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Integrity and Integration in Ecclesiastical Historiography: The Perspective of Mosheim and Neander

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INTEGRITY AND INTEGRATION IN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY: THE PERSPECTIVE OF MOSHEIM AND NEANDER

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Historical studies are too often ignored or at best given a secondary role in the modern world where interest in the latest scientific discoveries and in technological development dominates. Even in broad ecclesiastical circles, excessive concern for immediate relevance sometimes prompts questions about what history can possibly bring to the church, and the place of history as a legitimate, first-rank component of theological studies is often challenged.

In contrast the Lutheran church at its inception showed a lively interest in history and a real appreciation for the contributions the discipline can make to the whole area of theological scholarship. Such interest and appreciation continued in subsequent centuries, but in the later part of the modern era and in what many now call the post-modern age, the validity of history's role has come under fire. Twentieth century historians now have to pose anew the question about the relevant contribution that historical studies can render to the church today as it examines itself, considering its essential message and its mission in the world.

The present age has not only been called post-modern, it also is sometimes designated as the post-Christian era. Although Christianity has never before seen such world-wide expansion, the church has lost its past influence over human culture in general.[1] Can the church itself continue to survive intact in the midst of such radical

[1] Although the literature on Christian missions continues to expand rapidly, the basic point of Christianity's dramatic spread is illustrated in detail by the encyclopedic work of Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1937-1945). See also Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, 5 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958-1962). Latourette states: "To say glibly that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed early stages of the post-Christian era is a naive and hasty, if understandable generalization. . . . From the standpoint of history it is too soon either to affirm or to deny the accuracy of that affirmation."

changes in the world around it? Can the church survive if it does not exercise a meaningful impact on the world?

The integrity-integration motif used in this investigation is here proposed as an instrument to analyze how the church fared throughout history in its twofold mission of preserving its unique essence and identity on the one hand and of transmitting its message to the world in need of salvation on the other hand. Integrity is understood here as referring to what is essential for defining the church as church, as that which it cannot abandon without losing its own identity.[2] The question about the criteria for this integrity has been differently answered by historians/theologians. From a confessional Lutheran point of view it is not enough to insist simply that there necessarily must be some kind of integrity in the church since this would make any subjective view of integrity acceptable. True integrity has to conform to the only source and norm of all legitimate Christian doctrine, the Holy Scriptures. But the church in each period of its history and in every place where it finds itself always envelopes its integrity in a specific form: doctrinal formulations, language, concepts and rituals. This enables it to preserve and transmit the Christian message. Therefore, both the content and the form of the Christian message become important for the definition of the integrity of the church. Consequently, the

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Ibid., 1: IX. Regarding the loss of influence of Christianity over the political, economical, moral and other areas in a secularized West see James Hastings Nichols, *History of Christianity, 1650-1950* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1956).

[2] The concepts of integrity and integration used here were first encountered in a class taught by Dr. August Suelflow in the 1979/80 academic year where the motif was applied to the history of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in its process of growth from immigrant groups in the last century in the United States to the great church it is today. In 1984 I was called to teach at the Escola Superior de Teologia do Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo, one of the seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil. There I have been applying this motif in my classes in the analysis on the history of my own church. Dr. Suelflow used the illustration of a ball to explain his concepts. Integrity is the ball itself, while integration is the ball being used in a game. A proper balance between integrity and integration results in that both the ball is handled carefully and the game is being played. An excessive concern for integrity results in taking the ball out of the field and locking it into a safe lest it become soiled and damaged. The obvious consequence of such action is that it impedes the continuation of the game. An exclusive concern with integration, on the other hand, leads the players to abuse the ball in such a way that pretty soon they will have no ball left to continue the game.

integrity of the church is to be found first of all in its loyalty to the teachings of Holy Scripture but also in the acceptance of the authentic expressions of biblical truth as found primarily in symbols, that is, in the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions, and found also in other documents which the church accepts as biblically sound and correct such as dogmatic works, hymnals, and liturgies.[3]

The effort to defend and preserve the integrity of the church involves both a positive and a negative action. Positively, the church sets up safeguards to keep its message pure and intact. Such safeguards include the documents mentioned above, formulated in a language that can be understood and checked by its members. On the negative side, the church separates itself from the world and from groups that claim to belong to the church but are regarded to be in error or to have another spirit. Sometimes this difference has been made clear in outward appearances, that is, by adopting different rites, hymns and customs, but above all the difference is underscored by formulating clearly defined doctrines.[4]

The Christian church separates itself from the world through a system of beliefs and a conduct of life that Christians do not share with those who belong to the world. Christians are constantly reminded of Christ's words in John 17:11-16 that his followers

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[3] In the beginning, some of the leaders of the church that eventually would be known as the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod included even their German background in their definition of integrity. They feared that Lutheranism would be lost if they did not "retain the German language, customs, spirit, and culture . . ." Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 227. About efforts to retain the German language see pages 355-62.

[4] Andrew M. Greeley in a discussion about ethnic diversity in the United States replies to those who claim that even the study of ethnicity is a dangerous, divisive subject saying that ethnic diversity is a reality whether we like it or not. He argues that for someone to be rooted in his own particular heritage is not an hindrance but rather an asset for the understanding of the universal. "To understand the particular one must have the perspective of the universal, but in order to see the universal one must be firmly grounded and rooted in the particular. The citizen of the world is also the citizen of the neighborhood . . ." Andrew M. Greeley, *Why Can't They Be Like Us?* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1975), 18. A similar reasoning could be suggested for denominational loyalty. The empirical church is divided today and a Christian cannot belong to the universal church without being a member of a particular denomination.

are still in the world but are not of the world, and Christians are given warnings such as the one St. Paul wrote to the church in Rome: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world . . ."[5] Surely the young congregation in the imperial capital must have felt pressure from the culture of the day to conform, to be so thoroughly integrated that all integrity would be lost.

Christians know that preserving the integrity of the church does not depend on their efforts. It is a gracious gift from God ever renewed through the means of Word and Sacrament. The faithful use of these means is thus also the only sign or mark that reveals that a group of Christians in any given place or time still retains the right to claim that they uphold the integrity of the church.

Integrity is, however, not an end in itself in the Christian church. Attempts to defend the integrity can become misguided efforts if they preclude the integration of the church. For example, polemics can be a means to defend the integrity of the church but polemics can at the same time be very damaging from the point of view of integration.

Stated in a concise way, the integration of the church consists in the preaching of the word in such a way as to communicate effectively the law and gospel message to the world in order to convince it of sin and bring it to Christ whom God sent to the world to save it.[6] Some of the questions lying behind the church's effort at integration are: will the world pay attention to our message and understand it? Will our message be relevant to the questions raised at this place in this time? What can the church do to proclaim its message in such a way as to be heard, understood, and relevant to the needs of today's world?

Viewed from a broader perspective, the integration of the church also includes the

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[5] Romans, 12:2.

[6] Emphasis falls here on the effective communication of the message, as Robert Kolb points out: "Genuine Biblical teaching, doctrine, is not correct if it is merely flawless in content. It must also be accurately presented, aimed precisely at the situation of the contemporary hearer . . ." Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 15.

dialogue with the world.[7] The church has to listen to the concerns and questions raised by the world, questions that often find expression in secular literature, art, and science. Integration requires that the church be aware of the world views, customs, ideals and prejudices of those whom it wants to address. It requires learning the language of the prospective listeners in order to be able to convey the message of law and gospel in an effective and relevant way. It may involve cross-cultural ministry[8] and inter-denominational listening and witnessing. Integration demands from the church the awareness that it always needs to learn again how to communicate in an understandable way a message that comes from outside the world and is needed by the world for its salvation.[9]

The same Christian people who have been separated from the world are being sent back to the world as Jesus says to His Father, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent

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[7] Jaroslav Pelikan speaks of "the correlating function of theology" which he understands as the study of non-Christian thought both to refute its errors and to "learn from non-Christian thought what only it can teach them [theologians] about man and his situation." Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Functions of Theology," in *Theology in the Life of the Church*, ed. Robert W. Bertram (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 19. Theology, argues Pelikan, must stop repeating traditional answers to questions that are no longer being asked and listen to the new questions raised by culture today. Ibid., 18-21. Elsewhere, Pelikan refers to concepts used by Werner Elert to describe the relation between the church and the world: "Werner Elert has spoken of 'synthesis,' the attempt to conquer culture by merging with it, and of 'diastasis,' the attempt to save the church's soul by a separation from culture." Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), 160. [Hereafter referred to as Pelikan, Catholicism].

[8] Integration, however, is a concern not only when the Gospel is brought to a new area, but also when it is proclaimed to a different time and different culture with a "different" language in the same area in which in once was understood and accepted but where a new generation has turned its back to it. Present day Europe and other areas of the Western world now living in the so-called post-Christian era seem to illustrate this.

[9] See Jaroslav Pelikan's discussion about worship in Roman Catholicism where he argues, under the topic *Cultus and Culture* that worship (cultus) consists of elements from the world (culture) but also includes a separation from the world. Pelikan, *Catholicism*, 159-72. Pelikan affirms, "Liturgy belongs to 'diastasis,' the church's declaration of its identity. But it also belongs to 'synthesis,' the church's declaration of its universality and of its concern for the world. . . . cultus and culture belong together not only in their etymology, but in the life and strategy of the church." Ibid., 165.

them into the world."[10] The apostle Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 what is required of those who are sent back if they want the world to listen to them: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. . . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."[11] And therefore he appeals to his fellow Christians, "Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved."[12]

The demands of integration may pose serious risks to the preservation of the integrity of the church. The sinfulness and egocentricity of the world demand that the church sacrifice its integrity. And those in the church charged with guarding the integrity may be so eager to integrate that integrity falls by the wayside. How much of its integrity should the church be willing to risk for the sake of integration? The answer divides Christians. If the church only talks to itself and is not willing to reach out and risk its integrity even as it offers its message to others, it runs the risk of not being relevant or of being unintelligible to people who are different in age, culture, ethnic origin, or in some

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[10] John 17:18.

[11] 1 Corinthians 9:19, 22b. About verse 22 see H. Chadwick, "All Things to All Men," *New Testament Studies* 1 (1954-1955): 261-75.

[12] 1 Corinthians 10:32-33. A well known example of integration in history—without making a value judgment about it—is the recommendation given by Gregory the Great to the missionaries sent to christianize England. They were to accommodate themselves to local customs as far as possible, only rejecting what was clearly diabolic and anti-Christian. "The heathen temples of these people need not be destroyed, only the idols which are to be found in them. . . . If the temples are well built, it is a good idea to detach them from the service of the devil, and to adapt them for the worship of the true God . . . And since the people are accustomed, when they assemble for sacrifice, to kill many oxen in sacrifice to the devils, it seems reasonable to appoint a festival for the people by way of exchange. The people must learn to slay their cattle not in honour of the devil, but in honour of God and for their own food; when they have eaten and are full, then they must render thanks to the giver of all good things. If we allow them these outward joys, they are more likely to find their way to the true inner joy." Quoted in Stephen Neill, *Christian Missions* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1964), 68.

other way from those who belong to the church. If the church sacrifices to the point of losing its integrity, then it may be completely assimilated into the world, accepted by the world but having no message left to offer. In that case the church is no longer simply in the world but has become of the world.

The church therefore always must remind itself that its task is to bring people from the world to the church. Integration requires that the church constantly re-examine its dogmatic formulations, forms of worship, hymnody and other aspects of its doctrinal and practical life in an attempt to determine if these forms still convey the message in an understandable way to the lost who need to hear it. At the same time the church obviously uses those forms because it believes them valuable to conveying and preserving its integrity, and so the church would like those being drawn out of the world to appreciate those forms and learn to value them.

The history of the church stands before it today as a warning of the dangers involved in losing the healthy tension or in upsetting the delicate balance between integrity and integration by leaning too heavily and exclusively to one extreme or the other. Excessive concentration on integrity eliminates the dilemmas and hard struggles imposed by a dialogue with the world. But the calm and peace it brings to the church has the smell of death. From the human perspective, such a church locked behind cloister doors shrinks numerically, its voice no longer making an impact on a secularized world.[13] But to avoid this danger, many Christians advocate a stance of integration at any and all cost. The danger the church then faces is to listen only to the world as it only tries to please the world. As Dean M. Kelley points out, some modern secular people do not want a religion with absurd beliefs, supernatural dogmas, unreasonable requirements, irrelevant

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[13] Some preachers and lay people as well comfort themselves with the facile idea that if others do not like their church, their way of worshiping and of preaching, it is the exclusive fault of those who are lost since the doors of the church are open to those who want to come.

preoccupations, and offending distinctions between those who are members and those who are not.[14] It can be added that words like sin, miracle, heaven and hell, and all the terms that refer to transcendental realities also are taboo to many modern individuals. When the church starts to accede to every demand of the secular culture it may in the end even be willing to give up the fundamental objective of a true integration, the conversion of sinners, for as Michael Green points out, some are ready to eliminate the word and idea of conversion. "Dialogue" then replaces "mission," and "conversion" is an unacceptable concept.[15] A church trying to adjust itself to all the requirements of the world lets the world write its agenda and allows itself to be lured into a situation in which it is willing to give up its integrity whenever it clashes with some principle dear to the world or regarded as not politically correct. The church then drops from its vocabulary words that offend the world and lets its message be transformed so as to conform to the modern secular dogmas of relativism, diversity, and dialogue. Such a church puts very high on its scale of value appeals to be reasonable, tolerant, ecumenical, and relevant.[16] The integrity of the church is lost in the process and the church lets itself become assimilated to the world.

Even when the church is on guard against damaging influences from the world, its integrity still runs a risk in the process of translating the gospel from one milieu to another. There is always a possibility that in such a process not only the proclamatory form but also the essence of the gospel may be changed. The church therefore always has to be cautious and aware of the need to ask itself how the prospective convert hears what the missionary preaches. In the same way, a church that places great emphasis on relevance should be reminded that if it lets its message become relevant only to one specific culture or time, this

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[14] Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), 20.

[15] Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 147.

[16] See Kelley, 125.

message may lose its pertinence, its connection, with other times and areas.[17]

In order that the concepts of integrity and integration do not become distorted into subjective abstractions, it is necessary that their content be informed by the law and gospel message of the Scriptures and Confessions.[18] Furthermore it is never superfluous to insist on a correct distinction of law and gospel. When integration is attempted without the law, it leads to a compromise with the world. When that attempt is made without the gospel, it leads at best to mere moralism.

This investigation attempts to apply the motif of integrity and integration in an examination of Lutheran ecclesiastical historiography.[19] This is not a comprehensive survey involving all the significant Lutheran historians of the past but rather focuses on selected Lutheran historians of different centuries to determine possible tendencies in their views of integrity and integration. Although these terms themselves are not employed as such by the theologians/historians analyzed here, this study starts with the hypothesis that the concepts expressed by these terms are not unfamiliar to them.

In a study of Lutheran historiography the question about Luther's view of history deserves to be raised. This is done in the first chapter where Luther's position regarding the integrity and integration of the church also receives attention. Luther himself was no historian, therefore the views of two historians who lived close to Luther's times and gave

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[17] On the issue of the need and danger of relevance see E. L. Mascal, *Theology and History: An Inaugural Lecture* (Westminster: The Faith Press, 1962), 11.

[18] Today, especially in a Latin-American context, it is important to emphasize that the Gospel should not be turned into Law and that the Law stands in the service of the Gospel having as its main function to denounce sin and convince the world of sin, not *per se* to better the world but to lead sinners to repentance so that they can be saved through the message of the Gospel. The improvement of the world is a welcome resulting by-product.

[19] The expression ecclesiastical historiography in the title of this dissertation is not intended to imply either that there is or that there is not such a thing as a separate church history, distinct from secular history. It only means that what is going to be studied are the works of authors who chose to write specifically about the history of the church and selected this field for their investigation.

expression to his view of history are briefly examined in the same chapter. The two are Matthias Flacius and Veit Ludwig von Seckendorf. These Lutherans still felt a natural tie to the Reformation, although Seckendorf was already a transition figure. Seckendorf, who won recognition for his comprehensive history of Lutheranism, did not, however, write a general history of the church and therefore is only briefly considered here.

The main focus of this study falls upon two epoch-making Lutheran ecclesiastical historians, Johann Lorenz Mosheim and Johann August Wilhelm Neander. The historical production of Mosheim belongs to the eighteenth century and that of Neander to the nineteenth. Being more distant from the Reformation, these historians have to deal with the Reformation more as their genealogy than as their own youth. Mosheim seems not to have sensed very clearly that growing distance, but there is witness to the gap. Neander realizes how far he has come.

Although these historians have been studied before, they have never been analyzed according to the scheme of integrity and integration. Both scholars wrote several more or less comprehensive historical works, however, it seemed best to restrict the analysis to each author's major work, namely, each one's general history of the church. The main reason for this decision is that it allows a comparison of the views that the authors expressed on the same subject matter, a comparison that would not be possible with other wider-ranging writings where each deals with different topics.[20] In addition to analyzing their views of integrity and integration, and to better contextualize these views, attention will be given to their view of history, to their historical method, to their contributions to the church's historiography, and to emphases in their theological outlooks, especially as these relate to the larger theological context of their times.

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[20] Unfortunately even in the case of their general histories of the church the works of Mosheim and Neander do not cover exactly the same period of time. Mosheim brings his history up to his own times in the eighteenth century, while Neander begins his work after the apostolic period and his death interrupted it at the end of the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF LUTHERAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Luther's View of History

Knowledge of History

Martin Luther was not a historian, but he had a keen interest in history. In his address *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (1524) he laments that during his years in school he had been compelled to read "the devil's dung"—the scholastic philosophers and sophists—and had not dedicated himself to reading poets and historians.[1] According to Karl Holl,[2] it was, among other things, Luther's translation and study of the Bible that made him aware of the need to study history. Luther discovered that in order to interpret the Scriptures one has to know something of everything mentioned in them: plants, animals, minerals, geography and ancient history. The Leipzig Disputation challenged Luther to delve more deeply into historical studies. John Eck had raised, in his thirteenth thesis, the question about the primacy of Rome and the papacy. This led Luther, in his preparation for the debate, to investigate carefully especially the history of the early church. Twenty years later Luther commented that at the time of the debate he had not been well versed in history.[3] In fact,

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[1] Martin Luther. *Luther's Works*, ed. Walter I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 45:370. [Hereafter cited as LW].

[2] Karl Holl, *The Cultural Significance of the Reformation*, trans. Karl Hertz and Barbara Hertz and John H. Lichtblau (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), 116. Holl asserts that "Of the specific intellectual disciplines, apart from theology, history stood closest to the Reformation." Ibid., 117.

[3] See Lewis W. Spitz, "Luther's View of History: A Theological Use of the Past," in *Light for Our World*, ed. John W. Klotz (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 140-41.

Luther exaggerated his lack of historical knowledge at that time since, as Ernst Schäfer[4] points out, his earlier writings already reveal how carefully and thoroughly Luther had studied history even while he was still in the monastery. During the years following the Leipzig Debate, Luther was very much involved in battles against many kinds of foes. His historical knowledge continued to grow during these years, but at the time he employed history mostly as a weapon in controversy or for illustration.[5] Especially in the last ten to fifteen years of his life he was most deeply interested in history for its own sake. In those years he wrote several works dealing with historical events and also several prefaces to historical works written by others.[6] Among his own works is the *Supputatio annorum mundi* 1541 (Reckoning of the years of the world), a chronological table he had originally composed so that, as he explained, he

> could always have before his eyes and see the time and years of historical events which are described in Holy Scriptures and remind himself of how many years the patriarchs, judges, kings and princes lived and ruled or over how long a period of time one succeeded the other.[7]

Luther thus saw "the value of chronology as an aid to exegesis and for the light it shed on church history."[8] His prefaces and other writings show he shared the humanist's interest in history. But he went beyond them when he showed an interest in the inner

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[4] Ernst Schäfer, *Luther als Kirchenhistoriker* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1877), 44.

[5] Ibid., 83.

[6] Schäfer cites the following writings from 1535-1545 in which Luther reveals his historical interest and knowledge: I. Luther's own writings: *Der Artikel von der donatio Constantini* 1537; *Lugende von Chrysostomus* 1537; *Von den Conciliis und Kirchen* 1539; *Supputatio annorum mundi* 1541; *Wider das Papsttum zu Rom* etc. 1545; *Papsttreu Hadriani* 1545. II. Prefaces to historical writings by others: Barns, *vitae pontificum* 1536; Hus' *Briefe* 1536/37; Kymeus, *Konzil von Gangra* 1537; Hieronimus, *ep. ad Evagrium* 1538; Galeatius Kapella, *Geschichte von Mailand* 1538. Schäfer, 84.

[7] Quoted in Spitz, 142.

[8] Spitz, 142.

meaning and nature of history and when he, therefore, related it to his theology.[9] The Bible provided Luther with his view of history, and it was also his greatest single source for his theology and for his whole view of the world. His exegesis, which took the literal sense of the text seriously, allowed him to see history in Scripture.[10] Moreover, his faith gave him the conviction that all history is God's work. While agreeing that Luther's faith dominated his thought on history, Heinz Zahrnt points out that, on the other hand, Luther's faith was confirmed through history.[11]

Although Luther did not write a specific book on history as Augustine did, all of his works are filled with thoughts and judgments about history. The respectable historical knowledge that he acquired with the passing of the years led him also to form a definite opinion regarding the value and use of history. His positions on these points became basic for Protestant historiography.[12] Luther also shared with his times the view that history should not be "cold and dead," but its usefulness for the present should be explored. History was for him a rich source of experience from the past. It should therefore be taught in the schools and cultivated by the princes.[13] His suggestions sparked new interest

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[9] Theodore G. Tappert, "Luther in His Academic Role," in *The Mature Luther*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert et al. (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1959), 23.

[10] John M. Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), 44. Luther's exegesis shaped his view of history, but it could also be argued that conversely his sense of history shaped his exegesis.

[11] Heinz Zahrnt, *Luther deutet Geschichte* (Munich: Verlag Paul Müller, 1952), 18. Zahrnt states about Luther: "Als ein erlebnisfähiger und für die Wirklichkeit des Lebens aufgeschlossener Mensch hat er eben auch die Fülle des geschichtlichen Lebens in sich aufgenommen und verarbeitet, so dass sie ihm zu einer Stärkung und Bestätigung seines Glaubens wurde." Ibid., 18.

[12] Ibid., 14. Headley, VII. Walter Nigg, *Die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung: Grundzüge ihrer Historischer Entwicklung* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934), 42. Nigg says: "Wie Luther für die ganze Reformation der schöpferische Genius war, so gab er auch für die neue Kirchengeschitsschreibung die Losung aus." Ibid., 42. Lewis Spitz, "History as a Weapon in Controversy," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 20 (May 1949): 753. Peter Meinhold, *Geschichte der Kirchlichen Historiographie* (Freiburg/Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1967), 1:227.

[13] See Zahrnt, 16-17.

in German historiography. Luther and his co-workers not only theorized about the value and usefulness of history, they also took measures to ensure the promotion of the study of history. It seems that the first *chair* of history at a modern university was established at Marburg University in Hesse (Phillip of Hesse's state) around 1528 under Melanchthon's influence. This puts Marburg ahead of all Roman Catholic universities including Italian Renaissance universities.[14]

History Seen with Human Eyes

Luther views history two ways: with human eyes and reason, and with the eyes of faith.[15] Three essential factors used by God to shape history can be seen and discerned by human reason without the aid of faith: the nation, the law, and the great men. These three factors are all good gifts from God for the benefit of people's lives on earth. People, however, often abuse God's gifts and turn them into demonic caricatures. Thus when people do not regard any limitations to their wishes and demands, and do not respect law and order, they becomes a mob. "The unleashed mob is a satanic distortion of the nation, an element of destruction, whereas the nation represents an element of life."[16] Luther consequently was against the rebellion of the masses as manifested in the Peasant Revolt.[17]

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[14] Spitz, "Luther's View of History," 150.

[15] See Heinrich Bornkamm, "God and History," in *Luther's World of Thought*, trans. Martin H. Bertram (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 196-202.

[16] Ibid., 197.

[17] Zahrnt points out that Luther accompanied all phases of the Peasants War with writings, and referred to it often afterwards. His aim was to give instruction to the consciences of both parties: "er hatte nur ein Interesse: 'achthaben, was Gottes Wort will.' Seine Deutung des Bauernkrieges ist im jedem Augenblick Predigt." Zahrnt, 68.

Law is the second element of historical life. It draws the line that separates the nation from the mob. Without law there would be no order but only chaos. The visible form of the law is the state, established by God himself to restrain the evil of sin and maintain peace and order. Law and government are, therefore, God's gift to humanity for its own preservation. When people abuse God's gift of law and state they transform it into violence.

