulated by the second great awakening and European immigration.[105] Thus where Tulloch had urged the national church to lead the progress of Christian opinion, Smith and Schaff, in a more evangelical, even millennial register, set about historically instructing their hearers in the underlying unity of the invisible church despite outward differences. They pointed to the constructive role of denominational conflict in forging the new, and perhaps final, stage of Christian history that was unfolding between America's shores. Smith, who described church history as possessing a 'prophetic office' necessary to future unity in his 1851 inaugural, stressed the creative importance of denominational dialectic in shaping American history in his lectures and addresses.[106] 'Our country is the product of the Reformed Churches of all Europe,' he argued, which by fleeing seventeenth-century persecution in Britain and France had given

[103] Ibid., pp. 25-27.
[104] Oliphant, *Memoir*, pp. 223-224.
[105] On contemporary religious ideas of the American nation, see S. Haselby, *The origins of American religious nationalism* (Oxford, 2014); M. A. Noll, *America's God: from Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, 2002).
[106] Smith, 'Church history', p. 83.

political freedom and a workful gravity to American life. 'The sectarianism of Europe is the catholicity of America,' which by its lively interactions was producing 'a more liberal Christian spirit' that could, for the first time in the history of the world, place mankind truly under God.[107] In a series of lectures on the subject which he delivered in Berlin at the invitation of its theology faculty in 1854, and which were subsequently translated and published for an American audience as *America*, Schaff described the 'subjective Protestant heart-churches' as 'the living stones for the true Evangelical Catholic Church, which is to combine and perfect in itself all that is true and good and beautiful in the past.'[108] The American separation between church and state, he considered, was not in itself a perfect state of things. But the country's free climate made it 'a motley sampler of all church history,' and a vineyard from which the church of the future would grow.[109]

Confident in the dynamics of spiritual history, Smith and Schaff both became active campaigners for church union. Smith became known as 'the hero of Reunion' for his work in bringing Old and New School Presbyterians back into communion with one another, urging that the Westminster Confession was large enough to contain those who emphasized divine sovereignty, as well as Calvinists who dwelled more upon ethical truth.[110] Speaking before the New School's General Assembly at Dayton, Ohio, in 1864, Smith maintained that reunion amidst differences of doctrinal emphasis accorded with the truth that 'progress through and by conflict seems to be the law of human life.'[111] Now that 'materialism and idealism, or atheism and pantheism' were known among Americans, and wanted the future, 'we cannot afford to spend our chief strength in mutual criminations and doctrinal logomachy,' for infidelity

[107] H. B. Smith, 'The Reformed churches of Europe and America in relation to general church history', in idem, *Faith and philosophy*, pp. 109-110, 113, 122-123.
[108] P. Schaff, *America: a sketch of its political, social, and religious character* (Cambridge, MA, 1961), pp. 99-103; first English edition 1855. On this text, see T. A. Howard, *God and the Atlantic: America, Europe, and the religious divide* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 146-158.
[109] Schaff, *America*, pp. 77-81.
[110] Stearns, *Henry Boynton Smith*, pp. [272]-302; B. J. Layfield, *Presbyterians and American culture: a history* (Louisville, KY, 2013), pp. 110-115.
[111] H. B. Smith, 'Christian union and ecclesiastical reunion', in idem, *Faith and philosophy*, pp. 278-279.

challenged 'our common Christian heritage, lying back of all our ecclesiastical and sectarian disputes.'[112] Reunion, he urged, would enable Presbyterians to proselytize the west, educate freed slaves, and remould immigrants, by the strength of 'our common American Christianity.' 'Sects are transient; the church abides,' he explained, emphasising that Presbyterian reunion, which was to be completed in 1870, was but an increment in a larger process.[113] In this spirit, Smith also chaired the executive committee of the American branch of the international Evangelical Alliance from 1866 to 1870, which dispatched Schaff to Europe in 1869 to prepare for the Alliance's 1873 conference at New York. Writing in the *American Presbyterian Review*, Schaff anticipated that the congress would bear united testimony 'against unbelief and false belief,' whilst Europe would bring 'long experience and wisdom' to America, and America export her 'fresh, vigorous, and hopeful Christianity' to Europe.[114]

The notion developed and acted upon by Neander's pupils that past and present were tending towards a cross-denominationally Protestant future for civilisation carried with it a more exclusive obverse. Neander's liberal Protestantism had consistently carried a disturbing edge in its designation of Judaism, and Judaism's periodic recrudescence within the Christian church, as the anti-type of modernity. As his alignment with the Christian state grew closer during and after the 1848 revolutions, he had opposed the extension of the right to hold teaching offices to unconverted Jews.[115] His English-speaking students shared this anti-Judaism, shading into outright anti-Semitism, in their admiration for the way in which Neander's own biography appeared to vindicate his philosophy of history. 'He belongs to the line of converts which begins with Paul of Tarsus,' Schaff reflected, having shown a 'zeal for the freedom in Christ from the bondage of legalism' which made him 'an Israelite without guile'.[116]

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[112] Ibid., pp. 274-275.
[113] Ibid., pp. 271, 295-6.
[114] P. Schaff, 'The New York General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance', *American Presbyterian Review*, 2:2 (1870), p. 89.
[115] Wiegand, *Neanders Leben*, pp. 116, 120.
[116] Schaff, *Three biographies*, pp. 133,148.