War, however, does not always disrupt the divinely established order of peace.[18] It can also serve as the means to re-establish that order. In the first case it is a sin, in the second, a work of love. Luther condemns the attack of a lower political power against a higher, but he recognizes the right of the higher authority to engage in war against a subordinated power. He is so convinced of the dignity of the office of government that in his opinion a war waged by a higher authority against a lower will mostly happen according to what is right. But even if that is not the case, he does not allow the attacked party to resist. He prefers the injustice—if it must happen—from the authority than from the citizens. In a war among equals, the one who starts the war is wrong. A just war is only a defensive war against an aggressor. The aggressor in a war usually loses. That does not allow the conclusion that the one who engages in defensive war will always win. The one who claims his own right in a war is like someone who justifies himself. Victory does not depend on the right of man but the will of God. When Luther judges history, he has before his eyes either the guilt of men or the grace of God. The guilty person deserves defeat. The person who is in the right does not deserve success or victory. That is always an unmerited grace of God.

Luther also took a stand regarding the specific kind of war that were the Crusades. He did not say much about the Crusades themselves, but he took a definite position on the

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[18] This section on war is based on Zahrnt, 91-133.

idea behind the Crusades, i.e., the idea of conducting war in Christ's name as if to lend a saving character to such political activity. Luther outlined this position in his writings about the war against the Turks. His aim in these treatises was also the instruction of consciences.

Luther initially opposed the war against the Turks. In 1528/29 in *Vom Kriege wider die Türken* he presents a theological basis for a defense against the Turks. He does not hide his initial position but explicitly states it, and bases it on the concrete situation of that time. He does not know a judgment of history that does not take into consideration the contemporary situation.[19] His interpretation of history is basically nothing else than the exposition of God's Word in the concrete historical situation.

Although the war has been defensive and a reaction up to that time, Luther attributes the lack of success and the defeat at the hands of the Turks to the fact that this war had been conducted as a Crusade. A Crusade contradicts the distinction between the two Kingdoms.[20] Two men must fight against the Turks: "one is called Christian, the other Emperor Charles."[21] Luther is not thinking about two different persons but about two attitudes of the same person in the two kingdoms. The Christian has to repent and pray and so turn away God's wrath and defeat the devil. The emperor has to fight to defend the body and life against the killing and destruction of the Turk.

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19 "Es gibt für ihn kein allgemeingültiges Geschichtsgesetz, das den Menschen zu allen Zeiten das gleiche Handeln vorschriebe, sondern Luther kennt nur den Gehorsam gegen den Willen Gottes in dem konkreten Augenblick. Danach fragt er, darüber will er die Gewissen unterrichten. Seine Geschichtsdeutung ist nichts anderes als das Geltendmachen des Willen Gottes in der gegenwärtigen geschichtlichen Situation." Zahrnt, 121.

20 "Die Verkehrung einer von Gott selbst aufgerichteten Ordnung zieht aber immer Misserfolg und Niederlage nach sich, 'denn es kann kein Glücke sein bei solchen Leuten, die Gott und ihren eigen Rechten widerfechten'." Zahrnt, 123.

21 "Einer heisst Christianus, der andere Kaiser Karolus." Ibid., 124.

Luther was convinced, through his interpretation of Daniel 7, that with the coming of the Turks the end of the world was very near. This conviction, however, did not make a defensive war unnecessary for him, nor did it free the emperor's subjects from their obedience. However to be obedient to the authority meant, at that historical moment, to conduct war against the Turk.[22]

The third great gift of God to make human historical life possible—and which can also be perceived by human eyes— are the great men. God raises these "miracle men or sound heroes" from time to time.[23] Through them God governs in an extraordinary way, bringing prosperity and peace to the land. They are born leaders and are successful in all that they undertake. The demonic caricature of the great men has persons who only imagine themselves as great men and try to ape them in everything. They are guided by the devil and can cause misery and every misfortune. Even the great men themselves can become presumptuous and ungrateful. Then God causes them to fall and perish. There is, therefore, an incessant struggle in history between divine and satanic powers. Against God's great gifts and deeds the devil raises the mob, violence, and arrogance. Such disharmony in history can be seen by the physical eye. That is, however, all that the eyes of reason can perceive: "a chaos of people and rulers rising and falling, killing, and being killed—a scene without purpose or meaning."[24] To look beyond all this and to discern the power and presence of God in history and above history, eyes of faith are needed.

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[22] "Enderwartung und politische Selbstbehauptung, Eschatologie und Geschichtlichkeit schliessen sich für Luther nicht nur nicht aus, sondern tragen sich gegenseitig". Ibid., 133.

[23] "Gott hat zweierley leute auff erden jnn allerley stenden. Etliche haben einen sonderlichen sternen fur Gott, welche er selbst leret und erweckt, wie er sie haben will." Martin Luther. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1914), 51:207, 21-23. [Hereafter cited as WA]. Luther mentions as examples of miracle men such biblical figures as Samson, David, Jehoiada, etc. But, he says, also among the impious and pagans are such individuals, as for example the Persian king Cyrus, the Greek Themistocles and Alexander the Great, the Roman Augustus, and Vespasian, the Syrian Naaman, etc. Ibid., 207-16.

[24] Headley, 17.

God and History

Faith perceives the disharmony in historical happenings as a struggle between the divine and the demonic and asks about God's place in these confused events. The answer for Luther is that God is everywhere in history. He acts not only in the good and noble forces, but he also imparts life to the evil and demonic. It is a mystery why God does not simply lead his cause to victory. He acts in a hidden way in history, working through masks, i.e., through all events, people, and forces of history.[25]

It is God who acts in history. People are but the instruments for God's activity. Paul and Augustine had expressed this view of God as the ground of historical causation, earlier than Luther. This theocentric position separates Luther from modern historical understanding.[26] This view has two implications. The fact that every action stems from God gives unity and meaning to history, and, since each person is an instrument of God, none can act as a spectator. Everyone is always acted upon and cooperates in history. In other words, all stand always *coram deo* and *coram mundo*.[27] This fact places a great responsibility upon an individual's acting in history.

> Es handelt sich um die Entdeckung des Menschen als eines selbständigen und in einer letzten Verantwortlichkeit handelden geschichtlichen Faktors. Auch die Geschichte der Kirche stellt sich aufgrund dieser Einsicht weithin als Werk des Menschen dar.[28]

Behind and above every individual's action is God's sovereign activity conducting all history. With the eyes of faith one can see that God is not only the life of history, he is

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[25] Bornkamm, 202-3.

[26] Headley, 1-2.

[27] Spitz, Luther's View of History, 143.

[28] Meinhold, 1:230.

also its lord and master.[29] To view history with the eyes of faith is to view it also with grateful eyes, recognizing that everything great and good in history is the gift of a merciful God. Gratitude also serves as the best antidote against presumption and arrogance.

God administers history with absolute sovereignty. Granted, it seems everything results from natural causes. But everyone also knows about happenings called luck or coincidence. Even in this function, however, God still acts within the confines of natural law. His activity is characterized by his hiddeness. Even the unity of history, based on the premise that the same God acts everywhere, obscures its meaning, makes any possibility of its interpretation questionable, and attacks even the roots of faith in God. If God participates in the same way in success and failure, what is then the norm by which he distributes both? Trying to find a norm results in apparent paradoxes. The impious flourish, the pious suffer. Even the inner truth of someone being a Christian, a heretic, or a hypocrite is not visible from external appearances. Who is then able to recognize God working there?

Luther does not deny all possibility of knowledge about God by natural reason. He allows that natural man can perceive God's power, but does not know his will. He thinks of God as merciful, righteous and good, but history seems to contradict all this. Yet he does not stop trying to determine or identify God's place in history, with the result that natural man calls God what is not God. He identifies God with success. This happens in all natural religions.

Since the beginning of the world, nations see in their own success the mercy of God and God's wrath in the failure of others, but they never perceive God's wrath in their own defeat. Luther points to three witnesses to this interpretation of history *ex analogia*

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[29] The following paragraphs are based mainly on Bornkamm, 205-16, and on Zahrnt, 22-38.

entis: the Jews, the Turks, and the papacy. This view, he says, leads to the false idea of righteousness through works.

The simple identification of "fortune = grace" is false. What usually is called fortune and success in history is only the result of the divinely controlled temporal order that preserves creation in its sin and in spite of its sin. God distributes fortune and success both to worthy ones and unworthy without distinction. But this only has to do with this eon. No decision about the eternal destiny is manifested in this action of God. It is impossible for reason to know the goal or meaning of God's activity as he preserves his fallen creation.

But now God has decided to come out of his hiddeness and reveal his will toward humanity. This happened above all in Jesus Christ. God's revelation in Christ happens against all human expectations. We can see only defeat and humiliation in the cross of Golgotha where God hides himself in Christ. This hiddeness is not to negate the revelation but to characterize it. God deals with the world as he hides himself in the opposite. After this, all our judging of history has to be guided by the fact that God acts in a way that runs counter to our expectations and reason. In regard to God there are no logical sequences or conclusions to be drawn from the visible effects to the hidden causes. Rather one has to turn his back to the visible things and turn his ears toward God's word. One has to hear, not see. The inversion of human judgment through God's revelation should, however, not lead people now to establish another comparison, this time the reverse, and thus take defeat and disgrace as indications of God's grace, and, on the other hand, victory and fortune as signs of his wrath. Whoever judges in such a way, reasons according to an *analogia entis*— this time a negative one. If Christ is used as a formula to interpret history then all history becomes again a unequivocal revelation of God. But people can recognize the true God only in his word.

> Im Wort aber empfängt er [der Mensch] nicht eine vorgängige Belehrung, die ihn ein für allemal instandsetzte, Gottes Handeln in der Geschichte zu erkennen; vielmehr erfährt er das Handeln nur in dem je und je geschenckten Akt des Glaubens. Auch hier heisst Erkenntnis Anerkenntnis. Geschichtserkennen ist wie alles theologische Erkennen ein Bekennen, und zwar in dem doppelten Sinn der confessio laudis und der confessio peccati. Ein geschichtliches Ereignis kann ich immer nur beurteilen, indem ich mich durch das richtende und begnadigende Wort in dem jeweiligen geschichtlichen Moment treffen lasse. Der Glaube gibt dem Menschen keine Sicherheit in der Geschichte, sondern stöst ihn gerade aus alle Sicherungen, die er sich in ihr handelnd und deutend sucht, heraus.[30]

People cannot give history its meaning, but God does. Christian faith, therefore, does not recognize fate or arbitrariness. History is conducted by God's will. This will is not always clear to us in its associations and immediate aims, "but its meaning is clear: it always signifies either mercy or judgment."[31] God's gifts in history reveal his mercy. But Luther also sees, with the eyes of faith, "the immutable sequence of guilt and punishment behind the external happenings."[32] Nations perish not of natural causes but because of their sins as God uses one nation to destroy another evil nation. Faith also believes that God's mercy is above his judgments that serve as his agency of mercy and grace. "All history portrays God dealing with people in terms of law/gospel to meet sin and offer grace."[33] In history God speaks to people not in words but through acts.

God's activities of judging and preserving point to an eschatological consummation.[34] God maintains the world in its sin and in spite of its sin, in order to redeem it from its sin. What is clear to faith is not clear at all to natural human reason.

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[30] Zahrnt, 36-37.

[31] Bornkamm, 208.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Robert Rosin, "The Reformation, Humanism, and Education: The Wittenberg Model for Reform," *Concordia Journal* 16 (1990): 304.

[34] Zahrnt, 164-67.

Unbelief sees only blind destiny or simply punishment in history. It takes God's mask as being his face. Only faith is able to see God's mercy behind his judgment.

What is now the meaning of success or lack of success? They are very relative human measures. The decisive opposition is not between them but between faith and unbelief. Ultimately, what matters is not what happens to a person, but rather the relationship in which an individual stands before God when something happens. Success or lack of it do not in themselves change a person. But through faith and trust, one sees God's love and mercy in sorrow and defeat. Luther often pointed this out in letters of comfort to distressed people.[35]

Luther preached law and gospel to the person hit by catastrophe. He pointed out how disruption, chaos and evil active in the world are a result of sin and its continuous presence, including the individual as part of sinful humanity. At the same time, he showed how God's grace is seeking that person patiently through the judgment and is giving him one more possibility to turn back and repent. If an individual does not use the opportunity that God offers for that person's own benefit and does not repent, then that opportunity is lost forever. God's mercy has a limit. It does not come back again, and there is no logical guarantee that God will offer a second or different chance. Nothing can change his judgment later.[36]

The Church and Its History

Luther sees all history as a whole. The same God conducts and guides all history, sacred and secular.[37] With this in mind, it nevertheless seems proper to consider separately

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[35] See Zahrnt, 171-73.

[36] Zahrnt, 179-82.

[37] "The struggle for God's dominion is, according to Luther, the meaning and content of history. Therefore the history of the nations and the history of faith are not two distinct entities for Luther; they are an indivisible whole." Bornkamm, 216. "They [the reformers] really saw no sacred/secular distinction, no

Luther's utterances about the church and its history in a study focusing on ecclesiastical historiography.

The church has two sides. One is institutional, external, visible. The other is spiritual, hidden, abscondite.[38] The true church of Christ is for Luther the hidden church. The chief signs or marks of this church are the Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Where these signs are, there the church is to be found. Its spiritual head and the faith in the hearts of her members are, however, not visible to human eyes. The church is always there where people think that it could not be. The truth cannot, therefore, be demonstrated from the history as Erasmus thinks.[39] Only Holy Scripture can be the norm by which the appearance of church history can be judged. The hiddeness of the church and the clarity of Scripture belong together for Luther in the same way as the obscurity of Scripture and the visibility of the church for Erasmus. The decision about the truth of God is not to be found in the history of the church, i.e., in the consensus of the authorities, but in exegesis.

Church history can be described as the history of the course of God's word in the world.[40] This word meets either faith or unbelief. Unbelief opposes God's word in the world. History is, therefore, always a battlefield. Usually the word of God seems to be defeated as the church suffers weakness, opposition, persecution, defeat, sorrow and

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church history separate from the rest." Rosin, 304. "Aber Luther hat den Blick auch immer auf die Weltgeschichte gerichtet und niemals eine isolierte Geschichtsbetrachtung geuebt. Die Geschichte ist der lebendige Kommentar zum Worte Gottes, wie es in der Bibel vorliegt." Meinhold, 1:231. Headley speaks of "two types of history" but he also admits that, "Redemptive history cannot be understood as a closed district within world history, nor can these two types of history be seen as two parallel strands, for God's revelatory activity is not localized but works in and through every aspect and level of life." Headley, 13.

[38] This is sometimes referred to as the invisible church, a term acceptable not because believers cannot be seen but because from a human perspective hearts cannot be read. God sees and knows his church.

[39] Zahrnt, 49-50; Headley, 31-69.

[40] "Die Kirchengeschichte ist nichts anderes als der aufenthaltslose Lauf des Wortes Gottes durch die Welt." Zahrnt, 51.

death. But while the world sees only defeat, death, and humiliation, the true church is really alive, growing and victorious. Where the word is, there is always suffering. But that does not allow the opposite conclusion, that where suffering is, there is the word.[41]

Behind the opposition that the church suffers at the hands of unbelievers a continual struggle goes on between God and the devil. In his writing *Against the Antinomians*[42] Luther portrays history as the stage for this struggle. God works through his creatures to build up the church. The devil also uses God's creatures in his attempt to destroy God's works. The devil tries to prevent sinful people from hearing the preaching of law and gospel. The whole history of the church is, therefore, for Luther a continuous example of how the devil opposes God and his church on earth:

> In just these terms we could easily, if we wanted, trace the history of the church from its inception. We should perceive that such was at all times the course of events: when God's word flourished somewhere and his little flock was gathered, the devil became aware of the light, and he breathed and blew and stormed against it with strong mighty winds from every nook and corner in an attempt to extinguish this divine light. And even if one or two winds were brought under control and were successfully resisted, he constantly stormed and blew forth from a different hole against the light. There was no letup or end to it, nor will there be until the Last Day.[43]

In the attacks of those who opposed his work of reforming the church Luther saw the devil at work, storming and raging against the word of God. This happened, he says, in the attacks of the papacy, followed by Müntzer, Karlstadt, and the Anabaptists.[44] In

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[41] Ibid., 54-59.

[42] According to Bernhard Lohse, "A good way to become involved with Luther's view of history is to read *The Magnificat* (1521) or *Against the Antinomians* (1539). Neither of these is primarily devoted to the topic of history. Both, however, contain much relevant material. *Against the Antinomians* is particularly useful, because its polemical statements contain frequent references to contemporary situations." Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 197.

[43] LW, 47:115.

[44] Mark U. Edwards Jr. *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975), and id., *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531-46* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983. Both works, on earlier and later struggles, highlight this larger conflict going on in Luther's foes.

fact, Luther says, these were not only controversies among men, but struggles between Christ and the devil. And, the struggle is not over yet:

> I can see there in the distance how the devil is puffing out his cheeks so vigorously that he is turning all red as he prepares to blow and rage. But our Lord Christ from the beginning (even while he was in the flesh) struck these puffed cheeks with his fist, so that they emitted nothing but the devil's stinking wind. He still does this today and will ever continue to do so. . . . At the same time we are enjoined to remain awake and to do our part in preserving the light.[45]

The preservation of the church is not in man's hands and power. People such as Müntzer thought they had to preserve the church, but they became instruments of the devil and met a tragic end. The only one who always has preserved and always will preserve the church is Jesus Christ who says: "I am with you always, to the close of the age."

The Roman church attempted to secure the truth through a pretense of an uninterrupted chain or succession of bishops stemming from the time of the apostles.[46] Luther says the succession or the continuity of the church is to be found in the gospel. In this way his outlook on church history differed from that of his contemporaries. He did not argue for the idea of an unbroken chain of witnesses, a chain either of bishops or of Christians in general. There are, indeed, indications of an historic continuity. But because of the possibility of apostasy and rebellion, Luther does not rely on the fact of an external succession and the continuous existence of some believers. The conviction of the continuity of the church rests on faith, not on any historical linking of witnesses.[47]

God maintains the church through the word. There is no development of the church through some other immanent power. The extent of the church's transmission

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[45] LW, 47:117.

[46] The following paragraphs are based on Headley, 101-224.

[47] For Luther, the church of the patriarchs is the paradigm for all of church history. But it is not an ideal age in the past to which one must return; it rather presents the abiding face of the church for all time, by the exposition of its heroes' faith through tribulation and suffering. Headley, 58.

through men is also restricted. Men as preachers and ministers serve as a channel for the divine action and remain *cooperator Dei.*

Since the word and faith always remain the same, it would seem to preclude any sort of periodization since any sense of change or progression would seem to be denied. But the incarnation of Christ in time represents

> the fulfillment of God's promise to mankind and the final act of the divine revelation in which God discloses the Word to men. The increasing clarity in the announcement of the Word produces the main divisions of Church history.[48]

Luther was influenced somewhat by traditional schemes of periodization, but he was aware of the arbitrariness of all periodization and he himself did not hold consistently to any single scheme. In one of the divisions of history he exhibits a triadic periodization: the first epoch is the age before the Flood, the second starts with Noah, the third begins with Abraham. Pentecost marks the beginning of the church in the third epoch.

> Christ has come. The law has been fulfilled. The Kingdom of Christ is established. . . . Now the revelation of God to His people has attained its ultimate clarity and expression. It would appear therefore that history has in effect been concluded . . .[49]

But for Luther, the kingdom of Christ is marked by growth and expansion, "for the gospel does not rest but runs its course and expands throughout the entire world until the Last Judgment."[50] Above all, however, the last epoch has a distinctive, eschatological tone.

Luther did not follow invariably any existing scheme for dividing the last epoch. His approach to the early church period began with his search for the origin of papal primacy. At Leipzig he grouped history with reasoned argument. For him the

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[48] Ibid., 107.

[49] Ibid., 143.

[50] Ibid., 144.

demonstrative power of history was not independent from the authority of Scripture. Thus Luther always avoided presenting any historical period, person, or event as normative.

> Yet in his use of the material concerning the early church after Christ, he often found historical facts which were in such agreement with the nature of the true Church that he tended to make them tentative norms.[51]

The single most significant example of this is Luther's appeal to the Council of Nicaea. Yet he never considered this council as providing a program for present reform. Scripture alone could be normative. The purpose for a council was only to "strengthen against innovation the old articles of faith given by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost."[52]

In his polemics against the Roman Catholics and the Sacramentarians, Luther invoked the fathers. His use of them was conditional on their agreement with the gospel. His outstanding patristic authority was Augustine, but Luther's appeal to him was occasional and qualified. He condemned Origen and Jerome as the allegorizers of Scripture.

Luther also referred to the martyrs of the early church. What he admired was not martyrdom itself but the vitality of the gospel the martyrs demonstrated. Beyond the martyrs, his esteem for the early church did not stem from its outward appearance but from its relative freedom from human traditions, a freedom that favored the promulgation of the gospel. Such a condition he sought to restore.

That Luther entertained no illusions about a supposed primitive golden age of the church becomes evident when attention falls on his statements regarding the Antichrist. Luther maintained that the spirit of the Antichrist had appeared very early in the primitive church. Heresies, human doctrines and works began to replace faith and the gospel immediately after the time of the apostles, and the growth of human traditions started to

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[51] Ibid., 164.

[52] Ibid., 168.

accelerate during the fourth century. The last truly pastoral bishop of Rome, in Luther's opinion, was Gregory the Great. He had protested against the title of *universalis episcopus* for himself. Up to his time the Roman church had not been superior to other churches.[53] With Boniface III occurred a turning point in church history. With him the papacy was established. This marked the first appearance of the Antichrist.

Luther did not have access to such an abundance of sources for the subsequent centuries as he had for the early church period. He viewed and understood these later centuries from the perspective of biblical prophecy. He saw the entire period since Gregory the Great belonging to the Antichrist, though in Luther's earliest years he already claimed the worst perversions had originated only in the most recent three centuries. By the end of his life he regarded the pontificate of Gregory VII as the advent of the abomination, and he held that Antichrist was the governor of the sixth millennium.

Luther insisted the Papacy, claiming both spiritual and worldly authority, was unable to discover its origin in either of the two divinely ordained *Regimente.*[54] This proved to him that the papal estate was a human fabrication of devilish origin. Luther reached this conclusion from his interpretation of God's way of acting in history and it is a clear example of how he judges all history, namely, from a theological viewpoint.

The papal tyranny seeks to extend itself over the two *Regimente.* The papacy as the Antichrist leads the spiritual *Regiment* to apostasy. This happens through the burial of the gospel and the establishment of human doctrines and practices. While the papacy thus

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[53] "DYeser S. Gregorius ist der letzte Bisschoff zu Rom gewest, Und hat nach jm die Römische Kirche keinen Bisschoff mehr gehabt, bis auff diesen tag . . . Aber er ist kein Bapst und will auch kein Bapts sein." WA 54:229-30, 28-29, 36-37. Luther's estimate of Gregory is rather generous while later historians have seen Gregory amassing more power and at least acting more pontifically than Luther first thought. Luther's relationships with Rome are the subject of Scott H. Hendrix, *Luther and the Papacy: Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

[54] There is no exact equivalent in English for the term *Regimente.* Its meaning is better expressed by words like "power" or "realm" rather than by the often used "kingdom" with its physical/territorial connotations.

rules over the institutional church, Rome stands against the hidden church. The true church, therefore, always exists under, amid, and even in the possession of its adversaries.

Luther agreed with the common belief that the last period of church history belonged to the Antichrist. The Reformation, which he calls a restoration of the evangelical light, belongs properly to the period of the Antichrist. Together with the restoration, a number of other issues occur immediately before the imminent return of Christ: the appearance of the Turk, the growth of sects, and the new forms of unbelief.

Philosophy of History or Theology of History?

Luther judges all history from the perspective of the word of God.[55] He learned from this word that all history is God's action. God's works, however, are hidden. He does not work immediately but always through means, using his creatures as masks behind which he hides his actions. History, therefore, is obscure. Only Scripture is clear.

There is no such thing for Luther as an autonomous historical process. Consequently there is also no ready-made formula to interpret history. All interpretation of history is always a venture of faith.

> Luther did not think that the real meaning of history could be derived from a philosophy of history, but rather that a single theological insight, a conversion, a revelation from outside the closed circle of nature and history alone could offer a real grasp of the meaning of human history.[56]

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[55] Walter Nigg finds fault with Luther because his view of history was theologically based. According to Nigg, Luther's view derived from a dogmatic, not from his occupation with history. Nigg grants that Luther valued history highly and that he had a good knowledge of history, but, says Nigg, the same cannot be said of his understanding of history: Untersucht man, was Luther zu seiner Vorliebe für die Geschichtschreibung veranlasst, so sind es Gründe, die sich nur schwach mit der echten Historiographie berühren." Nigg, 43. The question naturally arises: what is for Nigg the "authentic" historiography? Does he judge Luther's view of history from the perspective of a notion of history engendered by the Enlightenment? As this section will show, Luther really had no inclination toward such a "secular" view of history.

[56] Spitz, Luther's view of History, 150. The conclusion that Luther's view of history is theological does not, however, settle all issues. There still remains the important question of which theology of Luther comes into consideration here. Is it the theology of the young Luther, or the theology of the mature Luther? Or should this distinction not even be made? Some studies, for example, emphasize

Luther's view of history arose from the acceptance of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of atonement. This view is nothing else than the application of his doctrine of justification through faith to the examination and study of history.[57] These assertions do not deny the fact that on a merely empirical level history appears the same for Christians and non-Christians. One vital difference is that the Christian views history as a gift from God to be received with thanksgiving. The Christian has no better tools to describe the past than a non-Christian, but he has a different (better!) perspective to judge it, for his judgments are informed by God's revelation in his word.

As with his whole theology, Luther's interpretation of history has a pastoral care characteristic.[58] He always shows concern about the temporal and eternal existence of others. It is no coincidence, therefore, that in his writings concerning concrete historical events the expression "instruction of the consciences" occurs again and again.

Luther is not looking for laws in history that are generally valid in order to identify objective truths about the flow of history. Instead he wants to proclaim in the contemporary historical moment the will of God revealed in Christ and in Scripture. His interpretation of history is basically nothing else than the application of God's word to the concrete historical situation. He always evaluates the historical events theologically, so his affirmations about history are judgments about history. "Dabei ist es ihm immer um den lebendigen Menschen in seiner einmaligen, unwiederholbaren Lage zu tun."[59]

Luther's early lectures on the Psalms, while others exclude these completely from their analysis, regarding them inconsistent with Luther's subsequent theology. Headley, for instance, argues that at that time Luther had not developed his concept of the church, nor had he broken with Rome or come to see himself completely as a reformer. Headley also asserts that, according to recent Luther scholarship, the turning point in Luther's thought occurred in 1518 rather than in 1513, and that his hermeneutics and the distinction between law and gospel were only fully established at the time of his controversy with the Enthusiasts in 1525. Headley, VIII-IX.

[57] Zahrnt, 66-7.

[58] The following paragraphs are based on Zahrnt, 186-201.

[59] Zahrnt, 186.

All of Luther's judgments about history, contradictory as they may appear, stand connected with the center of his theology. "Seine Geschichtsdeutung ist nichts anderes als das Geltendmachen des Rechtfertigungsbekenntnisses in der konkreten geschichtlichen Situation."[60] His interpretation of history stands in opposition to any theodicy. Theodicy is the justification of God before man and sees history as a logical process. That is how Hegel, for instance, views history. Luther inverts this: he sees in each event of history the question concerning the justification of man before God.

God is righteous because he is God. This personal, living God controls history. That is the reason why there is the possibility of grace for man. Whether history is grace or law depends on the relation of man to God. If a person acknowledges God's righteousness, repents and trusts in him, then that individual stands again in the correct original relation to him. Thus, the decisive, real contrast throughout history is not between success or lack of it but between faith and unbelief. In this way the word of God points to itself as the center of history. The destiny of the individual and of the nations is decided in relation to the word.

Uses of History

Luther valued history mainly because of its didactic or pedagogical use and as a resource for polemic. In his *Preface to Galeatius Capella's History*,[61] Luther regards history "a very precious thing"[62] and praises it for its pedagogical value. What all wise men can teach or devise as useful for an honorable life, history teaches powerfully with

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[60] Ibid., 186.

[61] LW, 34:269-78. Luther introduces in this preface Galeatius Capella's history of the reign of Francesco II Sforza Duke of Milan, who played an important role in the conflicts between Charles V and Francis I. Luther wrote this preface in 1538 to the German translation of Capella's work made by Wenceslaus Link, who was one of Luther's strongest supporters.

[62] LW, 34:275.

examples. It shows both how the pious and wise acted and how they were rewarded for it, and how the wicked and foolish lived and what was the outcome. Beyond all human activity in history, Luther sees God's action:

> histories are nothing else than a demonstration, recollection, and sign of divine action and judgment, how he upholds, rules, obstructs, prospers, punishes, and honors the world and especially men, each according to his just desert, evil or good.[63]

In this way, the examples of history serve as law to those who "do not acknowledge God or esteem him,"[64] but are, nevertheless afraid when they see how evil was punished in the past.[65] History teaches by examples. But Luther also sets a limit to exemplarism: God's heroes are to be admired but not imitated. In the realm of the spiritual *Regiment*, Luther rejects the imitation of the works of saints because it obscures the doctrine of justification, but he urges the imitation of their faith.[66]

But Luther is not satisfied with just anything passing as history. If history is to serve as a teacher of man then it has to be presented objectively. The writing of history, therefore, "requires a first-rate man who has a lion's heart, unafraid to write the truth."[67] A great number of historians, however, write in a subjective and biased fashion. "In that way histories become extremely unreliable and God's work is shamefully obscured." Luther regrets this and adds:

> For since histories describe nothing else than God's work, that is, grace and wrath, it is only right that one should believe them, as though they were in the Bible. They should

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[63] Ibid., 275-76.

[64] Ibid., 276.

[65] In view of the high value of history as a tool useful "to teach, admonish, warn, or deter," Luther praises highly those who write history: "The historians, therefore, are the most useful people and the best teachers, so that one can never honor, praise, and thank them enough." Ibid, 276. Especially the government should make every effort to preserve the history and to support the historians. In every age something happens noteworthy to be recorded, since God works continuously.

[66] Headley, 47-50.

[67] LW, 34:277.

> therefore indeed be written with the very greatest diligence, honesty, and truthfulness.[68]

Luther also valued history as a resource for polemics. He was convinced of the apostasy of the Roman Church, an apostasy that had begun with the doctrine and the development of papal primacy. When he identified the papacy with the Antichrist, the fight against the papacy became a religious duty, and history was enlisted into the service of anti-papal polemics.[69]

History convinced Luther that the idea of a direct divine institution of the Roman Church was untenable. But, since he grouped history with reasoned arguments or proofs, it could not establish articles of faith, but only confirm them. Only Scripture can establish doctrine and truth by divine right. It is, therefore, inappropriate to say that Luther employed history for the legitimation of the Reformation, unless the term "legitimation" is understood as having only a negative function.[70]

Luther's students and co-workers followed him in using history for polemical ends. Melanchthon, for instance, used history as a weapon in the *Treatise Against the Power and*

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[68] Ibid., 277-78. At the end of his preface, Luther praises Capella's works and regards it worthy of being read and remembered. And he sums up the value he sees in this history: "For in it one can indeed also see God's work, how marvelously he rules the children of men and how very wicked the devil is and all his, so that we learn to fear God and seek his counsel and aid in matters both large and small. Ibid., 278. Peter Meinhold, after stating Luther's requirement of an objective, truthful history as the only history able to teach man, adds this restriction regarding Luther's belief in the pedagogical value of history: "Jedoch verbindet er mit dieser Forderung auch das realistische Urteil über den Menschen, dass dieser trotz der Geschichte und aller ihn unterrichtenden Darstellungen aufgrund seines sündhaften Wesens unbelehrbar ist." Meinhold, 1:231.

[69] Nigg, 44. Meinhold, I:231.

[70] Meinhold defends the idea that the Reformation legitimized itself through history. Meinhold, I:227, 230. Werner Elert points out that such legitimation of the Reformation through history contradicts Luthers position. "When Luther and his associates took up the historical battle, they could hope for nothing else for their cause than to shake the position of the opposition; they could not hope to substantiate their own cause." Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* I, trans. Walter A. Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 482.

Primacy of the Pope.[71] This led protestant historiography to produce, initially, only confessional or denominational history.[72]

Luther from the Perspective of Integrity and Integration

Luther realized the Reformation was a historical movement, a movement with radical consequences for the future. At least once he called himself a prophet, and others also saw him in this way.[73] Although he certainly did not set out at first to lead a reformation, restoring the Church for his day and the future became his life's great concern. Thrust into this role, what did he do, what steps did he take to secure the integrity and integration of the church?

Rome and the papacy had led the church to apostatize from its original integrity, and a false church revolving around Rome and papal primacy had usurped the place of the true church. Luther saw himself as God's instrument to restore the true church of Christ, the church of his word and sacraments. To that end Luther employed history to demonstrate the loss of the church's true integrity at the hands of the papacy. Polemic history was for him a means, under Scripture, in his fight for the integrity of the church. History could not per se promote the integrity, but it proved to be a valuable resource to reveal the loss of this integrity through the apostasy advanced by the papacy. This was how Luther employed history, for instance, at the Leipzig debate.

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[71] Rosin, 305.

[72] According to Nigg, "Die verwendung der Geschichte als Mittel der Polemik war von weitreichender Wirkung. Ihre Folge muss als eine verhängnisvolle bezeichnet werden. Sie führte die Kirchengeschichtschreibung in eine Sackgasse hinein, aus der sie sich nur mühsam wieder heraus fand." Nigg, 44-45.

[73] Helmar Junghans, "The Center of the Theology of Martin Luther," trans. Gerald S. Krispin, in *And Every Tongue Confess: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Gerald S. Krispin and Jon D. Vieker (Chelsea, Michigan: BookCrafters, 1990), 192-94.

Luther admitted, when pressed by Eck at Leipzig, that the Council of Constance had erred in condemning some articles of John Hus that were "most Christian and evangelical."[74] This position led to the logical conclusion that if one council had erred, other church councils could have erred as well. Luther thus broke with the doctrinal authority of the Roman church. For, as Pelikan put it

> Such a conclusion jeopardized the fundamental tenet that orthodox doctrine, as unanimously defined by the ecumenical councils and by other constituted authorities in the Church, represented the one holy, Catholic, and apostolic faith.[75]

Luther, at the same debate, also explicitly denied the primacy of the pope and the church of Rome in his thirteenth thesis. So along with challenging conciliar authority, Luther rejected the Roman Catholic view that the integrity of the church resides in the institution and its hierarchy. Instead, Luther made clear that the true integrity of the church is found in the apostolic doctrine.

Most people would probably acknowledge Luther's interest in the integrity of the church, even if they cannot accept his view. Many, however, have vigorously asserted he was not concerned with integration.[76] The fact that Luther emphasizes and lavishly praises

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[74] "Secundo et hoc certum est, inter articulos Iohanis Huss vel Bohemorum multos esse plane Christianissimos et Euangelicos, quos non possit universalis ecclesia damnare." WA, 2:279, 11-13.

[75] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 36.

[76] The accusation normally is that Luther had no interest in missions. As Elert points out, Gustav Warneck, for instance, misses in Luther not only "missionary activity" but also the "idea of missions." It would, however, seem really strange that the great Reformer of the church who placed the Gospel again in its central position in the church should not have believed in the power and in the universal task of this Gospel. That he in fact did believe in the power of the Gospel and in the need to proclaim Christ and the message about him to all the world is persuasively expounded by Elert, 385-402. It becomes clear there that emphasis on integrity is not opposed to integration but, rather, promotes a proper integration. See also: Walter Holsten, "Reformation und Mission," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 44 (1953), 1-32. Holsten summarizes the arguments of those who deny the Reformers' interest in mission and shows the evidence of Luther's interest in missions from his writings. As early as July 13, 1521, Luther shows his interest in mission in a letter written from the Wartburg to Melanchthon. Referring to the abundance of pastors in Wittenberg and the need to send preachers to other places, Luther wrote: "For goodness' sake, do you want the kingdom of God to be proclaimed only in your town? Don't others also need the gospel? . . . Look how big a harvest there is everywhere—and how few are the harvesters! You all are harvesters. Certainly we have to consider not ourselves but our brethren who are spread out all over the

the pedagogical use of history is already in itself clear proof of his keen desire for integration. He wants men to know about God's law and gospel. History serves as an excellent tool for their proclamation since it teaches through examples how God works through law and gospel with mankind.[77]

Luther's Impact on Historiography

Many authors emphasize the tremendous impact Luther and the Reformation had on historiography. According to Holl, the knowledge of history achieved by the Reformers, "enriched greatly the general science of history."[78] In Nigg's opinion, church historiography experienced a momentous development through the Reformation. The Reformation produced again a comprehensive work that dealt with the entire history of the church. This had not happened since Eusebius over 1200 years earlier.[79] Schaff points out that the Reformation roused the spirit of inquiry and that "Church History, as a critical science, began with the Reformation, which emancipated the mind from the tyranny of an infallible traditionalism."[80] Headley emphasizes several important results of Luther's

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country, lest we live for ourselves, that is, for the devil and not for Christ." LW 48:262. In other occasions, Luther mentioned the whole world as a mission field, for instance in his hymn *Es wollt uns Gott genedig seyn*, 1523 he stated the need to convert the pagans, WA 35:418-19. Also in the exposition of Psalm 117, in 1530, he wrote: "Denn so alle Heiden sollen Gott loben, So mus das zuvor da sein, das er yhr Gott sey worden. Sol er ihr Gott sein, so mussen sie ihn kennen und an yhn glauben . . . Sollen sie glauben, so müssen sie sein wort zuvor hören und dadurch den heiligen geist kriegen . . . sollen sie sein wort horen, so müssen prediger zu yhnen gesand werden, die yhn Gottes wort verkündigen." WA 31,I: 228,33-229,9.

[77] Additional proof for Luther's concern with integration, i.e., with reaching out to the world with the Gospel, are his translations of the Bible and the liturgy into the vernacular language; the writing of the catechisms in a form and level adapted to the understanding of children and simple people (Small Catechism), as well as pastors and educated people (Large Catechism); and the writing of treatises on education urging authorities and parents to provide schools and to send the children to the same. Clearly Luther is more modern with his idea that missions start at home than later nineteenth and twentieth century calls mainly for foreign efforts.

[78] Holl, 117.

[79] Nigg, 42.

[80] Philip Schaff, *Theological Propaedeutic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 298. He adds: "But for a long time history was subordinated to dogmas and carried on in a polemic and sectarian

impact upon the sixteenth century's historical understanding. First, the Reformation restored the transcendental perspective of God over history. Also, Protestantism followed Luther's polemical attitude toward the papacy as the Antichrist, even employing many of the historical arguments used by the Reformer. In addition, the struggle, which had begun at Leipzig, over the sources and validity of theological doctrines prepared the ground for the scientific history of Christian doctrine. Luther's influence upon the *Magdeburg Centuries* produced a new kind of church history. Finally, instead of focusing on the narration of persons and events as was commonly done following Eusebius' model, the main theme of church history now was doctrine.[81]

Robert Barnes' *Vitae Romanorum Pontificum* was the first volume of church history owing its origin to the Reformation. Appearing in Wittenberg in 1536 with an introduction by Luther, Barnes' inserted polemical interpolations in the historical content gathered from Bartolomeo Platina and other humanists. Following Luther's prescription, "he blames all the evil of history on the Popes and glorifies their secular opponents."[82]

Modern history originated with humanism but humanism did not concentrate on church history per se. The Reformation changed this by regarding state and church as

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spirit", this was done both by Protestant and Roman Catholic historians. Protestant historians depicted the Pope as the Antichrist; the medieval Roman Catholic church as the great apostasy predicted in prophecy; and the Reformation as the restoration of the Apostolic Church. Roman Catholic historians described the Reformation as an apostasy from the true church of Christ; and the Reformers as rebels and arch-heretics. Ibid., 298.

[81] Headley, 269. Headley, however, laments that the insistence of Luther's followers upon pure doctrine led them to lose the "richness, breadth, and import of his theology." According to him "Luther's view of Church history depended upon his doctrine of the Word for its existence." But his successors lost the kerigmatic quality of his theology. Ibid., 269-270, 271.

[82] Spitz, "History as a Weapon in Controversy", 755. See also: Edward Fueter, *Geschichte der Neueren Historiographie* (Munich and Berlin: Druck und Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1911), 247-48. According to Grimm, the "first important Protestant history of the Reformation" was written by the Lutheran Johann Sleidan (1506-1556). It was published in 1555 under the tittle of *Commentaries on the Religious and Political History of Charles V.* This work was remarkably free of bias. "Because the author was a humanist and a diplomat, he recorded the events of the stirring period from 1517 to 1555 in a lively style and included all the documents available to him. Even though he gave no interpretation of the events leading to the Reformation, his work long remained the best single source for the period." Harold J. Grimm, *The Reformation Era 1500-1650*, 2nd. ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1973), 491.

equally important factors in history. Melanchthon, the first Reformation historian of note, was a humanist, and the "new learning's" interest in history certainly influenced him. "He wrote didactic history, but with emphasis on the power of divine direction."[83] Melanchthon adopted Luther's views on the content and the purpose of history and followed Luther's example in ascribing equal value to the secular and the spiritual factors in history. He also established scientific studies on a firm basis, insisting on a coherent narrative and paying attention to history's auxiliary sciences which included topography, chronology, and genealogy. "Protestant research in history is deeply indebted to his influence."[84]

Melanchthon was a teacher all of his life. Through his influence the study of history was included in the curriculum of the German university.[85] In 1555 Melanchthon started to give lectures at Wittenberg on world history including also events in the church. He also wrote a considerable number of historical works, most notably an edition of the *Chronicon Carionis*, a world history begun by his student Johann Carion but completely revised by Melanchthon.[86] It became a standard textbook in German history for 200 years.

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[83] Ibid., 751. See also Nigg, 48.

[84] Spitz, "History as a Weapon in Controversy", 752. See also Meinhold, I:258. According to Nigg, "Luthers und Melanchthons Ausführungen über die Geschichte sind als Anregungen zu einer protestantischen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung zu bezeichnen. Sie legten gleichsam das Fundament, auf dem sich weiter bauen liess. Sie schufen die Voraussetzungen, die erfüllt werden mussten, wenn es zu einer konfessionellen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung kommen sollte." Nigg, 48.

[85] Nigg, for instance, states, "Seinem Einfluss ist es vorwiegend zuzuschreiben, dass das Studium der Geschichte an den deutschen Hochschulen seinen Einzug hielt, und sich auch die Theologen mit der Geschichte beschäftigten mussten." Nigg, 47. See also Elert, 483.

[86] After Melanchthon's revision, others such as Valentin Trotzendorf expanded the work.

The Magdeburg Centuries

The first general history of the church written from a Lutheran point of view is the so-called *Magdeburg Centuries*,[87] an enormous work conceived by Matthias Flacius Illyricus.[88] His project, however, was so comprehensive that he was unable to accomplish it alone, so he enlisted the assistance of ten coadjutors.[89] The work was published from 1559-1574 in thirteen folio volumes covering thirteen Christian centuries. Each volume (or century) was subdivided in sixteen chapters.[90]

The *Magdeburg Centuries* were epoch-making both as to method and contents. The method was followed for two centuries. The content spurred Romanists and Protestants to

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[87] It has been called, "the first general church history deserving the name." Franklin Weidner, *Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1910), II: 66. The same idea is presented by Cave who adds that before the Reformation we can only find materials for ecclesiastical theology, rather than ecclesiastical theology itself. Alfred Cave, *An Introduction to Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), 438. According to Schaff, it is "An epoch-making work of herculean labor, but overgrown with polemics." Schaff, 298.

[88] Flacius was above all a theologian. In the internal struggles that the Lutheran Church underwent after Luther's death, he always defended firmly Luther's doctrinal position, except in the case of the controversy over original sin. He was aware of the significance of the past of the church for its contemporary theological conflicts and, thus, perceived the need to resume again the work of Eusebius. The new reformatory understanding required, according to him, also a new presentation of the past of the church. Nigg, 51.

[89] "Es war das erste grosse Zeugnis wissenschaftlicher Gemeinschaftsarbeit." Meinhold, I:268.

[90] Each century is arranged under the following topics: 1. General view; 2. Extent of the Church; 3. Its external condition; 4. Doctrines; 5. Heresies; 6. Rites; 7. Polity; 8. Schisms; 9. Councils; 10. Bishops and Doctors; 11. Heretics; 12. Martyrs; 13. Miracles; 14. Jews; 15. Other Religions; 16. Political changes, affecting the condition of the church. This arrangement persisted until the eighteenth century. The last great work which followed it was Mosheim's *Institutes*. John M'Clintock, *Lectures by the Late John M'Clintock on Theological Encyclopaedia and Methodology*, ed. John T. Short (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden; New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1873), 35-36. The peculiar form of the work was often criticized. Even for that time it was seen as a step backward by critics. Calvin, to whom the outline of the work was submitted for an opinion, advised against the distribution of the material in centuries. But in spite of its limitations, the form of the work was chosen by its authors intentionally and with complete awareness. The interest of the Centuriators did not lie in periodization but the whole arrangement of the historical material was subordinated to practical ends, namely, to serve as a polemical resource in the fight against Roman Catholicism. Nigg, 54-58.

similar efforts.[91] Flacius and his co-workers made a thorough and careful study of all the sources on which they could lay their hands. Flacius' historical passion found expression in the words:

> In den ältesten Schriftdenkmalen soll den Spuren der Kirchengeschichte nachgegangen werden; aus der untersten Tiefe der Brunnen soll die wahre Geschichte ans Licht gezogen werden.[92]

Flacius determined the subject matter of history in a new way. In the preface to the *Centuries* he chided his predecessors for viewing history as only a succession of individual personalities and a mass of anecdotes. He, on the other hand, proposed viewing history inclusively in its whole development.[93] In spite of criticism by others, such as Calvin, Flacius' approach arose according to Holl, from an inner necessity

> out of the situation in which the Reformation found itself over against the Catholic Church. If it wished to bring forth the evidence for its historical justification, it could not do so effectively through individual instances of truth . . . but only from the historical circumstance themselves. It had to compare itself as a whole with the totality of the Catholic Church, to clarify for itself the forms of life flowing from the essence of the church and to follow their development through the centuries.[94]

The Roman Catholics denounced the Protestant Church as an innovation that did not historically exist before the Reformation. The *Centuries* represented the Protestant reply. Their purpose was to expose the corruption and errors of the papacy and thus

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[91] The first great Romanist reply was that of Baronius (d.1607): *Annales Ecclesiastici*, in 12 folio volumes. Among the Protestants, not only Lutherans but also Reformed historians followed the example of the *Centuries*: Hottinger (Calvinist) wrote: *Historia Ecclesiastica Novi Testamenti*, 1651 ff., in 9 folio volumes; Gottfried Arnold (Pietist) wrote his *Unparteiischer Kirchen und Ketzerhistorie*, 1699, in 2 folio volumes; Henke (Rationalist) wrote a 9 volume history, 1788-1820. Cave, 438.

[92] Cited in Nigg, 52. Nigg adds the comment that in this search for sources, the influence of humanism is clearly discernible.

[93] Holl sees in this effort, "the recognition of the significance of the substance of history, the insight that what is actually significant are the forms that a particular community or a particular age evolves, which breaks through here." Holl, 119. He also points out that in so far as contemporary historiography seeks similar goals as Flacius, it stands on his shoulders, consciously or unconsciously.

[94] Ibid., 119.

demonstrate that Roman Catholicism was guilty of apostasy from the orthodox Christianity of the early church while Rome's theology was an innovation of later times.[95]

The Centuriators found the fundamental difference between the Lutheran and the Catholic churches to be in the area of doctrine. Qualitatively speaking, doctrine is the most important thing for them. Also quantitatively they dealt most extensively with doctrine. Correspondingly, they criticized the older Christian historiography especially because its authors neglected the treatment of doctrine, a defect they now wanted to correct. Because they regarded the doctrine of the New Testament as the rule for all doctrine, all teachings of subsequent centuries were to be judged according to the criterion of biblical doctrine.[96] Meinhold points out that the emphasis the Centuriators put on doctrine does not mean they intended simply to write a description of church doctrines. Rather their history also proclaimed saving truth.

> Die Lehre ist letzlich soteriologisch orientiert. Es handelt sich um die Lehre von der Vergebung der Sünden um Christi willen und ihrer Aneignung durch den Glauben, mit andern Worten, um die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung im reformatorischen Verständniss, die hier zum Kennzeichen für die Kirche erhoben wird.[97]

This emphasis on doctrine became a characteristic of Protestant historiography. From that time on it showed a preference for the history of dogma.

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[95] Cave, 438; Weidner, 66; Pelikan, 40. George S. Robbert lists four points that Flacius stated in letters as his objectives in writing the *Centuries*: "1) The most important advantage is that such a church history would demonstrate clearly that 'not the papal but our teaching' is the original and that throughout the history of the church individual pious men have fought against their (the papal) errors. 2) Should a new heresy arise one could inform oneself from this church history what the old teachers had thought about similar heresies for the same heresies always repeat themselves. 3) All Christians, but especially teachers, should have a knowledge of church history, and his church history would provide both a stimulation and a helpful beginning for such a study. 4) This church history would also serve as a reference book of what had happened in the various areas of church history and the history of dogma and would provide historically critical materials for a refutation of papal teachings and claims." George S. Robbert, *Matthias Flacius Illyricus' Treatment of Frederick Barbarossa in the Magdeburg Centuries* (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1964), 33-34.

[96] Nigg, 58-59. Nigg, who shows no great sympathy for the endeavors of the Centuriators, adds that they simply identified Lutheranism with biblical doctrine. Every interpretation of the Scripture that is not Lutheran was rejected by them as an error originated by Satan. Ibid., 60.

[97] Meinhold, I:277.