A religious anti-type that was rather more central to Neander's English-speaking students' conception of the present, however, was Roman Catholicism. Its contemporary resurgence in Europe, and the growth of Catholic immigration to America, called for historically-articulated and cross-denominational Protestant countermeasures with an urgency that Judaism, unlike in the Germany of Neander's day, did not provoke. Smith and Tulloch saw modern Catholicism as standing condemned by historical progress, rather than as a continuing agent within it. In a letter of 1869 to the historian, George Bancroft, in which he complained about the corrupting effects of the Irish on New York's political life, Smith welcomed the Evangelical Alliance's prospective meeting in the city as affording a chance for demonstrating 'Protestant unity.'[117] 'Not for tyranny, not for anarchy, not for the Papacy, not for pantheism, was our land planted and builded,' he told the New School's St Louis General Assembly in 1855.[118] Tulloch comparably declared that 'Romanism … has lost the key to the door of the world's progress, and can only grope amidst the strewn wreck – the dogmatic débris – of the path by which man has advanced.'[119] The Christian future which Neander's developmental ideas helped these historians to imagine was, despite its ecumenical aspirations, always a Protestant one, which designated Romanism, if no longer as Antichrist, then – together with Judaism - as an anachronism. The unprecedentedly universalising impetus which Neander had given to Protestant historicism also subtly reinvented distinctly traditional kinds of religious exclusion.

(IV)

The popularity of Neander's historicism, and the belief that it contained a solution to the entwined ecclesiastical and intellectual difficulties which confronted nineteenth-century

[117] [Smith], *Henry Boynton Smith*, 292.
[118] Smith, 'The Reformed churches', p. 123.
[119] [J. Tulloch], 'Dr. Newman's *Grammar of Assent*', *Edinburgh Review*, 132:270 (1870), pp. 382-414, 414.

believers, waned at different paces across the Protestant world. Supersession came most swiftly in Germany. After Neander's death, the conservative turn within mediating theology evident in his later years continued under his pupils, such as August Tholuck, who proclaimed Christ's atoning sacrifice for sin to German and Anglo-American Protestants from his chair at Halle until his death in 1877.[120] Ritschlianism, whose leaders stressed a more acute antagonism between historical criticism and traditional Christianity than Neander had acknowledged, meanwhile succeeded mediating theology in the vanguard of German liberal Protestantism.[121] The developing polarisations within German theology, and the increasingly Protestant character of German nationalism, more and more eroded the space for catholic and ecumenical compromise which Neander had occupied.

British and American students followed, by a kind of delayed reaction, the trends in historical inquiry which movements in German theological mood tended to mould. From the 1870s onwards, in scholarly studies and in works of reference, Neander's *General History* and shorter writings were more and more superseded by more recent German scholarship, and increasingly by British and American learning, as up-to-date authorities on points of historical criticism.[122] It would be some time, however, before Neander became merely a past phase of learning. Just as it had been Neander's historical philosophy - the spirit which breathed life into his immense erudition - which had first propelled him to international pre-eminence, so it was that same spirit which sustained his continuing attraction to critics engaged in mediation between orthodoxy and modernity long after his critical positions had begun to show their age. The British Methodist historian, Herbert Brook Workman, in his 1898 history of *The Church of the West in the Middle Ages*, commended Neander to his readers as 'always faithful to the

[120] L. Witte, *Das Leben D. Friedrich August Gottreu Tholuck's* (2 vols., Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1884-6), I, p. 104.
[121] A. Harnack, 'August Neander', in his *Reden und Aufsätze* (2 vols., Gieszen, 1904), I, pp. [195]-218.
[122] As early as 1874, one American writer described Neander as 'somewhat antiquated': [anon.], 'Die Politik der Päpste von Gregor. I bis Gregor. VII', *North American Review*, 118:243 (1874), p. 398.

continuity of life'.[123] Henry Melvill Gwatkin, a liberal evangelical Anglican cleric and Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge from 1891 until his death in 1916, told his predecessor, Mandell Creighton, in 1890 that for the ecclesiastical historian, 'Neander is still the highest model'.[124] To the many scholars who still believed that history bore witness to progressive divinity, and that historical scholarship was thus properly a kind of religious exercise, Neander continued to have important things to say as the nineteenth century drew to its end. Only when history lost its place at the pinnacle of religious apologetics, and came to appear as though it were a secular phenomenon, did Neander's religion of history finally fade from cultural memory.

[123] H. B. Workman, *The church of the west in the Middle Ages* (2 vols., London, 1898), II, ix.
[124] H.M. Gwatkin to M. Creighton, 15 Sept. 1890, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, H.M. Gwatkin papers, letters/208.