When the Centuriators measured the history of the Roman Church against the Lutheran doctrine, they saw in the Roman church apostasy from the truth. In Nigg's view this led them to let anti-papal polemics dominate the work as every shameful deed reported about the papacy was uncritically accepted. Viewed from the perspective of either its form or its content the work has to be characterized as a handbook of polemics. Nigg argues that the Centuriators cultivated an unambiguous confessional historiography. The Catholic opponent had to be crushed. The *Centuries* can therefore only be called a historical work in a limited sense. Flacius viewed history primarily not as a way to promote scientific knowledge but only as a means to a partisan end.[98] "Er leistet mit seiner Kirchengeschichtsschreibung der Dogmatik apologetische Handlungerdienste."[99] Nigg reaches the conclusion that the *Centuries* have more in common with the historiography of the early church than with modern ecclesiastical historiography. He sees this conviction confirmed by the metaphysical view of history held by the Centuriators. They retain a markedly transcendent view of history. As in the early Christian historiography so also here, the church is seen as the stage upon which God and Satan fight for the souls of men.[100]

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[98] Nigg, 60-63. See also: Robbert, 34-37; 181-82. Robbert asserts that the *Centuries* are polemical with no intention of historical objectivity. At the same time he argues that the Centuriators "were never men on the defensive. They never saw themselves in the light of men placed in a position to defend their church; rather they were committed, dedicated, positive proponents of the newly re-discovered truth of God's grace and love to man." Ibid., 182.

[99] Nigg., 63. Grimm follows a similar line of criticism of the *Centuries*: "It was frankly biased, viewing all history as a struggle between God and the devil in which the pope was Antichrist and the Catholic Church his empire. Although the authors amassed a great number of sources, these were selected and used to serve polemical ends. Miracles were also accepted if they proved the authors' contentions, and so absurd a legend as that of the female Pope Joan was taken at face value. Yet this bitter attack upon Catholicism, poorly arranged and exceptionally dull, provided a strong impetus to the study of history and served the cause of historical criticism by exposing the forgeries known as the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals." Grimm, 490-91.

[100] Nigg, 64. Nigg also misses in the Centuriators any sympathy whatsoever for the heretics. They condemn the heretical doctrines and regard the heretics as having no part in the church. A little further, Nigg states with more precision that he regards the *Centuries* as an interlude between the

Flacius and his co-workers, indeed, had a theological view and use of history. Does this, however, necessarily imply that such a history must be subjective or biased? That would be the case only if they manipulated the sources in such a way that they forced events to fit into a preconceived mold. Holl, among others, denies this was the case with the Centuriators.[101] He argues the "transcendental" point of view retained by Protestantism meant no restriction on research. In their attempt to discover the divine meaning of history, the Centuriators, according to Holl, had to immerse themselves in the materials and work them through anew from beginning to end. Although they could not ignore their faith perspective, they believed that an open examination of the facts and materials would certainly lead one to agree with their perspective.

Werner Elert concedes that the authors of the *Centuries* reveal their confessional ties

> [b]ut the history of the dogma that is completely free from this has not yet been written. Furthermore, one would have to ask whether a historian who is unwilling on principle to make a distinction between truth and error is capable at all of feeling his way into the doctrinal controversies of the past.[102]

Peter Meinhold also believes it incorrect to label the *Centuries* as simply an expression of historical polemic or denominational apologetic.[103] He finds in the work a new criticism of the historical sources. For example, sources that praised individual saints

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historiography of the early church and modern historiography. As such, he adds, they are not to be seen as the beginning of the modern concept. Ibid., 64-65.

[101] Holl, 118.

[102] Elert, 487. Elert, 485, calls the *Magdeburg Centuries* "the work that is the basis of all modern history." He criticizes the external division of the work into centuries but points out that "in this way for the first time a presentation of the history of culture, of the history of government, and of the history of dogma came into being on the basis of the sources." And for the critics of the work he has this sober reminder: "Scarcely anywhere in the *Centuries* is there such spite as is self-evident in the writings of many historians of dogma when they come to speak about the Lutheran Formula of Concord." Ibid., 487.

[103] He sees the *Centuries* and another work of Flacius, the *Katalog der Zeugen der Wahrheit* as complementing each other and denies the polemic character of both: "Eine solche Charakteristik trifft schon deshalb nicht zu, weil sie von dem Bemühen um eine allseitige Erfassung der Geschichte beherrscht sind, die ihrerseits die Ausdehnung der Betrachtung auf ein ganz neues historisches Material zur Folge gehabt hat." Meinhold, I:269.

with their miracles or praised monasticism as the most perfect example of Christian life were viewed critically. The focus of the historical presentation was not so much individual personalities in their historical uniqueness and greatness but Christians who act in the power of faith and live from justification. Meinhold concludes the *Centuries* have epoch-making significance for the whole tradition of ecclesiastical historiography.[104]

Holl praises the intellectual powers of the Centuriators and the strength of the impulses derived from the Reformation. As a result, "matters of significance for the general progress of historical science were brought into the light of day" in this first great historical work of the Reformation.[105] In spite of all his criticism against the work, even Nigg is able to see some indisputable merit. First, the polemic enlivens the material. In addition, with the emphasis placed on doctrine, the Centuriators won back for history an area neglected by the humanists. The *Centuries*, he concedes, represent in a certain way the first beginnings of a history of ideas in modern times. Their brief references to non-Christian religions also, to a certain extent, lay the groundwork for the history of religions.[106]

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[104] Ibid., 278-79. Meinhold has this to add about the historical perspective of the Centuriators: "Es will auch beachtet werden, dass sie sich um eine "unparteiische" Darstellung des Stoffes bemühen. Sie sind bestrebt, von jedem Zeitalter ein möglichst umfangreiches und allseitiges Bild zu geben, das die Kirche nach Lehre, Verfassung und Ordnung, aber auch in ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit dem Staate beschreibt. Es soll auch zu dieser möglichst umfassenden Characteristik eines ganzen Zeitalters dienen, wenn eine Einteilung des gesamten historischen Materials nach Jahrhunderten vorgenommen wird." Ibid., 278-79.

[105] Holl, 118. Robbert points out two reasons why such an important work was not used to a great extent in the Lutheran Church. The first reason was the high cost of the set of books. "Secondly, several of the leading theologians of the third generation of Lutheran theologians who succeeded Flacius ignored and neglected him. Martin Chemnitz, the foremost theologian of the 'Age of Orthodoxy' and a faithful disciple of Philip Melanchthon chose 'Systematically to neglect the works of Melanchthon's adversary, i.e. Flacius, for in his *Examen*, which he [Chemnitz] composed when nine *Centuries* were already published, he took care not to make use of them.' This neglect by a strong leader in the church, plus the appearing of historians such as Seckendorf and Mosheim who preferred to study a source in its entirety rather than rely on a series of excerpts, led to the almost complete disuse and neglect of the *Magdeburg Centuries*." Robbert, 187-88.

[106] Nigg, 63-64. Spitz, who agrees with Nigg in seeing the *Centuries* as polemical history, warns that such kind of history, although not necessarily revealing a pugnacious spirit on the part of those engaged in it, easily falls a victim to bias. Controversy stimulated the writing of history. But the reader of

From all that has been said above regarding the *Magdeburg Centuries* and their authors, it seems clear the dominant concern of the Centuriators lay with the integrity of the church. They were very much concerned with doctrine. Convinced of the biblical truth, they were disposed to defend it with all their strength and abilities. This led them to oppose vehemently all that they perceived as deviating from the truth or obstructing and distorting it. In the fight against error and in defense of truth they also enlisted history. Polemic, it would appear, was not the goal of their writing but rather the defense of the integrity of the church. In this sense it appears not to have been the intention of the Centuriators to write an objective history in which they would have presented dispassionately and with neutrality the historical events of the past of the church without taking sides. They rather made it clear from the very beginning on which side they stood.

Veit Ludwig von Seckendorf

Although a complete listing and analysis of even the most prominent Lutheran historians is outside the scope of this investigation, brief mention must be made of at least one seventeenth century writer in whom some decisive changes are already noticeable.[107] This writer, the author of a monumental three volume history of Lutheranism, was Baron Veit Ludwig von Seckendorf. He was a layman whose education and service at the court

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controversial history always must remain aware of the prejudice and bias which accompany it. But also the reader of didactic history, and to a degree of modern genetic history, must always keep the writer's person and purpose before his eyes in order to correct the image distorted by prejudice and bias. "One more warning—and not an unimportant one—is in place: Not only the historian has his prejudices, but the reader has them as well. We must not read history, including church history, through our prejudices." Spitz, "History as a Weapon in Controversy," 762.

[107] The more prominent Lutheran historians after Flacius were Kortholdt, Ittig, Cyprian, Buddaeus, Weissmann, and Pfaff. George R. Crooks and John F. Hurst, *Theological Encyclopaedia and Methodology* (New York: Philips & Hunt; Cincinatti: Cranston & Stowe, 1884), 314.

of Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and at the courts of other princes prepared him well for the task of a historian.[108]

In 1692 Seckendorf published the first edition of his work known commonly by the abbreviated title *Historia Lutheranismi.* The very long original title starts with the words *Commentarius historicus et apologeticus de Lutheranismo*, already indicating that the nature of the work is historical and apologetic. According to Spitz: "The work is an arsenal with each weapon in its place and so marked that it can readily be taken out for use."[109]

Seckendorf defended the Lutheran Reformation against the attacks of the Jesuit Louis Maimbourg (*Histoire du Lutheranisme*), and also against Pallavicino, Varillas, and others.[110] The work was written shortly after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) and reflects its having been composed in a time of religious warfare. Seckendorf, however, was interested not only in the defense of Lutheranism against external foes. Within Protestantism itself an increasing lack of appreciation of the Reformation's contribution was becoming noticeable. This led the author to quote copiously from the writings of

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[108] Seckendorf was born on December 20, 1626, at Herzogenaurach, near Erlangen. In his youth he was exposed to the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. After losing his father he was taken care of by Duke Ernest, known as "the Pious," and "Bet-Ernst." He attended the universities of Strassburg and Erfurt. From 1646 on he became successively page, gentleman of the bedchamber, privy court councilor and councilor of the board of domains at the court of Duke Ernest. In 1656 he was appointed court judge in Jena. In 1664 Duke Ernest elevated him to the position of chancellor of Gotha. This meant that he was at the head of the highest councils in both church and state. Later he also served various other princes as privy councilor, director of the states, chancellor and president of the consistory. He died on December 18, 1692 at Halle where he had become chancellor of the newly founded university only a short time before. This section is based mainly on L. W. Spitz, "Veit Ludwig von Seckendorf and the Historia Lutheranismi," *The Journal of Religion*, 25 (January 1945): 33-44 [Hereafter referred to as "Seckendorf"], exceptions will be indicated in the notes.

[109] Ibid., 34.

[110] Bossuet is mentioned by the author in the "Ad lectorem admonitio", but his work "came to the attention of Seckendorf too late to influence greatly the content and the arrangement of the *Commentarius*." Ibid., 34-35.

Luther and his collaborators in an attempt to acquaint particularly the Lutherans with those writings.[111]

Seckendorf had in large measure the natural gifts of a historian. Beyond his good education, his position at court, his good reputation, and his own rank of nobility were important to him as a historian because they opened to him the archives of Protestant princes and cities. He had access to a larger number of documents than were available to his predecessors in the field as they tried to write the history of the Reformation in Germany. But his evaluation of authorities was not in every instance a happy one. He was not an impartial writer and did not pretend to be one. He "tells his readers exactly where he stands and what he intends to do."[112]

Seckendorf was particularly interested in the course of the Reformation from 1517 to 1524. He called these first seven years the real history of Luther since, he believed, Luther's deeds during this period must be attributed to him alone and were thus most noteworthy.[113] He was then totally destitute of human protection and received little help from his colleagues. But in the same time his doctrine "penetrated like lightning into nearly all regions of Europe."[114] Those seven years represent the "most flourishing youth of the

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[111] Also Zeeden points out that in contrast to his contemporaries who hardly read Luther at all, Seckendorf was well versed in Luther's writings. Ernst Walter Zeeden, *The Legacy of Luther*, trans. Ruth Mary Bethell (London: Hollis & Carter, 1954), 58.

[112] Spitz, "Seckendorf", 42. The importance of the work becomes evident from the number of its editions. After the first edition of the complete work, published in 1692, sold out, a second was published already two years later. At least five different versions of the work were published in the eighteenth century by authors who wanted to make it more accessible to a larger circle of readers. One of the versions was translated into French and published in Basle in 1784. It is also reported that it was translated into "Belgian" in 1727 and published in Amsterdam. Historians dealing with the period of the Reformation have made wide use of Seckendorf's work. "Hundreds of authors cite Seckendorf by name." Even today historians continue to be interested in the important documents which he embodied in his work. Ibid., 34, 40-44.

[113] Zeeden, 56.

[114] Spitz, "Seckendorf," 43.

renascent Christian religion."[115] They were also happier because the later tumults, which ended in wars, had not yet broken out, nor had the divisions among the Protestants themselves.[116]

In Seckendorf's view, the Reformation was primarily a religious movement. Thus, he largely ignored the humanistic, economic, and political forces that impacted the Reformation. "Seckendorf returns the church to its rightful place as an important factor in history."[117] He was chiefly concerned with the Reformation in Germany and in Luther as *the* Reformer. "Luther's power lies in the doctrines which he teaches and spreads abroad in his writings. In these writings, therefore, Lutheranism is to be found."[118]

According to Zeeden, Seckendorf had a deep interest in Christian unity and lamented the divisions in the church.[119] He even perceived an improvement within Catholicism after the middle of the sixteenth century.

> There were three questions that specially troubled him: Is it not too late, and utterly in vain, to hope for the unity of the Christian faiths?—What articles of belief are common to the separated faiths, and how far are they fruitful ground for religious communion?—How should the separated faiths and individual Christians of different confessions live together (instead of as foes) in practice?[120]

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[115] Ibid., 43.

[116] According to Zeeden, "It was clearly not Seckendorf's intention to alter the commonly accepted view of Luther. But in fact he did so. The reformer lost his byzantine majesty and rigidity and became human again." Luther was still seen as the instrument of divine activity, but also "a living man was disclosed, with all his warmth, vigour, passions." Zeeden, 56.

[117] Spitz, "History as a Weapon in Controversy," 753.

[118] Spitz, "Seckendorf," 43. Zeeden expresses a somewhat different opinion. He states that Seckendorf considered the Bible translation as Luther's main achievement. "He was utterly convinced that Luther taught the truth, but venerated him less for his doctrine than for his scriptural theology." Zeeden, 58. Lohse follows Zeeden's view of Seckendorf saying that with him the orthodox image of Luther began to change. Lohse, 205-06.

[119] Zeeden, 60-64.

[120] Ibid., 61.

He believed the different denominations had to learn to live together. For him it was not too late or in vain to hope for unity. Regarding the second question, he considered it an act of God's goodness that there were articles of faith taught by all Christian confessions. Everyone should preach the truth with a pure conscience as he knows it. Seckendorf also wanted people to pray that the erring be brought to the truth and those in the truth remain steadfast. His answer to the third question was that those separated by different views on dogma could still find agreement where piety and virtue are concerned. He even admitted the possibility of common councils where common doctrines could be defended against "unbelievers, atheists, and fanatics."[121] Seckendorf still held firmly to doctrine, but he no longer identified it with the whole of Christianity. "He saw that outside his confession Christianity was also present."[122]

His faith and churchmanship bound Seckendorf to Lutheran orthodoxy. But his proto-ecumenism and a strong ethical strain distinguished him from it. His emphasis on Christian practice helped prepare the ground for pietism. Luther's "human touch" highlighted by Seckendorf, became the great theme of the eighteenth century. But the *Aufklärung* lost the Christian character that Seckendorf still upheld.[123]

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[121] Quoted in Zeeden, 62.

[122] Zeeden, 61-62. Zeeden points out that these ideas are presented in such important places of the work as the introductory preface and the retrospective epilogue.

[123] Ibid., 63-64. Seckendorf associated with the pietist leaders Spener and Francke. Spitz, "Seckendorf," 42. The most famous radical Pietist historian was Gottfried Arnold. He wrote *Unpartheiische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*, 1698-1700, in four volumes. He was suspicious of official presentations of history in general. In Schaff's words, "He advocated the interests of practical piety, and the claims of heretics and schismatics, and all those who suffered persecution from an intolerant hierarchy and orthodoxy." He believed that all the historic churches—Greek, Roman, and Protestant—were under the reign of Antichrist, and that only a little flock in each had never bowed the knees to Baal. Without intending it, he prepared the way for a skeptical treatment of history. He was the first to use German, instead of Latin in learned works, "but his style is rude and insipid." Schaff, 300. See also, Holl, 121; and Erich Seeberg, *Gottfried Arnold: die Wissenschaft und die Mystic seiner Zeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964).

Living in a very unstable age in which Lutheranism was exposed to the attacks of a militant Roman Catholicism, it seems quite natural that Seckendorf should lean more heavily toward the integrity of the Church. His great work was written in defense of Lutheranism, but he also shows the signs of an age beginning to grow tired of war and controversy. His preference for the "young Luther," instead of the doctrine of the mature Luther, and his interest in Christian unity reveals this. A desire for some sort of integration with the surrounding world is perceptible in his writing. This integration is, however, distinct from that proposed by Luther. Luther reached out to the world with the gospel. Seckendorf's attitude opens the door to the possibility of reaching out to the world in order to achieve understanding and peace at the expense of the doctrine. The doctrine, to be sure, is not denied. It is still important. But it is now seen as one factor among others. In other words, Seckendorf leaves the door open for an integration that leads to a compromise of the integrity of the church, the kind of compromise that eventually happened in Pietism and in the *Aufklärung*. Seckendorf did not do this with conscious intention, but according to the experts, such a tendency is, nevertheless, perceptible in his work.

CHAPTER II

JOHANN LORENZ MOSHEIM

Life and Works

Johann L. Mosheim has won the recognition and praise of many scholars. Karl Heussi, for example, heralds him as the most original of the Lutheran theologians of the first half of the eighteenth century.[1] Mosheim lived in an era that witnessed particularly great change in historiography. "The age of controversy and the age of erudition were giving way to the beginnings of scientific church history."[2] Mosheim helped to revive interest in church history as an academic discipline and is considered to be the author of the first scientific and comprehensive church history. In view of his achievements he has been called the "father of modern church history." Philip Schaff sums up Mosheim's major characteristics and accomplishments:

> Mosheim marks an epoch. He was a moderate and impartial Lutheran, educated in the school of the classical and French historians, and the first German who raised Church History to the dignity and interest of an art. In this respect he may be compared to Bossuet. He surpassed all his predecessors in skillful construction, clear though mechanical and monotonous arrangement, critical sagacity, pragmatic combination, freedom from polemical passion, almost bordering on cool indifferentism, and in easy elegance of Latin style.[3]

Mosheim is regarded as the first to view the history of the Christian Church no longer predominantly from a religious viewpoint but above all from a historical perspective. Hailed as the "Erasmus of the eighteenth century," he was above all a scholar with an

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[1] Karl Heussi, Johann Lorenz Mosheim: Ein Beitrag zur Kirchengeschichte des Achtzehnten Jahrhunderts (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1906), 1.

[2] Lewis Spitz Jr., "Johann Lorenz Mosheim's Philosophy of History," Concordia Theological Monthly 20 (1949): 322.

[3] Philip Schaff, Theological Propaedeutic (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 300.

amazing capacity and inclination for work. He had a wide-ranging mind and multiple interests. He was well acquainted with foreign literature on church history, especially that of France, England and Holland. Reading these accounts broadened Mosheim's own writing in church history, but his work definitely surpassed the foreign ones.[4] Spitz agrees with this view and adds additional to the picture:

> The key to Mosheim's life as a teacher and scholar was tremendous erudition. He worked in every department of theology and wrote homiletical works, exegetical studies, dogmatics, ethics, practical theology, and history of dogma, showing not merely extent of learning, but a degree of depth and novelty as well. This variety of learning, of course, informed his studies of church history, which early became his chief interest.[5]

Mosheim displayed a gentle, refined, and reserved nature, completely disposed toward reconciling and mediating. He preferred to avoid theological polemics. His mildness is also clearly evident in his evaluation of church historical events.[6] Contacts with princes and their courts helped him make better judgments of political events in ecclesiastical history. His excellent linguistic style both in German and Latin also helped.[7]

Although recognizing Mosheim's great achievements, Heussi cautions that the advance of a whole scientific discipline is never the work exclusively of one individual. Mosheim's contribution to church historiography was conditioned by the efforts of several other German and foreign historians. His epochal contribution to church historiography, says Heussi, is found in three areas. He raised its method, he achieved new results

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[4] Walter Nigg, Die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung: Grundzuege ihrer Historischen Entwicklung (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934), 100-1.

[5] Spitz, 324-25.

[6] Heussi, 147.

[7] Nigg, 101-2. The same author adds: "Er wurde wegen seiner kuenstlerich fein gestalteten Sprache schon der erste deutsche Prosaist genannt." Baur concurs with this characterization of Mosheim: "It is generally agreed that he not only possessed the most fortunate combination of the usual qualities in a church historian, but also especially excelled in his brilliant and stylish treatment." Ferdinand Christian Baur, "The Epochs of Church Historiography," in Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 142-43.

through his penetrating investigation, and he wrote excellent scholarly textbooks.[8] Nevertheless, concludes Heussi, Mosheim's approach is still far from present church historiography. Mosheim knows neither higher criticism nor development nor major historical connections. Lacking these three elements, his view of the total course of history differed significantly from the one current today. Mosheim's position can best be defined as situated on the borderline of two times.[9]

Johann Lorenz Mosheim was born on October 9, 1693, in Lübeck, the son of Ferdinand Sigismund von Mosheim, an impoverished knight from South Germany.[10] Ferdinand was catholic but allowed his children to be reared in the Evangelical faith. He died early, leaving Johann and his younger brother to be raised by their mother. It is reported that Johann endured many hardships during his early years. These were probably related to the bad economic situation in which the family found itself, although the exact circumstances are unknown. With the help of the Princess Elisabeth Sophie Marie, later Duchess of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, he was able to attend the Latin school in Lübeck, starting in May 1707.

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[8] Heussi, 222-23.

[9] Ibid., 224.

[10] According to Spitz: "There have been at least eight biographies of Mosheim in addition to many articles of a biographical nature. The oldest is that by Gabriel Wilhelm Goetten, Das jetzlebende gelehrte Europa, I, 1735, pp. 717ff.; next in order is Johann Jacob Moser, Beytrag zu einem Lexico der jetzlebenden luterischen und reformirten Theologen, 1740, pp. 511ff.; Jacob Bruecker, Pinacotheca scriptorum illustrium, 1741; Johann Moller, Cibria litterata, 1744, I, pp. 447ff.; Johann Matth. Gesner, Memoria Johann Laurenz Moshemii, 1755, reprinted in the Biographia Academica Gottengensis, 1768; Christian David Jani, Johann Peter Nicerons Nachrichten von den Begebenheiten und Schriften beruhmter Gelehrten, 1771, XXIII, pp. 406ff., reputedly the best of the 18th century; Friedrich Luecke, Narratio de Joanne Laurentio Moshemio, 1837. Unfortunately these early biographies are for the most part inaccessible outside the Continent. By far the most complete biography of Mosheim is that by Karl Heussi, Johann Lorenz Mosheim, Ein Beitrag zur Kirchengeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts (Tuebingen, 1906). Heussi not only used the older biographies, but had access also to the many manuscripts, documents, and letters which constitute the best sources for Mosheim's life." Spitz, 323, note 16. The following sections on Mosheim's life are taken from Heussi's above mentioned biography. The information is basic and can be found also in the other biographical studies noted.

Mosheim apparently had a gift for learning languages. In addition to classical Greek and Latin, he also knew French, English, Italian, and Spanish as his writings reveal. More about his schooling is not known. It is even uncertain how many years Mosheim spent in the Latin school and what he did immediately afterwards. He reappeared in 1714 as tutor near Lübeck. In 1715, when he was twenty two years old, the city officials made it possible for Mosheim to enroll at Kiel University to take up theology.

Mosheim began his theological studies at Kiel in 1716. That university no longer defended strict orthodoxy but had embraced the mild reconciling position espoused by the disciples of George Calixt. Mosheim's theological latitudinarianism probably resulted in large part from the influence of his teachers at Kiel.

Already at this time Mosheim began his literary activity, publishing several short writings. It was probably through these pieces that he became known also among intellectuals outside Kiel. He began to correspond with several renowned scholars in 1716, including Gottfried W. von Leibniz, Johann Christoph Wolff, Johann Christian Wolff, and Johann Albert Fabricius.

Mosheim soon showed his preference for church history. According to Heussi, research in that field had been much neglected in Germany with the domination of Protestant Orthodoxy whose dogmatic and polemic interests overshadowed all others. During the seventeenth century interest in church history increased slightly, but before Mosheim, Germany could not even remotely compete with other countries in this field. Especially in the Netherlands, England and France, the study of church history experienced a great boom in the seventeenth century.

Mosheim studied with such zeal and dedication that he endangered his health, "aber der Ehrgeiz, etwas Grosses zu schaffen und—die Notwendigkeit, sich durchzuschlagen,

trieben ihn vorwaerts."[11] In 1718 he earned his Master of Arts degree, and the next year he began to lecture in Kiel's department of philosophy. In addition in 1720 he began to teach classical languages and related subjects. Since 1718, he also had started to preach regularly. He began to write a series of refutations of Toland's *Nazarenus or Jewish, Gentile, and Mahometan Christianity* in 1719 and wrote several other short works in 1720 and 1721.

In 1723, he received a call to become a professor of theology at the university in Helmstedt. He married in the same year. The next twenty four years were spent at Helmstedt, the best years of his life in Heussi's opinion. Mosheim initially dealt with various topics in theology before he narrowed his focus in 1725 with lectures on his main subject, church history. His lectures were well prepared and delivered in a lively manner that caught the attention of his students.

Mosheim identified two duties of a theological professor. First, he has to advance research, and second, he must prepare future preachers for their calling. Mosheim saw the teacher's task not as sharing every bit of factual knowledge available, but as introducing the beginnings and foundations of the subject under study. The teacher should offer his students not a lot of particularities but a short and understandable foundation for his discipline.

Mosheim suffered strong opposition from his colleagues on the Helmstedt theological faculty. It seems this opposition stemmed from the resentment his colleagues harbored due to the favor he enjoyed at the court of Wolfenbuettel. Chilly faculty relations only gave Mosheim more time to spend on his own work. His literary activity continued uninterrupted during his years at Helmstedt.

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[11] Heussi, 47. According to Heussi, during four years, Mosheim alternated one night of work and one night of sleep. The anecdotal information and estimation of Mosheim's early career is thoroughly recounted by Heussi.

Mosheim's lectures on church history also led to publications in that field of study. Already in 1726 he published a textbook on church history to be used as a basis for his lectures, *Institutiones Historiae Ecclesiasticae Novi Testamenti*, reaching up to the fourteenth century. It represents an advance in church historiography, for in it Mosheim employs more criticism, reveals greater objectivity, and initiates the so-called pragmatic church historiography. He later revised this work twice.

When Mosheim received a call to Wittenberg in 1725, the government of Wolfenbuettel took measures to keep him in Helmstedt. They raised his salary, and made him a consistorial councilor. In return, Mosheim had to sign a document obliging himself to remain at the Helmstedt university for life and to decline all calls. In 1727 he also became abbot of the Mariental monastery. Two years later, he was named the general school inspector for the duchy of Wolfenbuettel. This also represented a considerable increase in salary for Mosheim. In addition, he was appointed to positions in the principality of Blankenburg. All these favors were due to the house of Wolfenbuettel. Mosheim's many new responsibilities, however, did not lead him to neglect his lectures, and his literary production continued uninterrupted.

All this proved to be taxing physically. Mosheim had a weak constitution due to overexertion in his years at Kiel. He was frequently sick, did not take sufficient care of his health, and always worked beyond what generally would be considered adequate. When his health became weaker, he ceased to preach, but he still gave attention to the theologian's duty of offering something for the lay people. Several writings from the last two decades of his life were done in German and intended for the laity.

In 1747 Mosheim was called to the recently founded University of Göttingen.[12] He was installed as chancellor of that university on October 16, 1747, and remained there

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[12] Although Mosheim had pledged himself to service at Helmstedt, in the wake of university reform he felt that the conditions under which he had been bound had changed so much that he was now free

until his death in 1755. Two months before his death, Mosheim finished a complete revision of his main work in church history that had taken two years to do. He maintained the divisions by centuries on the advice of friends, but he made a major advance in another way: he based his history now exclusively on original sources. The student textbook had now become a comprehensive church history with this revision.[13]

Writings and Influence

Mosheim contributed to church historiography with a long list of writings that numbered, including the smaller ones, about 130.[14] Among his most important works are *Institutiones Historiae Ecclesiasticae Novi Testamenti* (1726), a compendium dealing with church history up to the fourteenth century.[15] A new edition was retitled the *Institutiones Historiae Christianae Antiquioris* (1737), and the work extended the presentation to the time of the Reformation. Its continuation dealt with the time after the Reformation: *Institutiones Historiae Recentioris* (1741). *Institutiones Historiae Christianae Maiores, Saeculum Primum* (1739), focuses on the first century of the Christian Church. After this came a work dealing with the first three centuries: *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum Commentarii* (1753).[16] Finally Mosheim wrote his above-mentioned comprehensive history of the Church: *Institutiones Historiae Ecclesiasticae*

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to make this move. Since Göttingen lay under the influence of the broader ruling family of Braunschweig, he reasoned that he had not really abandoned his obligation. Apparently the ruling house accepted that excuse since no protest was lodged. Heussi, pages 194-95, speculates on this move.

[13] Heussi offers this evaluation of this work: "Die Institutionen sind der Schlussstein seiner epochemachenden Arbeit auf kirchengeschichtlichem Gebiet. Sie sind zugleich das Werk, dem es in erster Linie zu danken ist, dass Mosheims Name bei den folgenden Generationen lebendig blieb. Es ist 1764 noch einmal in neuer Auflage, und es ist vor allem nach Mosheims Tode in einer stattlichen Anzahl von Uebersetzungen erschienen." Heussi, 214.

[14] Heussi, 1.

[15] This list is found in Nigg, 104.

[16] This work is "still today one of the most comprehensive works on the first three hundred years of the Christian era", some consider it the best example of Mosheim's writing. Spitz, 325.

Antiquae et Recentioris (1755). This work was translated into German and later also into English, French, and Dutch, and is regarded as Mosheim's definitive church history.

In addition, Mosheim also wrote smaller works which show the breadth of his learning: *Historia Tartarum Ecclesiastica* (1741), and *Beschreibung der Neuesten Chinesischen Kirchengeschichte* (1748). Finally, his two works dealing with the history of heresy deserve mention: *Versuch einer Unpartheyischen und Gruendlichen Ketzergeschichte* (1746) about the Ophites and the Brothers of the Apostles, and *Anderweitige Versuch einer Vollstaendigen und Unpartheyischen Ketzergeschichte* (1748) about Servetus.

Mosheim won recognition through his works not only among theologians but also among intellectuals in other fields. His works, translated into French and English, had a wide readership.[17] He was said to be the only German Lutheran theologian of that time whose name was known outside Germany, especially in England and the United States. Such recognition certainly seemed justified given his influence on two theological disciplines in an epoch-making way: church history and homiletics.[18]

Mosheim was not only the most distinguished church historian of his day, but the German church historians were dependent on his *Institutes* into the nineteenth century. With Mosheim German scholarship also exerted influence over other countries in the field of church historiography. Mosheim's shadow fell on church historians of the next

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[17] In the Advertisement to the second edition of James Murdock's english translation of the Institutes it is reported that the first edition was very well received in the United States, "and is adopted as a text-book in nearly every Protestant theological seminary on this side of the Atlantic." Advertisement to the second edition, in John Lawrence von Mosheim, Institutes of Ecclesiastical History Ancient and Modern, trans. James Murdock (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1871), vol. 1, IX. Schaff reports that the Institutes "continued in use as a text-book much longer in England and America than in Germany." Schaff, 300.

[18] Heussi, 1. See also, Jaroslav Pelikan, Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 49.

generation who were not his equal in style and lacked his lively presentation of the material.[19]

Mosheim's Contribution to Historiography

Historical Method and Definition

In spite of all the recognition won by Mosheim and notwithstanding his great influence, some critics maintain he was not an original mind.[20] If this were the case, where is the great and enduring value of Mosheim's works then to be found? The answer, claim several authors, lies in the area of method. Spitz, for instance, maintains that Mosheim

> was no real theoretician, and nowhere did he give a really extensive presentation of his philosophy of historical writing. He was no originator of great new insights into historical processes. His discussion of material organization and experiments in new division of historical narrative really were fundamentally more a matter of method than of theory.[21]

Mosheim, nevertheless, went beyond his predecessors in that he at least began to define the nature and purpose of the historian's task. He offers his definition in the first two paragraphs of the introduction to the *Institutes.*

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[19] Heussi, 223-24. Schaff provides a list and a brief characterization of the main historians of the generation that followed Mosheim. J. M. Schroeckh, a pupil of Mosheim but influenced by the neological spirit of Semler, is the author of the most extensive German work on Christian Church History (Leipzig, 1768-1810, in 45 vols.). "Very unequal in different parts, but useful for occasional reference. Nobody ever read it through except the author and proof-reader". H. P. C. Henke, Church History (Continued by Vater; Braunschweig, 1788-1820, 9 vols.), is termed rationalistic and ignores the divine side of the church. "He derives the events from hierarchical ambition." Spittler wrote a compend in the same derogatory spirit "which destroys all real interest in Church History except that of mere literary and antiquarian curiosity." Schaff, 300-1.

[20] Fueter, for instance, claims: "Ein verstaendiger, belesener Mann mit Welterfahrung und gebildeten Urteil, ein guter Professor und ein gewandter Stilist hat die Institutionen geschrieben, kein grosser Historiker und kein grosser Denker." Edward Fueter, Geschichte der Neueren Historiographie (Munich and Berlin: Druck und Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1911), 271.

[21] Spitz, 333. Nigg concurs with this opinion but goes further stressing the importance of a new method: " Mosheim ist fuer alle Zeiten das unwiderlegliche Beispiel, welch eminente Foerderung eine neue Methode fuer die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung bedeutet; geht doch aus seinen methodischen Ueberlegungen sogar ein neues Geschichtsbild hervor." Nigg, 106.

1. *The Ecclesiastical History of the New Dispensation* is a clear and faithful narrative of the external condition, and of the internal state and transactions, of that body of men who have borne the name of *Christians*; and in which events are so traced to their causes, that the providence of God may be seen in the establishment and preservation of the church, and the reader's piety, no less than his intelligence, be advanced by the perusal.

2. The best form of such a history seems to be that, which considers the whole body of Christians as constituting a *society* or community, subjected to lawful authority, and governed by certain laws and institutions. To such a community many external events must happen, which will be favourable to its interests or adverse to them: and since nothing human is stable and uniform, many things will occur in the bosom of such community tending to change its character. Hence its history may very suitably be divided into its *external* and its *internal* history. In this manner the history of the Christian community, in order to its embracing all the details and promoting the greatest usefulness, should be divided.[22]

Historical Causation

Mosheim's definition of church history "is hardly that of an original thinker. It is rather that of a man seeking a practical working concept", says Spitz.[23] Yet Mosheim contributed decisively to the formation of modern history. He opposed the atomistic way in which the polyhistorians of the seventeenth century viewed and wrote history. To them the historical presentation consisted in accumulating endless individual facts without paying attention to the internal connections and with no special effort to separate the essential from the superfluous. Mosheim, on the other hand, showed interest in the larger historical connections and attempted to understand the relationship of the whole.[24] To explain the history of the church's doctrines he also explored the intellectual and cultural history that had an impact on the form of the church's doctrines. To understand the sociological

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[22] John Lawrence von Mosheim, Institutes of Ecclesiastical History Ancient and Modern, trans. James Murdock (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1871), vol. 1, XV. Emphasis in the original.

[23] Spitz, 334.

[24] Heussi, 220-21. Spitz, 335-36.

phenomenon of the church Mosheim felt the need also to explain the political and religious background of that same time.[25]

Mosheim himself explained in the introduction to his *Institutes* that the writer of church history must trace events back to their causes, that is, he must explain the *how* and *why* of *what* happened. This, Mosheim said, requires "access to ancient *testimony* and the *history of the times*," and "a good *knowledge of human nature.*"[26] The historian should also be acquainted with the education and the opinions of the people whom he treats, because this helps to understand their motivation. As he describes the past, Mosheim regularly works with "external" and "internal" history, external referring to the observable structures and operations and the internal history referring more to the mind-set, the psyche, or what modern social historians call *mentalitè.*[27] To explore the causes in external history, it is important to consider the civil conditions and the religious situation of the countries and people. In regard to internal history, it is necessary to know the history of learning and especially of philosophy. A knowledge of the civil government and of ancient superstitions is also useful.

> For most unfortunately, human learning or philosophy has in every age been allowed more influence in regard to revealed religion than was fit and proper, considering the nature of the two things. Moreover, a good knowledge of the civil government and of the ancient superstitions of different countries, is useful to the same end. For through the prudence, or, rather, the indiscretion of the presiding authorities, many parts of the discipline and worship of the church have been shaped after the pattern of the ancient

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[25] Peter Meinhold, Geschichte der Kirchlichen Historiographie (Freiburg/Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1967), 2: 12. According to Meinhold the approach of the history of ideas starts with Mosheim, while Heussi maintains that there was still one step left from Mosheim to the formulation of the "ideas." Heussi, 221. Spitz agrees with Heussi when he maintains that, in his attempt to understand the history as a whole rather than an accumulation of isolated events, Mosheim "lacked tools for ready generalization and classification. Larger conceptual terms, such as Renaissance, Reformation, Protestantism, Jesuitism, and Catholicism, did not occur to him." Spitz, 336.

[26] Mosheim, 1:XVII.

[27] The concepts of external and internal history will be discussed in greater detail below.

> religions, and no little deference has been paid to the pleasure of sovereigns and to human laws in regulating the church of God.[28]

Pragmatic History

Mosheim's Christian view of history was one of the elements that led him to look for meaningful interrelationships between historical events. But his search for cause-and-effect relationships came above all "from his conviction that history must serve a pragmatic purpose, must serve to 'enlighten' and not just satisfy a natural curiosity about the past."[29] Mosheim himself puts it this way:

> He who narrates the naked facts, only enriches our memory and amuses us; but he who at the same time states the operative causes of events, profits us, for he both strengthens our judgment and increases our wisdom.[30]

Mosheim continued to extol the benefits ecclesiastical history could bring to mankind in general and to the teachers and leaders of the church in particular. Knowledge of past dangers overcome by Christianity could help prepare the attentive reader to withstand present attacks from the enemies of the church. Examples of virtue from the past could serve to awaken piety and to instill the love of God in lukewarm hearts. Revolutions and changes of every age "originating often from small beginnings, proclaim aloud the providence of God, and the instability and vanity of all human things."[31] Identifying the roots of false opinions, superstitions and errors could lead to a clearer conception of the

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[28] Ibid., XVIII.

[29] Spitz, 336.

[30] Mosheim, 1:XVII.

[31] Ibid., XIX. Meinhold calls attention to the fact that Mosheim evaluates the Reformation from this perspective. As all history, so also the Reformation started from small beginnings but then it came to cause the most important transformations in Europe and in the world. Mosheim sees the Reformation as marking a huge advance over the Middle Ages. His pragmatism is thus combined with the idea of progress. Meinhold, 14.

truth, giving it more value and enabling Christians to defend it better. But the study of church history is particularly important for public teachers and the ministers of religion who

> may from this study derive great assistance, in acquiring that practical wisdom which they so much need. Here, the numerous mistakes of even great men, warn them what to shun if they would not embroil the Christian church; there, many illustrious examples of noble an successful effort, are patterns for their imitation. And for combating errors, both those inveterate by age and those of more recent growth, nothing, except the holy Scriptures and sound reason, can be compared with this kind of history.[32]

Pragmatic history had been written since ancient times. After the Middle Ages it reappeared in humanism[33] and more aggressively in the historiography of the Enlightenment. Luther had stressed the pedagogical as the most important use of history. What Mosheim did was introduce a new orientation in which morality was "divorced for all practical purposes from the broader aspects of the Christian faith."[34] He was convinced that church history suffered from insufficient pragmatic development. The connection between changes and results was not being identified and emphasized in church history and that prevented it from serving as a teacher. Mosheim wanted to correct this shortcoming.[35]

Church history has, thus, a double goal according to Mosheim. It should delight and benefit. Mosheim wanted to penetrate the hearts in order to instruct them. Nigg remarks that this association of teaching and stirring emotions is characteristic of

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[32] Mosheim, 1:XIX.

[33] Hans Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), traces the use of history in civic humanism to rally citizens to the defense of Florence. See also William J. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), for a similar pattern there.

[34] Spitz, 337.

[35] Heussi regards the pragmatic method an advance over the denominational apologetic and polemic historiography of the sixteenth and seventeenth century which employed history for the justification of the contemporary dogmatic position. He views pragmatic history as a transition from polemic to the history pursued merely for the sake of knowledge. The accent on moral ends replaced the denominational-confessional goals, marking, thus, the advance from emphasis of the special denominational to the general human. Heussi, 217-18.

Mosheim's church history and marks him as a genuine child of the Enlightenment characterized by its sentimentalism and passion for the useful.[36] Spitz, however, cautions that while Mosheim traced the origin of events from natural causes, he consistently "strove to recognize the agency of God working toward a further end."[37] Spitz further argues that Mosheim's moderation in applying this method distinguishes him from the so-called Pragmatic School of church historians from the later eighteenth century. That school "went far beyond Mosheim in applying church history to pragmatic ends, particularly to the ends of morality and ethics."[38] Spitz's argument, however, does leave room for Meinhold's contention that Mosheim laid the foundation on which the ecclesiastical historiography of the Enlightenment was built, and this in turn became the presupposition of the ecclesiastical historiography of the nineteenth century.[39]

Objectivity

Mosheim's objective treatment of church history was another element that placed him on a higher level of historiography compared to his predecessors in the field.[40] He believed he could write both pragmatic and objective history. He was not aware of the full implications that the growing historical relativism of the Enlightenment had with respect to pragmatic history. "He led the way from polemics and apologetics to the discipline of

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[36] Nigg, 105.

[37] Spitz, 338. Seeberg inverts this by saying that Mosheim does not eliminate completely the supernatural factors in history but that his interest tends toward the natural causes of the historical life. Seeberg, however, also points out that Mosheim's historiography presupposes the pure truthfulness of the Lutheran doctrine, which will just shine brighter when history is treated in an unpartisan way. Erich Seeberg, Gottfried Arnold: die Wissenschaft und die Mystic seiner Zeit (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 581.

[38] Spitz, 338.

[39] Meinhold, vol.2, 11.

[40] Baur, 145.

objective historical writing."[41] Mosheim himself expressly included objectivity among the qualities he expects from a good ecclesiastical historian:

> He must have no moderate acquaintance with human affairs in general; his learning must be extensive, his mind sagacious and accustomed to reason, his memory faithful, and his judgment sound and matured by long exercise. In his disposition and temperament, he must be patient of labour, persevering, inflexible in his love of truth and justice, and free from every prejudice.[42]

In another part Mosheim stated that all admit "it is the first excellence of a historian to afford no ground for a suspicion of either partiality or enmity."[43] A historian, warned Mosheim, must be on guard against prejudices arriving especially from three sources: times, persons, and opinions. His own times should not be the measuring stick to evaluate other ages. He must be careful not to be misled by highly regarded authorities. He has to be aware of the fact that his personal opinions or doctrines can make him prejudiced. Mosheim laments that many ecclesiastical historians of all ages have not exercised sufficient caution against prejudice.[44]

An objective treatment of history is, however, only possible if the material presented comes from genuine and trustworthy sources.

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[41] Spitz, 338. Heussi also sees Mosheim as the first representative of historical objectivity among the church historians. Objectivity in Heussi's view is made possible when one does not fear or expect any influence upon the present time as a result of an historical investigation, but makes such investigation only to understand the past. In this sense, he believes, objectivity is possible and was achieved by Mosheim notwithstanding his partial judgment of the papacy, monasticism, Roman catholic piety, neoplatonic philosophy and other subjects. Heussi, 219-20. Such view of objectivity, however, conflicts with Mosheim's goal for history as a teacher of men. Spitz points out how Mosheim solved this dilemma between pragmatism and objectivity: "Either it had to be assumed that history of itself is of such a nature that an impartial presentation will serve pragmatic ends, or history must be presented so as to bring out the lessons more obviously even at the sacrifice of objectivity. Of these two possibilities Mosheim chose the former." Spitz, 338. Seeberg concurs with this position pointing to Mosheim's belief that an unpartisan presentation of the historical reality was the best way to refute heretics and Catholics and to help the truth triumph. Seeberg, 584, see also page 581.

[42] Mosheim, 1:XVIII.

[43] Ibid., 3:384.

[44] Ibid., 1:XVIII.

> My principal care has been to impart fidelity and authority to the narration. For this purpose I have gone to the primary sources of information, such as the best writers of all ages who lived in or near the times they describe.[45]

With the investigation of the sources, Mosheim also connected source criticism. He was aware of the fact that the writers "are not always to be trusted."[46] He was not only convinced of the need to treat the sources critically but he also provided many examples of it. The Apostle's Creed did not come from the Apostles, in his view. He found out that very early it was customary to devise pious fables and to lie to the advantage of the truth. He thought that the religious disputations of the Germans are a modification of the warlike genius of their ancestors. Attempting to distinguish the true tradition from the false, Mosheim concluded that short stories seemed more reliable than longer ones. He was suspicious of the time computations and distrusted long speeches attributed to martyrs.[47]

Source criticism had, in fact, been practiced long before Mosheim, especially since the Renaissance and Reformation.[48] What was new was that Mosheim, for the first time, applied source criticism to the entire range of church history. This feat earned him such recognition "that his histories dominated the field for a century after they first appeared."[49]

Style and Intended Readers

Mosheim's literary style prompts Nigg to declare: "Eine besondere Annehmligkeit von Mosheims 'Kirchengeschichte' ist seine gefällige und geschmackvolle Darstellung."[50]

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[45] Ibid., 1:XI. In another paragraph, Mosheim distinguishes between original and secondary sources and asserts that both are useful. Ibid., 1:XVIII.

[46] Ibid., 1:XII.

[47] Nigg, 106.

[48] See, for example, John F. D'Amico, Theory and Practice in Renaissance Textual Criticism: Beatus Rhenanus between Conjecture and History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[49] Spitz, 339.

[50] Nigg, 107.

Mosheim, he continues, was very much concerned with arranging his material clearly. He wrote not only for the specialists in the field but for a larger group of readers, wanting to delight and instruct also those outside the circle of scholars. His church history is, therefore, not overloaded with dates or with long explanations and digressions. Where these were needed, he placed them in footnotes. Thus he was able to preserve both the thoroughness and the readability of the book.

Mosheim stated that he had originally designed his *Institutes* for lecturers who needed a textbook for their classes. But when he revised the book for a new edition it occurred to him that the cause of sacred learning would be better served if he adapted the book "not merely to the convenience of lecturers, but also to the wants of those who attempt without a teacher to gain a general knowledge of ecclesiastical history."[51] For the benefit of this extended circle of readers, he then made additions and provided fuller and more precise explanations in his work.

Periodization and Internal Structure of the *Institutes*

The *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History Ancient and Modern* are the centerpiece of Mosheim's historical writing, as already mentioned above, and will be examined in the next section to determine Mosheim's view on the integrity and integration of the church. But first, a closer analysis of its external form and arrangement is in order.

Mosheim followed the traditional approach of organizing his history by centuries because of the insistence of some friends and because "it is the most approved."[52] He divided the material under each century into external and internal history. He defined external history as follows:

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[51] Mosheim, 1:XIII.

[52] Mosheim, 1:XIX.

> The external history of Christians, or of the Christian community, is properly called a *history of the church*: and it embraces all the occurrences and changes which have visibly befallen this sacred society. And as all communities are sometimes prosperous and sometimes meet with adversity, such also has been the lot of Christians.[53]

He thus divided the external into prosperous and adverse events. The first are those which promote the advancement and progress of the church. They proceed either from the heads and leaders, or from the subordinate members of the church. Heads and leaders include public characters such as kings, magistrates, and sovereign pontiffs and private individuals such as the doctors, the learned and influential men.[54] On the other hand, adverse events "arose either form the fault of Christians, or from the malice and stratagems of their adversaries."[55]

The internal history[56] is subdivided into five categories. These are defined as (1) state of literature and science, (2) church officers and government, (3) religion and theology, (4) rites and ceremonies, and (5) heresies and schisms.

In addition to the breakdown by centuries, Mosheim superimposed a division in epochs.[57] He distinguished four main periods, the first extends to the time of Constantine,

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[53] Ibid., 1:XV. Emphasis in the original.

[54] "Both classes have contributed much, in all ages, to the increase of the church. Men in power, by their authority, laws, beneficence, and even by their arms, have contributed to establish and enlarge the church. And the doctors, and men of learning, of genius, and eminent piety, by their vigorous and noble efforts, their travels, their writings, and their munificence, have successfully recommended the religion of Christ to those ignorant of it. And common Christians, by their faith, their constancy, their piety, their love of God and men, have induced many to become Christians." Ibid., 1:XV-XVI.

[55] Ibid., 1:XVI.

[56] "The internal history of the Christian church, treats of the changes to which the church in every age has been exposed, in regard to its distinguishing characteristics as a religious society. It may not unsuitably be called the history of the Christian religion. The causes of these internal changes are found, for the most part, in the rulers of the church. These often explained the principles and precepts of Christianity to suit their own fancy or convenience. And as some acquiesced and were submissive, while others frequently resisted, divisions and contentions were the consequence." Ibid., 1:XVI.

[57] This does not seem to have been an original achievement since, according to Bernheim, the first historian to divide general history into larger periods was Christopher Cellarius (1634-1707), a Lutheran theologian and professor at Halle. He divided history into: Historia antiqua, extending to Constantine; Historia medii aevi, extending to the conquest of Constantinople by the turks; and Historia nova. Ernst

the second from Constantine to Charlemagne, the third to the beginning of Luther's Reformation, and the fourth to the early eighteenth century. Despite this stated scheme, the division of the historical material into four larger periods did not influence perceptibly Mosheim's writing, but it suggests that he recognized the limitations of division by centuries championed by so many others and wanted to point out that there were larger, long-range connections.[58]

Integrity and Integration

The First Three Centuries

Integrity

Having reviewed some of the basic outlines of Mosheim's life and work, it is time to examine his magnum opus in terms of the integrity-integration motif chosen for this study. The procedure adopted here to determine Mosheim's view of the integrity and integration of the church is to follow his division of church history in the four larger periods reaching beyond the centuries, pointing out in each the most significant sections in which he deals with the subject matter that sheds light on these two concepts. Brief comments will be offered when necessary, but a more complete survey of Mosheim's theological position will be left to the next major section of this chapter.

Already in his introduction to the *Institutes*, Mosheim reveals his awareness of and concern for the theme of the integrity of the church. In his work, the ecclesiastical historian has to include the study of Holy Scripture, Christian doctrine, and Christian life:

Bernheim, Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1903), 70.

[58] Meinhold, 13. Baur points out that since Mosheim regards the church as analogous to the state, political history also determines the epoch-making factors in its history in Mosheim's presentation. The four periods which Mosheim superimposes over the traditional century division of church history, show this influence of the political point of view. Mosheim establishes these divisions as being self-evident without adding any justification or explanation of their importance or adequateness, or how they relate to each other or to his concept of the church. Baur, 147-48.

> In the history of these laws or *doctrines*, it should be our first inquiry, In what estimation was the sacred volume held from age to age, and how was it interpreted? For in every period the state of religion among Christians has depended on the reverence paid to the sacred volume, and on the manner of expounding it. We should next inquire how these divine instructions and laws were treated; in what manner they were inculcated and explained, defended against gainsayers, or debased and corrupted. The last inquiry is, how far Christians were obedient to these divine laws or how they lived, and what measures were taken by the rulers of the church to restrain the licentiousness of transgressors.[59]

What does this statement reveal about Mosheim's criterion for ecclesiastical integrity? He asserts that the "state of religion," that is, the integrity of the church, depends on the attitude regarding the Holy Scripture and the way it is interpreted. It seems legitimate to infer from this that Mosheim believes that Christian doctrine and life should flow from the Scriptures and conform to it. And this he affirms expressly when he states later

> The whole of the Christian religion is comprehended in two parts; the one of which teaches *what we are to believe*, in regard to religious subjects; and the other, *how we ought to live*. . . . The rule and standard of both, are those books which God dictated to certain individuals, either before or after the birth of Christ. These books it has long been the custom to denominate *the Old* and *the New Testaments*.[60]

Mosheim himself adheres to the rule he lays down for the historian and offers a century by century survey on the way the Scriptures were treated and interpreted. His own attitude toward the Holy Scriptures comes to light, additionally, when he, for instance, writes about the life of Jesus. Mosheim accepts without any question the gospel narratives about Christ: "An account of the birth, lineage, family, and parents of Christ, is left us by the four inspired writers who give the history of his life."[61] Christ's death "to make

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[59] Mosheim, 1:XVI-XVII. Original emphasis.

[60] Ibid., 1:78-79.

[61] Ibid., 1:42.

expiation for the sins of men," his resurrection on the third day, and his ascension to heaven are all clearly affirmed by Mosheim.[62]

Mosheim attributes the books of the New Testament to the apostles and their disciples "whom God moved to write histories of the transactions of *Christ* and his apostles. The writings of these men . . . are in the hands of all who profess to be Christians."[63] Mosheim does not elaborate on the history of the New Testament texts or on arguments for their divine authority and authenticity, but rather he refers the reader to other authors "who have written professedly on these subjects."

Throughout his work Mosheim indicates that he is not fond of doctrinal intricacies and controversies. He points out that the early teachers of the biblical truths taught with simplicity and plainness. Neither the apostles nor their immediate disciples prepared a system of the main doctrines of Christianity. The Apostles Creed does not come from the apostles but evolved gradually as the needs of the church required additions in order to exclude new errors from the church.[64]

Mosheim, however, in not willing to sacrifice the truth in order to avoid controversy. He reports, for instance, the so-called judaizing controversy in the first century over the way of attaining justification and salvation. The apostles preached justification by Christ's merits while Jewish teachers ascribed salvation to the law and to works. Mosheim maintains that this error, which led to others, dishonored Christ.

> For they who maintained that a life regulated according to the law, would give a title to eternal rewards, could not hold *Christ* to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind; but merely a prophet, or a divine messenger among men. It cannot therefore

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[62] Ibid., 1:44.

[63] Ibid., 1:72.

[64] Ibid., 1:79.

> appear at all strange, that St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere, took so much pain to extirpate this capital error.[65]

Mosheim also recounts the early appearance of sects whose origin he attributes to men who were not content "with the simplicity and purity of that religion which the apostles taught" and therefore "fashioned religion according to their own liking."[66] Mosheim concludes that whoever loves the biblical truths must disapprove the peculiarities of these sects.

Mosheim makes brief reference to the Sacraments which he terms rites. He points out that Jesus instituted Baptism and the Lord's Supper and that "these are not to be considered as mere ceremonies, or as having only a symbolical import; but as having also a sanctifying influence on the mind."[67] One could certainly expect a clearer definition of the Sacraments from a Lutheran theologian than this vague formulation. They hardly occupy a major place in his account. Although the reason for this is not totally clear, it is reasonable to suppose that he wished to avoid controversy with the Reformed.

Mosheim discloses his dislike of human reasoning in spiritual matters when he reports on the conversion of philosophers and learned men in the second century. He declares himself unable to decide if the Christian cause received more benefit than injury from these men.

> For the noble simplicity and the majestic dignity of the Christian religion were lost, or, at least, impaired when these philosophers presumed to associate their dogmas with it, and to bring faith and piety under the dominion of human reason.[68]

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[65] Ibid., 1:83.

[66] Ibid., 1:88.

[67] Ibid., 1:84.

[68] Ibid., 1:105.

The early Christians perceived the need to train carefully their children from infancy in order to preserve the integrity of the church. For this purpose they established schools where children could read the Scriptures and learn the principles of the faith. In addition, they also began seminaries in larger cities where adults and especially future teachers and pastors of the church were taught both human and divine learning. St. John is said to have established such a school at Ephesus, and Polycarp at Smyrna. The most famous of these seminaries was the so-called catechetic school founded later in Alexandria.[69]

The number of learned men among the Christians was small in the first century but increased in the second. Not all Christians, however, saw the usefulness of learning and philosophy.

> Those who were themselves initiated in the mysteries of philosophy, wished that many, and especially such as aspired to the office of pastors and teachers, might apply themselves to the study of human wisdom, so that they might confute the enemies of truth with more effect, and teach and instruct others with more success.[70]

But the majority thought otherwise, says Mosheim. The war between faith and reason, religion and philosophy, piety and intelligence that broke out at this time continued through the centuries "down to our times," and all efforts have not brought it to an end. Those who thought philosophy and erudition were profitable rather than harmful to religion and piety gradually obtained ascendancy, but the other side did not lack defenders, concludes Mosheim.[71]

What Mosheim describes here is a struggle involving the integrity and the integration of the church. Those early Christians who opposed philosophy and learning did so to keep the integrity intact. They did not want divine truth to be mixed with human

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[69] Ibid., 1:81.

[70] Ibid., 1:115.

[71] Ibid., 1:115-16.

invention. The champions of human wisdom appear to be more concerned with the integration of the church: they want to be able to instruct others more successfully. But they also believe that learning can help them to preserve the integrity of the church by equipping them to confute the enemies of truth more effectively.

The early church, asserts Mosheim, cared not only about doctrine, instructing the catechumens as well as baptized Christians, but also about the Christian life. For this reason the church excluded impenitent sinners from the brotherhood.[72] Very early, however, this aspect of the integrity of the church was assailed by the very persons who supposedly should have been its promoters and defenders, the heads and leaders of the church. Mosheim regards the increase of the episcopal power in the third century as a cause of the corruption of the clergy. Many of the clerics "were addicted to dissipation, arrogance, voluptuousness, contention, and other vices." The presbyters were affected by this bad example of their superiors and imitated them.[73] Thus, Mosheim argues, the craving for authority and power by the leaders of the church led to a loss of integrity in the church.

Integration

Mosheim is aware that the church, living in the world, is impacted by the world and also exerts influence upon the world. He shows this insight when, for instance, he dedicates a whole chapter to "The civil and religious state of the world at the birth of our Saviour," analyzing the relationship of political history to church history. He points out, among other things, how the unification brought about by the Roman Empire helped the propagation of the gospel.[74]

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[72] Ibid., 1:81-82.

[73] Ibid., 1:164-65.

[74] Ibid., 1:24.

True integration for Mosheim is, however, not a human achievement but is brought about by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Mosheim asserts that the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost freed the disciples from their former ignorance and blindness of mind and gave them the joy and power to fulfill their task. They also received the gift of the knowledge of foreign languages and the firm reliance on Jesus' promise that they would be aided by miracles as often as necessary.[75] Further on, when he reports about the rapid expansion of Christianity in the first century, Mosheim claims that

> [t]he causes must have been divine which would enable men destitute of all human aid, poor and friendless, neither eloquent nor learned, fishermen and publicans, and they too *Jews*, that is, persons odious to all other nations, in so short a time to persuade a great part of mankind to abandon the religions of their fathers, and to embrace a new religion which is opposed to the natural disposition of men. In the words they uttered there must have been an amazing and a divine power controlling the minds of men.[76]

Mosheim adds that these first missionaries were also equipped with several divine gifts that enabled them to accomplish their task. The writers of the early church were little different: all men of piety but of little learning. Mosheim does not think this is reproachful but rather honors the Christian cause for the fact that "illiterate and imbecile men" led a large part of humanity to conversion proves that the expansion of Christianity was due "not to human abilities and eloquence but to a divine power."[77]

Regarding the scope of the integration of the church, Mosheim knows "it was the design of our Saviour, to gather a church from among all nations, and one which should

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[75] Ibid., 1:45.

[76] Ibid., 1:49. Emphasis in the original.

[77] Ibid., 1:78. When, however, he comments on the expansion of Christianity in the second century, Mosheim stresses the human factors of that expansion alongside the divine causes: "This rapid propagation of Christianity, is ascribed by the writers of the second century almost exclusively to the efficient will of God, to the energy of divine truth, and to the miracles wrought by Christians. Yet human counsels and pious efforts ought not to be wholly overlooked. Much was undoubtedly effected by the activity of pious men, who recommended and communicated to the people around them the writings of Christ's ambassadors; which were already collected into one volume." Ibid., 1:101.

continue through all ages."[78] Integration required that in such a church, Christian worship need not be uniform but it should be regulated and conducted differently in different places from the beginning. The form of worship was influenced by "former opinions, customs and laws of different nations."[79] Mosheim thinks that "it was proper that the rituals of those early times should be variously modeled, according to the peculiarities of genius and character in different nations."[80]

At the same time Mosheim would like to see a limit in the adaptation of the Christian worship to suit the preferences of different peoples and places. That tendency to tailor is hardly new as he claims that many rites were unnecessarily added to the Christian worship already in the second century. This caused offense to many sober and good men. The reason for multiplying sacred rites was, according to Mosheim, in the first place a desire to render the Jews and pagans more friendly to the church. They were used to many splendid ceremonies from their infancy, and the absence of such ceremonies in the Christian church had led to accusations of atheism against the Christians. So it was a desire for integration that, according to Mosheim, gave rise to the increase of rites and ceremonies in the second century church.

The cause of the integration of the church was furthered in the second century also by means of translations and writings. The New Testament books were translated into Latin, Syrian, Egyptian, Ethiopian and other languages in order to spread the message of Christianity.[81] Meanwhile the apologists helped the cause of Christianity by removing

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[78] Ibid., 1:66.

[79] Ibid., 1:84.

[80] Ibid., 1:85.

[81] Ibid., 1:101-2.

obstacles to its expansion through their writings. The same was done by those who wrote against the heretics.[82]

Mosheim detects especially in the apologists and polemicists in the second-century church the beginning of what he regards as an unfortunate departure from the original simplicity of the Christian religion. Many points were more artificially stated and principles derived from philosophy were adopted in order to communicate both within and to hellenic culture. He attributes this change to two causes:

> The first lay in the disposition of certain teachers, who wished to make Christianity appear in harmony with the decisions of philosophy, and who thought it elegant to state Christian precepts in the language of philosophers, jurists, and rabbis. The other cause is found in the discussions with the opposers and corrupters of the truth. To meet these, the Christian doctors were sometimes under a necessity to state with precision what was before undefined and to exhibit their views with more discrimination.[83]

Mosheim acknowledges that the changes with which he disagrees were prompted by the desire for integration, but the promotion of that integration led to what in his eyes appears to be a loss of integrity of the church.

From Constantine to Charlemagne

Integrity

The new era inaugurated by Constantine that ended the persecutions and brought peace to the church was detrimental to the integrity of the church, according to Mosheim. He points out that in the fourth century "the elementary principles of the Christian religion were preserved entire and inviolate, in most churches" but "they were very often unskillfully and confusedly explained and defended."[84] Having made reference to the growth of superstitions derived from paganism, like frequent pilgrimages to Palestine as

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[82] Ibid., 1:102.

[83] Ibid., 1:125.

[84] Ibid., 1:259.

well as to the tombs of the martyrs, and the worship of martyrs among other things, Mosheim concludes:

> From these specimens the intelligent reader will be able to conceive, how much injury resulted to Christianity from the peace and repose procured by *Constantine* and from an indiscreet eagerness to allure the pagans to embrace this religion.[85]

Mosheim does not view the formulation and systematization of doctrines as a necessary part of the integrity of the church. He rather considers the definition and explanation of doctrine that occurred, for instance in the fifth century, as a departure from "that devout and reverential simplicity of the first ages of the church, which taught men to believe when God speaks, and to obey when God commands."[86] Elsewhere in his work he repeats his lament over this departure from the original simplicity and purity in the doctrines of religion. But here he adds another reason for his dislike of elaborate dogma, namely, that sometimes the doctrines were "expanded beyond what is revealed," and "were supported not so much by scriptural evidence as by the authority and reasonings of the ancient doctors."[87]

Mosheim also perceives a growing loss of integrity in the area of Christian life after Constantine. Describing the situation in the sixth century, he observes that some attempted to inculcate piety trough precepts and others through examples. The first represented the

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[85] Ibid., 1:260. Emphasis in the original. Mosheim's reference to "an indiscreet eagerness to allure the pagans to embrace this religion" shows that he regards a misguided integration damaging to the integrity of the church.

[86] Ibid., 1:342.

[87] Ibid., 1:344. Once the trend had started, the situation grew worse and worse, according to Mosheim. The loss of integrity in the sixth century he describes in the following way: "The barriers of the ancient simplicity and truth being once violated, the state of theology waxed worse and worse; and the amount of the impure and superstitious additions to the religion of Christ, is almost indescribable. The controversial theologians of the East continued to darken the great doctrines of revelation by the most subtle distinctions and I know not what philosophical jargon. Those who instructed the people at large, made it their sole care to imbue them more and more with ignorance, superstition, reverence for the clergy, and admiration of empty ceremonies; and to divert them of all sense and knowledge of true piety." Ibid., 1:406. Emphasis in the original. For a description of the increase of superstition and loss of integrity in the seventh century, see Ibid., 1:445.

Christian life as consisting of certain external virtues while avoiding the contagious influence of the world. To inculcate piety by examples, writers composed the lives of the saints. Almost all of them were "marvellous and silly fables" and they hold up for imitation

> none but delirious persons or those of perverted minds, who did violence to nature, and adopted austere and fantastic rules of life. To endure hunger, and thirst without repining, to go naked about the country like madmen, to immure themselves in a narrow place, to expect to behold with their eyes closed an indescribable divine light; this was accounted holy and glorious. The less any one resembled a man of a rational and sane mind, the more confident might he hope to obtain an honoured place among the heroes and demigods of the church.[88]

In the area of education, more attention was given to the study of philosophy and the liberal arts from the time of Constantine than ever before, but not everyone in the church was well educated. No law prevented ignorant and illiterate men from entering into the office of the ministry, and many bishops and presbyters were completely unlearned. Among those who opposed learning "as injurious and even destructive to true piety and godliness" were the ascetics, monks and eremites.[89] Maintaining integrity in this era seemed to be no easy task, certainly more difficult than in the church's first epoch.

Integration

Mosheim perceives much going wrong in the process of the integration of the church after the time of Constantine. Individuals as well as whole nations embraced Christianity due to the victories of Constantine, out of fear of punishment, and from a desire to please the Roman emperors. But all is not entirely bad. Mosheim also notes the zeal of the bishops and other holy men, the pure and devout lives of many Christians, the translations of the Scriptures, and the excellence of the Christian religion as efficient causes

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[88] Ibid., 1:408.

[89] Ibid., 1:230-31.

of the conversion of many people in the fourth century.[90] As for miracles, Mosheim thinks that many things were too quickly regarded as miraculous in the fourth century without much warrant. In addition, there were also pious frauds sold to the public. But Mosheim still leaves open the possibility that God manifested his power through extraordinary signs also in that century.[91] Nevertheless, one of the principal errors of the time was "that to *deceive and lie is a virtue*, when religion can be promoted by it." This principle had already been adopted in the preceding centuries and led to an incredible mass of fables and pious falsehoods. Even great men like Ambrose, Hilary, Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Jerome are guilty of this error.[92]

Mosheim shows that there again was tension between integrity and integration in the fourth century. An improper emphasis and pursuit of the latter led to a loss of the former. Due to the "indiscreet piety of the bishops," the fourth century saw the multiplication of rites and ceremonies that obscured the true nature of the Christian religion and depressed its energies. With only slight alterations, bishops adapted and introduced into the Christian worship rites and institutions derived from Roman and Greek pagan religions. The clerics intended to facilitate the acceptance of Christianity by pagans by preserving the rites and manner of worship to which they were accustomed. As a result, little difference could be seen between the public worship of Christians and that of the pagan Roman and Greeks. "In both alike there were splendid robes, mitres, tiaras, wax tapers, crosiers, processions, lustrations, images, golden and silver vases, and numberless other things."[93]

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[90] Ibid., 1:227.

[91] Ibid., 1:227-28.

[92] Ibid., 1:267-68.

[93] Ibid., 1:276-77.

The situation did not change for the better in the centuries that followed according to Mosheim. He attributes many conversions to Christianity in the fifth century to "the labours, the perils, and the zeal" of missionaries, but many others abandoned their gods out of "the fear of the vengeance of man, the hope of temporal advantages and honours, and the desire of obtaining aid from Christians against their enemies."[94] Mosheim admits that miracles might have played a part in some conversions, but he regards the greatest part of the reported miracles in that age as "very suspicious."

Conversions of nations in the sixth century are attributed by Mosheim not to supposed miracles and prodigies but to the example and influence of the kings of the converted nations. Conversions were superficial, for the Christian preachers merely required from the people that "they were only to worship the images of *Christ* and of holy men, instead of those of their gods, and for the most part with the same ceremonies; and to commit to memory certain Christian formulas."[95] Some preachers also deluded ignorant people with pious frauds.

Another example of faulty integration is recorded by Mosheim when he writes about the Jews who were compelled in the seventh century "by means of penalties to make an outward profession of belief in Christ." Mosheim disapproves of this approach saying that "[s]uch evils resulted from ignorance of the true principles of Christianity, and from the barbarism of the age."[96]

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[94] Ibid., 1:317.

[95] Ibid., 1:382. Emphasis in the original.

[96] Ibid., 1:426.

From Charlemagne to Luther[97]

Integrity

Mosheim again and again concerns himself with what is here called integrity and integration. He never grows tired of pointing out in the history of each successive century the apostasy that began very early in the history of the Christian church and brought a loss of integrity. This loss, Mosheim points out, always led to misguided attempts of integration. Wrong reasons impelled to it and wrong methods were employed to bring not only individuals but entire nations into the external fellowship of the church.

Mosheim repeatedly contrasts the corrupt state of the Christian religion in the Middle Ages with the original and true biblical religion of Christ. According to Mosheim, the biblical religion is characterized by its simplicity, while the religion of later centuries was corrupted by the addition of rituals, ceremonies and dogmas derived from human reason. This corruption of religion was paralleled by a corruption of the lives of the religious leaders and teachers. Some examples of this loss of integrity in the medieval period will be given in the following paragraphs.

The apostasy of the Christian church continued to grow in the eighth century, reports Mosheim. The fundamental doctrines were preserved both in the east and the west, but they were burdened with many ideas that threatened to corrupt them. For example, while all acknowledged the efficacy of Christ's merits, all nevertheless

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[97] Mosheim claims to have given more attention to the Middle Ages than his predecessors in the field of church history. He refers specifically to the period from Charlemagne to Luther's Reformation. He regards this period of ecclesiastical history important both for the great events that occurred in it and because it casts light on the causes of the civil and religious state of the Europe of his own times. He, therefore, laments the neglect of that period of church history. He sees his own contribution to the history of the Middle Ages in three areas: he uncovered new or little known facts about that period; he was able to correct distorted notions about certain facts on the basis of the sources; and, he was able to expose the forgery of some accredited fables. Ibid., 1:XII-XIII.

> tacitly depreciated them, by maintaining that men can appease God either by undergoing voluntary punishments or by offering him gifts and presents, and by directing those anxious about salvation to place confidence in the works of holy men.[98]

Mosheim here reveals his knowledge of and ability to distinguish between law and gospel and his conviction that the way to salvation is not through the works of the law but through Christ. He further adds that the religion of the eighth century "consisted, almost wholly, in ceremonies and external marks of piety."[99]

The corruption of the clergy continued in the ninth century. Few of the popes possessed wisdom, learning, and virtue. Instead most of them were known for their vices and all for their arrogance and lust of power.[100] The study of the Bible, that was pursued at the instigation of Charlemagne, put up, however, a temporary barrier to the ingress of errors and superstitions in the Latin Church.[101]

The clergy of the tenth century, both in the east and the west, floundered on a low level both in terms of professional learning and personal morality.[102] The most important Christian teachings were misunderstood and perverted in this century. Other doctrines that remained were obscured by the addition of unsound opinions. No one was embroiled in

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[98] Mosheim, 2:33.

[99] Ibid., 2:44.

[100] Mosheim reports the story about the papess Joana, saying that until the seventeenth century it was generally accepted as genuine. He himself prefers to take an ambiguous stand concluding that, "Something must necessarily have taken place at Rome to give rise to this most uniform report of so many ages; but what it was that occurred, does not yet appear." Ibid., 2:62.

[101] Ibid., 2:79.

[102] Ibid., 2:119. About the tenth century popes Mosheim writes: "That the history of the Roman pontiffs of this century, is a history of monsters, a history of the most atrocious villanies and crimes, is acknowledged by all writers of distinction, and even by the advocates of popery." Ibid., 2:120.

theological controversy in this century because of the lack of intelligence and knowledge.[103]

The Christian religion lay debased and corrupt in the eleventh century. Church leaders wallowed in vices and were destitute of both sacred and secular learning. The people lived in superstition concerned not with the true faith but only with statues, images, relics, and futile rites. The learned had some knowledge of the truth but they debased and obscured it with human opinions and doctrines.[104] Even the simple people, however, were able to conclude from the few remaining fragments of Christianity that the prevalent religion was not the true religion of Christ who instead requires of his followers "holiness in the soul."[105] Witnesses of the truth began to appear, especially in Italy and France from the times of Gregory VII on. They deplored the corruption of the whole church and strove for a reformation. Most of them were not up to the task, however, for although they perceived the corruption of the prevailing religion, they did not themselves understand the nature and character of true religion.[106] They sensed how things should not be, but they did not know how they should be and certainly were not capable of effecting change.

The coming of the Crusades did not help matters. Mosheim views them as detrimental to the integrity of the Christian Church and religion. They increased the power of the Roman pope, augmented the wealth of churches and monasteries, lowered the moral level of priests and monks whose superiors left them behind alone while they traveled to

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[103] Ibid., 2:129-30. "The amazing stupidity of the age, which was the source of so many evils, had this one advantage, that it rendered the church tranquil and undisturbed by new sects and discords." Ibid., 2:135.

[104] Ibid., 2:186.

[105] Ibid., 2:187.

[106] Ibid.

Asia. Along with fervent rhetoric and high intentions, the church saw increased superstition, especially the addition of new saints and relics.[107]

The clergy of the twelfth century continued to be dominated by dishonesty, ignorance, luxury and other vices and disregarded the salvation of the people.[108] Even the monks, who were held in higher repute than the secular clergy, exhibited for the most part no virtue but only vice and wickedness.[109] With the Christian religion under so much pressure exerted by its corrupters, Mosheim marvels that it was not completely destroyed. The popes defended their supremacy and allowed nothing to be taught that militated against it. The priests and monks found it in their interest to keep people thoroughly ignorant with the result that most people relied more on relics than on "Christ and his merits, or upon prayers founded on his meditation."[110] Again, "[h]onest men who had their own and other's salvation at heart" and who saw that the true religion of the gospel was lost attempted to reform the church, but their efforts were misguided due to their own ignorance and lack of biblical understanding. They instead originated sects that were as far from the true religion of Christ as was the Roman religion which they censured.[111]

The Christian religion became even more corrupted in the thirteenth century than it had been before, both in the east and the west. In the west, the Roman popes and the scholastics perverted the faith.

> The most pernicious among them—for all were not equal offenders—were those who led the mass of people to believe, that men can perform more than God requires of

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[107] Ibid., 2:145-46.

[108] Ibid., 2:225.

[109] Ibid., 2:235.

[110] Ibid., 2:252.

[111] Ibid., 2:264-65.

> them, and that all religion consists in the external homage of lips, and in certain bodily gestures.[112]

Mosheim also reproaches the scholastics for "their senseless eagerness for prying into subjects inscrutable to man," and for their "propensity to examine religious subjects by the powers of reason and human sagacity" that led them to neglect the Scriptures.[113]

The popes claimed absolute power not only in the church but also over secular authorities.[114] In the fourth Lateran Council, A.D. 1215, Innocent III enacted measures to increase papal power. In addition he promulgated the doctrine of transubstantiation and decreed that at least annually all needed to confess their sins to a priest and then commune. These two dogmas "produced many regulations and decisions, wholly unknown in the scriptures or in the early ages of the church, and calculated to foster superstitions rather than piety."[115]

The writers of moral theology of the thirteenth and the following centuries

> use the same terms that the inspired writers and we ourselves do, yet they assign to them very different imports. The *justice, charity, sanctity*, and *faith* of most of the doctors of this age, are not identical with the virtues which Christ and his apostles designate by these terms.[116]

It seems clear from the quotation that Mosheim is not interested in ethics alone apart from biblical doctrine. This linking of Christian life to faith is one of the points that distinguish him from the Enlightenment.

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[112] Ibid., 2:334.

[113] Ibid., 2:336-37.

[114] Ibid., 2:294. Mosheim sides with the secular authorities against the popes.

[115] Ibid., 2:335. Though sounding high-minded, the decrees were aimed in large part at the dualistic Albigensian heretics whose Manichaean-like disdain for the material translated into scorn for the sacraments and for the visible church with all its pomp and power. Rome had to put down that kind of challenge.

[116] Ibid., 2:338. Emphasis in the original.

Mosheim's appraisal of the state of the Christian religion in the fourteenth century leads to the conclusion that the church had by then almost entirely lost its integrity.

> All who acquaint themselves with the history of these times, must acknowledge the corrupt state of religion, both as theoretically taught in the schools, and as practically inculcated on the people. Almost no part of the Christian doctrine retained its native form and comeliness.[117]

The corruption of the clergy was so great that all good and honest men "wished for a *reformation of the church, both in its head and in its members*, as they themselves expressed it."[118] But several obstacles stood in the way of a reform: the power of the popes, the generalized superstition, and the ignorance and barbarism of the times.

Mosheim sees mixed results from the Great Schism of the west. There was, on one hand, persistent contention and war between the pontifical factions, the clergy became even more corrupt, and conscientious people were thrown in great perplexity and anxiety. But on the other hand, the schism led to a decrease of papal power and freed the kings and princes from their subjection to the pontiffs, turning them into judges and masters. Many people also grew disenchanted with these popes who fought for dominion, and "committing themselves and their salvation into the hands of God, concluded that the church and religion might remain and be safe, without any visible head of the church."[119]

Neither the morality nor the theology of the clergy improved in the fifteenth century, prompting many teachers and writers of that age to clamor for reform.[120] The

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[117] Ibid., 2:406.

[118] Ibid., 2:368-69. Emphasis in the original.

[119] Ibid., 2:377.

[120] One of them was John Hus, "an eloquent and learned man." Ibid., 2:427. Hus "was a good man and a lover of real piety, though perhaps sometimes over ardent and not sufficiently prudent." He certainly, "had not departed in things of any moment from the religion of his times," but only criticized the Roman clergy. Ibid., 2:428.

western church was completely corrupted, and in the east the conditions were not much better.

> Nearly the whole worship of God consisted in ceremonies, and those in a great measure puerile and silly. The sermons that were occasionally addressed to the people, were not only destitute of taste and good sense but also of religion and piety, and were stuffed with fables and nauseous fictions. And among the Latins, he was accounted a well-informed and pious Christian who reverenced the clergy and especially the head of that body the Roman pontiff, who secured the favours of the saints by frequent offerings to *them*, that is, to their temples and to the priests, who attended the stated rights and ceremonies, and who in short had money enough to buy remission of sins from the Romish venders. If beyond this, a person now and then practised some severity towards his body, he was accounted eminently a child of God. Very few were able or disposed to acquire just views of religion, to bring their hearts to accord with the precepts of Christ, and to make the Holy Scriptures their counsellor; and those who did so with difficulty escaped with their lives.[121]

Integration

There certainly could not be any great expectations of authentic efforts at integration in a time when the church had lost so much of its original integrity and when the whole issue of integrity was held in very little regard over these post-Constantine centuries. Rather than bringing the Christian message with its law and gospel components to bear upon the world and make an impact, what the medieval missionaries usually did, according to Mosheim, was adapt that message to the pagan customs and cultures of the individuals and nations they wanted to convert. That practice was, in fact, not an authentic integration of the church but rather an accommodation to outside interests.

An example of this accommodation rather than integration is provided as Mosheim evaluates the work of Boniface, the Apostle of Germany. Mosheim does not regard him "altogether unworthy of this title" in view of his great achievements. Nevertheless, Boniface was very different from the first and genuine apostles. He cared more for the honor and glory of the pope, Mosheim asserts, than for the glory of Christ and his religion.

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[121] Ibid., 2:457-58. Emphasis in the original.

Boniface also "did not oppose superstition with the weapons which the ancient apostles used, but he often coerced the minds of the people by violence and terrors, and at other times caught them by artifices and fraud."[122] His epistles reveal, besides several moral shortcomings, "a great degree of ignorance not only of many things which an *apostle* ought to know, but in particular of the true character of the Christian religion."[123]

Charlemagne fares little better in Mosheim's appraisal. According to the standards prevalent in the Middle Ages, he deserves to be counted as a saint, for at that time, Mosheim observes, everyone who enriched the priesthood and extended the boundaries of the church by whatever means was regarded a saint. But seen from the point of view of Christ, Charlemagne appears quite different. He can hardly be regarded a saint and a devout man, for in addition to his personal vices, he compelled the Huns, Saxons, and Frieslanders to profess Christianity "more for the sake of gaining subjects to himself than to Jesus Christ."[124]

A consequence of the distorted integration was, according to Mosheim, increased honor and adoration for the clergy to the level of near-deity in spite of all their vices. The cause of this, he says, lies in the customs of the barbarian nations before their reception of Christianity. These nations had been dominated by powerful priests, and when they became Christian, they transferred the prerogatives of pagan priests to the Christian clergy. The Christian bishops and ministers eagerly accepted such privileges and rights.[125]

Mosheim regards the missionaries of the ninth century as more pious and virtuous than those of the preceding century. They did not resort to coercive measures, were not so

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[122] Ibid., 2:8.

[123] Ibid., 2:9. Emphasis in the original.

[124] Ibid., 2:12.

[125] Ibid., 2:17-18.

much engaged in the promotion of the private interests of the pope, and led better moral lives. Still their preaching was far away from the original message of the apostles of Christ, and was corrupted by human inventions and superstitions. They also allowed the converted nations to retain many of their old superstitions, being content to inculcate only an external form or impression of religiosity rather than true piety itself. Mosheim, however, admits that "the rudeness of those savage nations" required the missionaries to make concessions.[126] In other words, he allows the possibility that integration may on occasion require some measure of sacrifice of integrity.

The sacrifice of integrity for the sake of integration went, however, too far in the twelfth century in Mosheim's estimation. Pagan European peoples converted in that age "became disciples of Christ in *name* only and not in reality." They learned not the "pure and simple doctrine" taught by Christ but only ceremonies and external acts not much different from those practiced to appease the gods in their old religion.

> Take out the history and the name of Christ, the sign of the cross, some prayers, and a disagreement in rites, and it will not be difficult to reconcile both to each other to a great extent. Besides, many practices were still tolerated among these nations, which were wholly inconsistent with the nature of Christianity, and which betrayed very great impiety.[127]

Mosheim shows no appreciation for the use of religious drama as a means to promote integration. He seems rather to place it in the same category as the multiplication of rituals, which he repeatedly denounces. Thus, reviewing the practices of public worship in the thirteenth century, he remarks:

> Those who directed public worship, conceived that the religion generally embraced in those times, was not to be presented solely to the understanding, but also to the eyes and the senses, so that it might make a deeper impression on the mind. Hence, at stated

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[126] Ibid., 2:53. As examples of ancient pagan superstitions among ninth century Christians, Mosheim mentions that innocence in civil and criminal cases was demonstrated in trials "by cold water, by single combat, by red-hot iron, by a cross" and others. Christian clergy gave a somewhat Christian tenor to such superstitions, dignifying them with prayers, the eucharist, and with other rites. Ibid., 2:99-100.

[127] Ibid., 2:210.

> times, and particularly on the festivals, they were accustomed to exhibit the divine works and beneficent acts, and all the more striking facts in sacred history, by signs and emblems, or rather by mimic representations. These scenic representations, partly comic and partly tragic, though they might gratify the senses and produce some slight emotions in the soul, were still rather prejudicial than advantageous to the cause of religion; and they afforded matter for ridicule to the more discerning.[128]

Unfortunately Mosheim does not provide any examples or further description of these religious shows. This makes it difficult to render an unbiased judgment about the same. Modern readers, accustomed to visual images as pedagogical aids, may find Mosheim's conclusion strange and assume that, at least in principle, dramas would have been helpful to the cause of integration in an age characterized by widespread illiteracy. Mosheim does not explain his prejudice against these potentially useful teaching tools.[129]

Improvement in education in the fourteenth century benefitted the cause of integration. Mosheim relates that the pope Clement V required the teaching of Hebrew and other Oriental languages in schools "that there might be men competent to enter into discussions with the Jews and the Saracens, and to preach divine truth in the countries of the East."[130] Mosheim does not comment directly on this measure, but he signals his endorsement in the context.

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[128] Ibid., 2:341.

[129] One could speculate that this antipathy toward drama was, like Mosheim's surprisingly brief discussion of the sacraments, a concession toward the Reformed, since the presence of theater was known to be a controversial subject in Reformed territories.

[130] Mosheim, 2:363.

From the Reformation to the Eighteenth Century[131]

Integrity

The Roman church remained corrupt and integrity was in short supply for Mosheim at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Complaints against the pope and the desire for reform could accomplish nothing as long as popes held the supreme power in the church.[132] Priests lived in indolence, unchastity, avarice, ignorance and other vices and were understandably despised by the people.[133] The people labored under ignorance on religious matters, living in superstition and great moral corruption. This stemmed from the lack of religious instruction, for the public worship consisted only in ceremonies, and the preaching that existed was designed to enhance the authority, power and treasures of the church.[134] All good and earnest people longed for a reformation of the church. The majority of them, however, desired only a moral reformation without change in the constitution, organization, or doctrines of the church. But since the errors originated from "absurd and impious opinions" a "reformation of religion" was necessary.[135]

For Mosheim the uniqueness of Luther's Reformation apparently lay not in doctrine but rather in the boldness with which he attacked the Roman organization in its most sensitive parts. Mosheim asserts that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, many doctors of the church openly discussed and disputed points of doctrine, even those

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[131] Mosheim still continues to segment the history by centuries in the period after the Reformation. But now he subdivides it into general history dealing with the history of the entire Christian Church, and into particular history dealing with the different Christian denominations of the modern times. For the sake of brevity, examples of references made by Mosheim to integrity and/or integration will only be considered here when they deal with the major divisions of Christianity: Lutheran, Reformed, and Roman Catholic; references to minor groups will not be discussed.

[132] Mosheim, 3:8.

[133] Ibid., 3:12-13.

[134] Ibid., 3:16.

[135] Ibid., 3:17-18.

essential to salvation. This was possible because many of those points had not yet officially been determined or defined by the authority of the church.

> Hence many persons of great eminence might be named, who safely advanced the same opinions and not without applause, before *Luther's* day, which were afterwards charged upon him as a crime. And doubtless, *Luther* might have enjoyed the same liberty with them, if he had not attacked the system of Roman finance, the wealth of the bishops, the supremacy of the pontiffs, and the reputation of the Dominican order.[136]

When Luther began to teach in Wittenberg, he followed the principles of the Nominalists in philosophy and, for the most part, St. Augustine in theology, says Mosheim. Mosheim ties the beginning of the public Reformation to the controversy over indulgences. Tetzel proclaimed the indulgences "in a manner that impiously detracted from the merits of Jesus Christ." Luther openly denounced this in his ninety-five theses in which he chastised not only the indulgence sellers but censured the pope himself "for suffering the people to be thus diverted from looking to Christ."[137] Yet even before this public clash Luther had begun to reform theology in his own mind, according to Mosheim. As he writes, "But he had long preferred the holy scriptures and sound reason, before any human authorities or opinions."[138]

After the pope had issued his bulls of condemnation against Luther and his doctrines, nothing remained for Luther

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[136] Ibid., 3:15. Emphasis in the original. In spite of this view, Mosheim elsewhere claims that "[t]he most important of all events that occurred among Christians after the fifteenth century, nay, the greatest of all events affecting the Christian world since the birth of the Saviour, was that celebrated religious and ecclesiastical revolution called the Reformation." The Reformation affected the future of all Europe and impacted significantly also the other regions of the globe. Ibid., 3:6. Emphasis in the original. Among other benefits brought by the Reformation was the advancement of history by names like Melanchthon, John Cario, David Chytraeus, and Reinerus Reineccius. Ecclesiastical history was promoted by Mathias Flacius and Martin Chemnitz. Ibid., 3:133.

[137] Ibid., 3:21.

[138] Ibid., 3:19. Concerning Luther the man, Mosheim asserts "[n]o wise man indeed will pronounce him entirely faultless; yet if we except the imperfections of the times in which he lived and of the religion in which he was trained, we shall find little to censure in the man." Ibid.

> but to attempt to found a new church opposed to that of Rome, and to establish a system of doctrine consonant to the holy scriptures. For to subject himself to the dominion of his most cruel enemy, would have been madness; and to return again, contrary to the convictions of his own mind, to the errors he had opposed and rejected, would have been base and dishonest.[139]

Mosheim leaves here the impression that Luther acted for pragmatic reasons, choosing what was most expedient, rather than being driven by the conviction of the divine truth of the gospel, or, as Luther himself states, by God himself against his own choice and will. Mosheim here views history anthropologically, without reference to divine providence. The Reformation is dealt with as an accomplished fact rooted in a structural decision made by Luther rather early, as Mosheim's citation just noted makes clear with no option "but to found a new church." It seems Mosheim did not consider the possibility that Rome might actually change theologically. Instead, given the structural weight and organizational inertia of Rome, Mosheim is quick to have Luther move out of the old church. In fact, one wonders if that was so clear to Luther or if he ever thought in terms of a new church. Rather than leave Rome, it seems Luther thought in terms of much of the Roman church having left the true church, having lost integrity.

The church that coalesced around Luther and the message, however, reflects in its own name the recovery of integrity. The Evangelical Lutheran Church

> assumes the name of *evangelical*, for having rescued from oblivion the *Gospel*, or the doctrine of salvation procured for men solely by the merits of Christ, when it was smothered in superstition; and which does not reject the appellation of *Lutheran*, as it would not be ungrateful to the man who first dissipated the clouds that obscured the gospel, and taught his followers to place no reliance on themselves and none on glorified saints, but to give all their confidence to Christ.[140]

Mosheim provides further evidence of his Lutheran persuasion in his remarks concerning the place of scriptures and confessions in the Lutheran church. The church's

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[139] Ibid., 3:30.

[140] Ibid., 3:128-29. Emphasis in the original.

rule of faith and life "is to be drawn exclusively from the books dictated by God himself." These books can be understood in respect to the way of salvation by everyone with common sense and who understands their language. The symbolical writings of the Lutheran church are said to contain a collection and statement of the principal truths of religion. Mosheim rather matter-of-factly asserts that

> these books derive all their authority from the sacred volume, the sense and meaning of which they exhibit; nor may theologians expound them differently from what the divine oracles will permit.[141]

Mosheim does not offer much evidence of his position regarding the individual confessions of the Lutheran church. He describes the style and content of the Augsburg Confession in a very detached and objective manner.[142] Its formulation and presentation to the diet of Augsburg lended a "stable form and consistency" to the Lutheran church.[143] Mosheim reproaches Melanchthon for his "rashness or imprudence" in altering this confession, observing that the Lutheran Church never approved it and never included the altered confession among its symbolical books.[144] In regard to the Apology, Mosheim simply says it "constitutes a part of the symbolical books of the Lutheran church."[145] Similarly he reports about the Smalcald Articles that they were "admitted among the books, from which the religious sentiments of those called Lutherans are to be learned."[146] The history of the Formula of Concord and the controversy surrounding it is likewise described objectively by Mosheim. While he devotes more pages to the facts surrounding the

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[141] Ibid., 3:129.

[142] Ibid., 3:51.

[143] Ibid., 3:129.

[144] Ibid., 3:132 note 6.

[145] Ibid., 3:54.

[146] Ibid., 3:58.

document, he does not analyze the theology involved in the various articles. He does not defend the orthodox theologians, but neither does he side with their opponents.[147] He comes a step closer to revealing and asserting his position regarding this Confession when he reports that the Formula is not received by some, but that this happens

> without any interruption of harmony, because the few things on account of which it is disapproved, are of minor consequence, and neither add anything to the fundamentals of religion nor detract from them.[148]

There was marked improvement in the study of the holy scriptures and in theology in general in the sixteenth century.

> Hence the true nature and genius of the Christian religion, which even the best and most learned had not before sufficiently understood, were placed in a clearer light, being drawn up as it were from a deep pit.[149]

This recovery of integrity had a beneficial effect on the whole society, says Mosheim. The manners of many nations, who before were coarse, unpolished, and rude, were corrected and softened. Piety was promoted and cultivated by many.[150]

Mosheim looks toward and reveals his affinity with a "modern" position in which theology, especially since the Reformation, improves and progresses over time, making the most recent also the superior version. He shows his character as a transitional theologian when he describes the gradual process of improvement and perfection of the budding truth discovered by the Reformers.

> The theology which is now taught in the Lutheran schools, did not at once attain its present form, but was improved and perfected progressively. Of this fact those are aware, who understand the history of the doctrines concerning the holy scriptures, free will, predestination, and other subjects, and who have compared the early systems of theology written by Lutherans with those of more recent days. For the vindicators of

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[147] Ibid., 3:153-59.

[148] Ibid., 3:129.

[149] Ibid., 3:79.

[150] Ibid., 3:80.

> religious liberty did not discover all truth in an instant; but like persons emerging from long darkness, their vision improved gradually.[151]

The external controversies with the papists, Zwinglians, and Calvinists, and the internal contests all helped the Lutheran theologians define their position. Those who criticize the Lutherans on this account

> do not consider that the founders of the Evangelical church never wished to be regarded as inspired men, and that the first virtue of a wise man is to discover the errors of others, and the second is, to find out the truth.[152]

Mosheim gives another indication of his kinship with the thought of the Enlightenment when he laments the fact that the Lutheran church did not, in the beginning, pay more attention to practical theology, that is, to ethics and morals. He ascribes this to the many foes who attacked the Lutheran church and, thus, hindered the Lutheran theologians from "collecting and arranging the first principles of morals."[153] The fault also lies in the spirit of that unpolished age that "not only tolerated but applauded many things in morals and in the modes of living, acting, and contending, which modern times, improved by experience and education, disapprove and reject."[154] Mosheim, however, apparently contradicts himself when he deals elsewhere with the practice of excommunication. The Lutheran church, he says, at first purified that practice from abuses and corruptions and the ministers of the church employed it in the sixteenth century, but its use was gradually discontinued due to various reasons. Mosheim laments this and says that the removal of

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[151] Ibid., 3:136.

[152] Ibid., 3:136-37.

[153] Ibid., 3:138-39.

[154] Ibid., 3:158-59.

"this restraint upon wickedness" led to the corruption of the morals of the Lutherans and to a situation in which many live in open transgressions.[155]

The Roman Catholic Church made no significant progress toward the recovery of its lost integrity in the sixteenth century. Mosheim admits that at the Council of Trent some decrees aiming at the improvement of the lives and morals of the clergy were approved. But, he says, especially the higher clergy disregarded those rules, and only the lesser clerics were forced to observe external decency in order to avoid offence to the people.[156]

The religion of Rome, asserts Mosheim, is derived from two sources, the holy scriptures and tradition. Some argue that the pope alone is their legitimate interpreter. Others contend that individual theologians and bishops may derive rules of faith and practice directly from both sources, and that questions of controversy should be submitted to councils. Such controversy involving papalists and conciliarists obstructs the attainment of "a stable and determinate form" of the Roman religion. In other words, it obscures its integrity. The Council of Trent did not solve this difficulty even though it increased papal dominion of the church. Also militating against the integrity of the Roman church are the constant internal struggles between the different orders.[157]

Mosheim views the Reformed Church as a body lacking in doctrinal unity, and where the majority of members is composed of those "who suppose there are but few things necessary to be believed in order to salvation, who allow many doctrines to be variously explained, and who wish to extend the Reformed church as widely as possible."[158] In other words, Mosheim views the Reformed church as having made the

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[155] Ibid., 3:131.

[156] Ibid., 3:93-94.

[157] Ibid., 3:99-105.

[158] Ibid., 3:161. Mosheim sees a difference between the Lutheran and the Reformed (Calvinists) in regard to three subjects: (1) the doctrine of the Lord's Supper; (2) the doctrine of the eternal decrees of

decision to sacrifice its integrity or hold it to a minimum in order to achieve the greatest possible degree of integration.

Mosheim criticizes the external form of Lutheran Orthodox theology in the seventeenth century. During the greatest part of that century, he states, the Aristotelico-Scholastic philosophy flourished in the schools. Those who somehow opposed Aristotle "were considered as threatening as much danger to the church as if they had undertaken to falsify some portions of the Bible."[159] Mosheim, however, does not join those who exaggerate the faults of the Orthodox era clergy. He attributes the criticism directed at the Age of Orthodoxy to an idealistic view of the church. The critics mention many vices of the higher class of ministers and ignorance and neglect in the lower class. Mosheim, however, claims that the clergy of this age was, in final analysis, no worse than that of other times in history. In addition, he says many of the faults attributed to the clergy were not so much the fault of persons but of the times; "arising from the public calamities, the thirty years' war . . . from a bad education also, and sometimes from the conduct of the supreme magistrates."[160]

Mosheim detects a loss of integrity in the Lutheran church starting toward the end of the seventeenth century. During most of the century, strict public adherence was maintained to the fundamental articles of religion as contained in the symbolical books of the Lutheran church. "In more modern times", however, the authority of those rules of faith has "been much weakened and diminished" in many places. In the latter part of the century, the Arminian principle "that every man is accountable to God only, for his

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God in regard to the salvation of men (Mosheim believes that God predestined men on the ground of their faith or unbelief, foreseen by God from eternity); and (3) certain rites and institutions. "This short list of topics, will be seen to be in fact a long one, by those who are aware what a multitude of abstruse questions extending through the whole system of theology, these few differences produced." Ibid., 3:187.

[159] Ibid., 3:362.

[160] Ibid., 3:365.

religious opinions" and the idea that the state should not interfere in issues of religious opinions, were gradually accepted among the Lutheran churches. These ideas "degenerated into the unbridled licentiousness of treating every thing sacred and salutary with utter contempt, and of attacking with amazing wantonness, the honour both of religion and its ministers."[161]

A positive note in the seventeenth century was, according to Mosheim, the attention given to the languages. He regards the study of Hebrew and Greek and other Oriental languages as very helpful for the study of the holy scriptures and, thus, for dispelling error and false doctrine based on misunderstood scriptural passages. Such study, therefore, promotes and serves the integrity of the church. Similarly, the modern study of Latin eloquence and of the vernacular languages of different nations is viewed by Mosheim as an advantage to the integration of the church.

> For it is of great importance to the welfare and progress of the Christian community, that it should not lack men, who are able to write and to speak, properly, fluently, and elegantly, on all religious subjects; so that they may bring the ignorant, and those opposed to religion, to listen with pleasure to what they ought to learn, and readily to comprehend what they ought to know.[162]

Mosheim reports that during the seventeenth century many became displeased with the philosophical way of teaching theology. Then, at the end of the century, Philip J. Spener "began to treat on religious subjects with more freedom and clearness," and "the Ecletics drove the Peripatetic philosophy from the schools. . . . from this time onward, theology acquired a more noble and agreeable aspect."[163] In the minds of these critics such as Spener, this was an effort to recover integrity.

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[161] Ibid., 3:368-69.

[162] Ibid., 3:273.

[163] Ibid., 370.

Mosheim believes that the pietistic controversies originated from people with good intentions, but "they were amplified and aggravated" by others with an "ill-informed understanding or heated imagination or some wrong bias of mind."[164] Mosheim divides the Pietists in two groups: those who desired to keep the creed, discipline, and form of government of the church (notably Philip J. Spener, Augustus H. Francke), and those who wanted to change the doctrines and "the whole form and constitution of the church" (here, for example, Godfrey Arnold).[165] Although he describes the history of Pietism in an objective way, Mosheim does not conceal his sympathy for the cause of the more moderate pietists led by Spener. He argues that they did not always express themselves with the necessary precision and so their views were misunderstood or misrepresented by their opponents. The pietistic controversies, says Mosheim, although otherwise most lamentable, also brought some positive results, among them "that greater numbers than before, applied themselves to the careful reading of the holy scriptures, and to meditation of their contents."[166] These controversies thus served in final analysis, according to Mosheim, to promote the cause of the integrity of the church.

Turning his attention to the Roman Catholic church, Mosheim writes that the faults of its clergy were rather increased then diminished in the seventeenth century. Some popes of that century certainly had good intentions and attempted to improve the morals of the clergy. "Yet it is strange that these sagacious men should not see, that the very constitution of the Romish church and its whole interior structure, were insuperable obstacles to all such good designs."[167] In other words, without the recovery of its lost integrity, all

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[164] Ibid., 3:377.

[165] Ibid., 3:382-84.

[166] Ibid., 3:369.

[167] Ibid., 3:310.

attempts to improve the external life of the church were inevitably doomed to failure. But the recovery of integrity did not happen in that century. Rather the public religion of the Roman church became even more corrupt and deformed, both in its articles of faith and rules of life. The Jesuits, supported indirectly by the negligence of the popes, were especially responsible for this corruption.[168]

The Reformed church of the seventeenth century is described by Mosheim as "united not so much by the bonds of a common faith and discipline, as by principles of moderation and candour."[169] Attempts were made in that century to effect a union between the Lutherans and Reformed. According to Mosheim, the Reformed were easily persuaded that the Lutherans did not err in fundamental doctrines. But the Lutherans did not think the same way about the Reformed and regarded the differences between the two as matters of fundamental doctrines. As a result, the two groups exchanged mutual accusations.[170] The Lutheran attitude and stance was not mere stubbornness but a clear and natural consequence of its deep concern for the integrity of the church, as Mosheim's description reveals.

The Roman Catholic church, according to Mosheim, continued in the eighteenth century in the same old errors to which it adhered in the past. The Bull *Unigenitus*, published by Clement XI (1700-1721), shows most clearly that the Roman doctrine remains the same "on most of the points which obliged our ancestors to separate from the Romish communion."[171] A reconciliation between Rome and the Protestants was therefore out of question.

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[168] Ibid., 3:323.

[169] Ibid., 3:394.

[170] Ibid., 3:357-58.

[171] Ibid., 3:485.

In Mosheim's view, the integrity of the Lutheran church was preserved without alteration in the eighteenth century. No change was taking place in the doctrines and practices of that church, nor could any such change happen "because the ancient confessions and canons by which the public faith and discipline were ascertained, remained as formerly."[172] The methods of teaching the doctrine were, however, not the same everywhere.

The Reformed church continued the pattern of not insisting on strict adherence to the formulas of faith approved by their ancestors. It was generally regarded as sufficient if a preacher maintained the fundamental truths of Christianity and was not excessively familiar with the papists and Socinians.[173] Such lack of concern for the integrity of the church, asserts Mosheim, was detrimental to the relations between the Reformed and the other Evangelical churches.

> For this *church* leaves every one at liberty to think as he pleases, on those points which were formerly the ground of its separation from the Lutherans and Arminians, and deems the fundamentals of religion safe, however those points are explained. And yet this very moderation thwarts the designs of such as would effect a union between the Lutherans and the Reformed. For those among *us* who are strenuous for orthodoxy, complain that the Reformed open the door of salvation too wide, and that they offer communion and friendship not only to us, but to all the sectarians.[174]

Although Mosheim reproaches the Reformed for their excessive moderation, he seems to sympathize with the English Latitudinarians. He describes them as "wise and peace-loving persons" who were "moved by the numerous calamities and sufferings of their country arising from the intemperate religious disputes" and attempted to effect peace and union between the contending parties.[175]

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[172] Ibid., 3:488.

[173] Ibid., 3:490-91.

[174] Ibid., 3:491. Emphasis in the original.

[175] Ibid., 3:423.

Mosheim, however, has only disdain for the English Deists. He refers to them as enemies of the Christian religion, who deride Christianity and the worship of God in their writings. The Deists are divided into various sects.

> The best of them—though these are bad enough—are those who endeavour to merge Christianity in natural religion, maintaining that Christ only republished the lost and obliterated precepts of nature or correct reason.[176]

The metaphysical philosophy of Gottfried W. von Leibniz, advanced by Christian Wolff, acclaimed by many Christians and disapproved by others, also deserves Mosheim's criticism.[177] Mosheim also perceives an attack on the Christian religion from the legal side by those who continued their attempt, begun in the seventeenth century, to "reform the system of ecclesiastical law." But many theologians as well as excellent jurists feared "lest religion should at length be converted into a mere political engine for the security of civil government, if the opinions of some of these men should acquire authority."[178] Those fears where not unfounded. Leibniz supported the Lutheran confessions not for their theology but because they could boast German cultural identity as people rallied around these writings.

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[176] Ibid., 3:484-85.

[177] "For many are of opinion, that the metaphysical philosophy imbues the minds of young men with sentiments hostile to all religion and all worship, with arrogance also, contempt for divine revelation, excessive confidence in human reason, and other vices; and that it does not throw light and dignity around theology but rather darkness and ignominy." Ibid., 3:489. Leibniz championed a kind of Christian philosophy, linking Christianity with a rather mechanistic view of the universe in his effort to unite Lutheran, Reformed, and Roman Catholic churches. Wolff claimed to accept revelation in principle, but in practice he sided with reason as a first authority. This rationalist approach to theology brought strong criticism from Halle university pietists. Both Leibniz and certainly Wolff conceded too much to reasoned philosophy and thus, in Mosheim's view, sacrificed Christianity's integrity.

[178] Ibid., 3:488. Mosheim's assertions regarding this issue indicate that Fueter's claim that Mosheim paid no attention to metaphysical and theological interests is not justified. According to Fueter, Mosheim subordinated the tasks of the church completely to those of the state. The ruler, he continues, can be satisfied with the church if she cares for a certain measure of education, and promotes the ethical life of the people, and does this without violent actions against dissenters. Fueter, 270.

Mosheim always strives to give an objective treatment of all the material included in his presentation. His concern for the integrity of the church, as he views it and understands it, is however everywhere apparent and it becomes difficult for Mosheim to hide his preferences.

Integration

The Lutheran church of the sixteenth century decided to sacrifice uniformity in externals for the sake of integration. This church, reports Mosheim, regards ceremonies as adiaphora, depending on human authority, and therefore the church sees nothing wrong having diversity in the rites of churches that confess the same faith. Only such ceremonies as were manifestly corrupted by error or superstition, that is, ceremonies contrary to true doctrine were rejected. Provisions were also made so that public worship would not be subverted by an overabundance of ceremonies.

> In other respects, every church was at liberty to retain so many of the ancient usages and rites as were not dangerous, as a regard to places, the laws, and the character and circumstances of the people seemed to require. And hence, quite down to our times, the Lutheran churches differ much in the number and nature of their public rites: and this is so far from being a dishonour to them, that it is rather good evidence of their wisdom and moderation.[179]

The same principle of diversity was also applied regarding the government of the church. Unless mandated by scripture, church polity is also an adiaphoron.

Mosheim reports on the expansion of the Roman Catholic church in various parts of the world, but he does not regard this expansion as true integration. He notes the extension of the Roman church in North and South America, Africa, and parts of Asia through the efforts of the Spaniards and Portuguese. These accessions to the church, however, are not true conversions for Mosheim since these nations were brought in by coercion, and all that

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[179] Mosheim, 3:129-30.

was taught to them was to venerate their instructors and to repeat by words and gestures "certain useless rites and forms."[180] The Protestants could not do much for the extension of the "empire of Christ" because at this point they possessed no colonial territories outside Europe.[181]

The missionary efforts of the Roman church are also viewed by Mosheim as attempts to increase the power of the pope. Since Roman Catholicism had lost the true integrity of the Christian church, the integration it seeks to achieve must, therefore, *ipso facto*, also cannot be in conformity with the genuine integration pursued by the true Christian church. An errant message can never be rightly adapted and applied. Referring to the establishment of the *Congregation for propagating the faith* by Gregory XV, in 1622 Mosheim remarks:

> The arduous efforts, commenced by the Roman pontiffs in the preceding century, for extending the Christian church, and thus exalting the glory and dominion of the Romish see, were in this century placed upon a permanent and solid basis.[182]

Mosheim reproaches especially the Jesuits for their methods of converting nations to Christianity. They attempt to minimize the differences between Christianity and the pagan religions. They accommodate pagan rites and usages to Christianity, and employ all kinds of artifices and tricks in their missionary work. Mosheim illustrates his charges with the work of Robert de Nobili in India, and of Matthew Ricci in China, among others.[183]

Mosheim does not censure the missionary efforts of the Reformed the same way he did in the case of the Roman Catholics. In fact he praises the Separatists and Puritans who went from England to America and there promoted the cause of Christianity "with more

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[180] Ibid., 3:73.

[181] Ibid., 3:75.

[182] Ibid., 3:242.

[183] Ibid., 3:246-56.

wisdom, and of course with more success" than the Roman Catholics.[184] The Puritan John Eliot translated the Bible and other religious books into the Algonquin Indian language and instructed a great number of Indian converts, thus earning the title of the Apostle of the Indians.

The difference between Mosheim's appraisal of the Roman Catholic and the Reformed missionary efforts seems clearly to stem from how he views these church bodies and the objective of their efforts. Rome propagated a very obscured Christian message and desired to extend papal dominion. The Reformed, on the other hand, took the holy scriptures to the pagans and led them to the knowledge of the gospel. Compared to the Roman Catholics, the Reformed were much closer to the genuine integrity of the Christian church and therefore their efforts for integration are better focused.

Mosheim continues to charge Roman Catholicism with a wrong approach to integration in the seventeenth century. Much effort was expended trying to recover its lost possessions, that is, to bring the protestants under its power. "In the struggle they resorted to the power of genius, to arms and violence, to promises, to flatteries, to disputations, and to wiles and fallacies; but for the most part with little success."[185] The character of the Roman mission efforts did not improve in the following century, as the missionaries propagated the Christian name but not the Christian religion.

> For it is demonstrable, that very many of those whom the Romish missionaries persuade to forsake idolatry, show themselves to be Christian only in name, and as to certain ceremonies and outward forms, not in reality and in spirit; nor do they quit superstition, but only exchange one species of it for another.[186]

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[184] Ibid., 3:262.

[185] Ibid., 3:285.

[186] Ibid., 3:482. Mosheim chides again especially the Jesuits who were active in many parts in missionary work but, "are represented as pursuing their own honour and emolument, rather than the interests of Christ; and as ingeniously corrupting very much the holy religion of our Saviour, in order to obtain the more proselytes." Ibid., 3:483.

Mosheim contrasts the Roman Catholic missions with the Lutheran missionary efforts. For example, he calls the Lutheran mission to India, promoted by the king of Denmark Frederick IV, "the noblest and most successful" of the Lutheran missionary efforts and adds,

> This mission, the purest and best of all, not only still flourishes, being supported by the very best regulations, but through the munificence of that excellent king, *Christian VI.*, it is daily becoming more and more brilliant. The men who labour in it, I admit, make fewer Christians than the papal missionaries; but they make far better ones—real disciples, and not the apes of disciples of Jesus Christ.[187]

It seems clear that for Mosheim genuine integrity of the Christian Church is the essential and indispensable prerequisite for authentic integration, and in his view the Lutheran church upholds this integrity.

Mosheim's Theological Position: A Survey

Mosheim wanted to write an objective church history. He is usually associated with emancipating the scholarly study of church history from its ecclesiastical sponsorship and with defining it as an academic discipline.[188] Mosheim disliked polemics, fanaticism, and dogmatic partisanship, and he thought that church history scholarship should avoid them. In view of these preferences and goals, Hirsch said that "[h]e deliberately extricated Church history from theology."[189] That statement is certainly an exaggeration, and as such does

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[187] Ibid., 3:484. Emphasis in the original.

[188] Pelikan, 48.

[189] Cited in Pelikan, 48. Nigg states, similarly, that although Mosheim sometimes still employs the expression "holy history", the term is an anachronism in his case. The historia sacra disappears with Mosheim. Its place is occupied by a human point of view which begins through the pragmatic method. The religious awe for the presentation of the history of the church which was so great in Eusebius, is lost in Mosheim who starts to handle the material historically. The method triumphs over the content in Mosheim's case. The religious treatment of church historiography is replaced by the scientific treatment. And Nigg continues: "Deswegen datiert man von Mosheim an eine neue Epoche der Kirchengeschichtsschreibung. Er wird als Vater der neueren Kirchengeschichtsschreibung bezeichnet. Er hat die Platform geschaffen, auf der sich weiterbauen liess. Man steht bei ihm tatsächlich am Fusse der Treppe, die zum Gebäude der neuzeitlichen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung führt." Nigg, 117-18.

not reflect Mosheim's position accurately. His theological views are profusely and clearly presented throughout his work as the investigation above reveals. In fact, he concerned himself with the quality of Christian doctrine expressed throughout the history of the Christian church, that is, he was concerned with the integrity of the message. And he also took great interest in the integration of the church in the world in all times and places.[190] Nevertheless, it must be admitted that his presentation of the subject matter of church history differs markedly from the approach of earlier church historians.

Mosheim attempted to build his historical presentation on reliable sources carefully scrutinized and evaluated. In so doing he prepared the ground for a scientific treatment of the problems of church history. Seeberg sees in Mosheim's writings an embryonic awareness of the concept of progress in history where the present stands higher and is better than the past. It has come closer to the goal: it has continued and completed the work of the Reformation. So while the reformers were unable to see the whole truth at once, the knowledge of the present time is understandably better.[191] In the sixteenth century, the reformers would have conceded that people of an age could see the truth better or worse than some other era. That vision, however, would be due to the truth or error under which they labored relative to the other era being compared. The vision would not be different because one age had developed a higher realization of truth. To put it another way, unlike Luther, Mosheim could say that two eras could both be free from error and embrace the truth, yet the later, more modern era would know truth better because progress had carried it to a higher level.

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[190] Pelikan even admits the possibility that Mosheim served the cause of the integration of the church through his historical writings. According to Pelikan, historical study has provided some men with a bridge to the Christian tradition. It may have been their only exposure to the message of the gospel. Mosheim intended his publications not only for the clergy but also for interested laymen whom it would help to learn the history of Christian matters. "Although this meant readers who were church members, it included those who had lost most forms of connection with the Church and its doctrines." Pelikan, 81-82.

[191] Seeberg, 596.

Mosheim's Concept of the Church

In order to gain a better understanding of Mosheim's conception of the history of the church an examination of his view of the church itself is in order. As stated above, Mosheim views the Christian church as "a *society* or community, subjected to lawful authority, and governed by certain laws and institutions."[192] According to Spitz, although this definition can be regarded as consistent with the Orthodox theology, it "does have a secular ring to it." Spitz continues:

> By identifying the church as a *coetus hominum*, Mosheim did externalize the concept of the Church and deprived it of the specific meaning and connotation understood by his predecessors. If to them the Church was the veritable Kingdom of God in opposition to the kingdom of the devil, to him it was an association of humans. If to them the heretics were those who erred against the doctrine, to him they were disturbers of the peace. Of course, these differences were not absolute, but in general they represented the trend or emphasis of Mosheim's thinking.[193]

An obvious analogy with the state is seen in Mosheim's concept of the church. Mosheim calls the ministers of the church rulers, its doctrines laws, and compares heresies with wars and insurrections in the civil realm. He will even call the church a "sacred republic." [194]

F. C. Baur criticizes Mosheim's concept of the church which treats the church little different from the state. This concept, Baur says, impoverishes the idea of church, limiting it to outward appearances or characteristics it seems to have in common with the state. Understood in that misguided, restricted way, church is a superficial and empty concept. And as church goes, so goes the history of the church. "He [Mosheim] does not succeed, therefore, in understanding the organic continuity of the various components of church

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[192] Mosheim, 1:XV. Original emphasis.

[193] Spitz, 334. Original emphasis.

[194] See, Mosheim, 1:XVI-XVII, 231. See also Nigg, 111, and Baur, 143.

history."[195] The division between external and internal history is "terribly vague." It is "neither logical nor fundamental." Baur also finds fault with Mosheim's concept of the Church especially because of its "externalization and secularization, or generalization."[196] Nigg disagrees with such criticism and replies that all church historiography, whether scholars admit this or not, has to work with such a formal concept of the church. Eusebius, Nigg says, was already aware of this and therefore built his church history on the more tangible, visible, or external concept of Christ's people rather than stay with a more spiritual view suggested by the "body of Christ." Mosheim's new concept of the Church was unavoidably necessary for his new method, Nigg concludes.[197] Heussi concurs with Nigg's criticism but argues in his own way that Baur's reproach presupposes that in church histories written before Mosheim, there was a better, less external concept of the Church. But such is not the case, he continues, rather the difference is that his predecessors used a totally unreflected concept of the Church, while Mosheim was the first to give more consideration to the object of church historiography.[198]

Nigg, however, points out that defining the church as if it were an institution similar to the state, the whole metaphysical perspective that had dominated church historiography to that time broke down automatically. Until the eighteenth century, the church history had been viewed as the grand stage hosting the gigantic battle between the powers of light and darkness, the cosmic struggle between God and Satan. What people undertook for or against the church they did only as agents or tools of God or the devil.

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[195] Baur, 146.

[196] Baur, 148. According to Baur, Mosheim's concept of the church also does not account for the changes which constitute the history of the church. He is not able to explain, from his standpoint, where these changes come from and what is their purpose. The older dualistic view of history made the devil the cause of historical movement in the church. But Mosheim has left such notion behind. Ibid., 146-47.

[197] Nigg, 111-12.

[198] Heussi, 221, note 2.

Church history was seen as a description of the battle between these two transcendent powers. Mosheim does not openly or actively dispute this view, and owing to good Lutheran roots he certainly still professes to believe in Satan's action in history. But Mosheim also tried to foster a more pragmatic method that found no place for Satan. There the causes of the events are not brought about by or not attributed to the devil but to people. The Enlightenment has no room any longer for the devil. Mosheim was thus the first who attempted to overcome the dualistic perspective in church historiography.[199]

Divine Providence Or Natural Causes?

To the ecclesiastical historiographers who preceded Mosheim it was evident that God makes and moves history. God alone acts and this explains all happenings. Mosheim is no longer satisfied with this general solution. It is true Mosheim sometimes makes use of it, for instance, when he ascribes the rapid expansion of the Christian religion necessarily to divine causes. But the appeal to supernatural causes, which appears now and then in Mosheim is the result more of a habit that still persists—Lutheran roots showing—than of a conscious conviction. Mosheim strives to unearth the natural causes of the events. The effort he expends to identify those causes rather than divine intervention shows where Mosheim's sympathies lie and what he takes most seriously. So, for example, the real reason for the massive conversion of pagans to Christianity was not, according to Mosheim, the miracles but the fear of punishments and the hope of an easy life. Likewise the Crusades did not happen because God wanted it but rather as a result of the decision by people who dreaded work and longed for adventure. Or as Nigg observes,

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[199] Nigg, 112-13. According to Nigg, the rejection of dualism and the idea that good and evil men have always been mingled in the church leaves no room for the notion of the fall of the church. What corresponds to an idea of the fall is in Mosheim's view the hellenization of the church. Ibid., 113. Meinhold agrees that the idea of the church's fall is no longer basic for Mosheim. But Meinhold states that the fall of the church had its beginning neither with Constantine nor with the hellenization of the church. Rather, Mosheim attempts to evaluate these phenomena from a purely historical point of view. Meinhold, 2:12.

the origin of the monastic hermit life Mosheim attributes to the eastern culture or climate.[200] In short, Mosheim puts man in the center and sees him as the active force in the historical happenings.

> Diese durch Mosheim eingeführte, anthropologische Kirchengeschichtsbetrachtung bedeutet für die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung die kopernische Umdrehung. So wie es Sokrates Tat war, die Philosophie vom Himmel auf die Erde heruntergeholt zu haben, ist Mosheims unvergängliche Leistung die Zurückführung der Kirchengeschichtsschreibung aus der übernatuerlichen Welt in die Bahnen gewöhnlicher Geschichtsschreibung.[201]

Baur expresses the same opinion, saying that Mosheim finds the causes of the events in man. Mosheim therefore requires the historian to know precisely human nature, for this will enable him to explain the events.[202] Fueter concurs: "Die Kirchengeschichte wurde unter den Protestanten zuerst von Mosheim aus dem Reiche übernatuerlichen Geschehens in die Welt zurückgeführt."[203]

Many examples could be drawn from the Institutes to illustrate how Mosheim maintains God's theoretical role while putting the actual focus on human conduct or motive. Discussing the persecution of the Christians by the Romans, for instance, Mosheim points to natural and rational causes of those persecutions. The Christians opposed the religion of the state as well as those of all other nations, and their worship lacked all the things that were common to the other religions. This led the Romans to regard them as atheists justifying efforts to suppress them. Another reason for the persecutions were the calumnies against the Christians disseminated by their enemies.[204]

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[200] Nigg, 109-10. Mosheim links the origin of monasticism to an exaggerated desire to imitate the lifestyle of other holy men found in nations in which the Christians lived or to geographic conditions in Syria, Egypt and other Eastern provinces that led naturally to austerity and gloom. Mosheim, 1:129-30.

[201] Nigg, 110.

[202] Baur, 149.

[203] Fueter, 269.

[204] Mosheim, 1:53-54.

Nothing is said about the devil as the cause of the persecution or about the struggle between the kingdom of Christ and of the devil, and there is no thought that God might permit and use the trials as a way to chasten and even strenghten members of the church. Mosheim also seems to feel a need for finding causes and reasons even if they are not readily stated and he himself has to figure them out. So, for instance, he speculates as to why Christ showed himself visibly only to his disciples and not to his enemies during the forty days after the resurrection.

> To his enemies he would not show himself visibly; among other reasons, because he knew that those unprincipled men, who had before accused him of sorcery, would impudently affirm that it was only a spectre that had appeared, bearing his likeness, and produced by the power of the devil.[205]

Mosheim's rationalizations become more speculative as he moves further from biblically recorded history. He believes that the martyrs were not so numerous as usually supposed and sees a pragmatic reason for the growing influence and veneration of the martyrs and confessors among the early Christians: "to induce others more readily to encounter all evils for Christ's sake."[206]

On the other hand, there are also clear examples in Mosheim's writing that show his belief in divine providence. To say that such expressions are unthinking or perfunctory, merely the result "of an habit that still persists" and not personal convictions, seems to be only a subjective opinion. So, for instance, when Mosheim reviews the dispersions of the Jews before Jesus' birth, he concludes:

> The special providence of God is undoubtedly to be recognized in the dispersion of this people (who were the depositaries of the true religion, that which inculcates the worship of the one God) over nearly the whole world, so that their example might put

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[205] Ibid., 1:44.

[206] Ibid., 1:54-55.

> superstition to shame, and in some measure prepare the way for the Christian religion.[207]

When he recounts the selection of the twelve disciples, Mosheim states that Jesus chose apostles who

> were plebeious, poor and illiterate; for he would not employ the rich, the eloquent, and the learned, lest the success of their mission should be ascribed to natural causes and to human means, 1 Corinthians I.,21.[208]

Mosheim also maintains that both human and divine causes were responsible for the expansion of Christianity. Among the divine causes are the miracles, but the number of miracles is decreasing in the third century. He attributes this both to God's wisdom and to his justice since God would not permit people to gain from the powers he had bestowed on them.[209] Mosheim therefore looks with skepticism at supposed miracles in later centuries. So, for instance, he regards the many miracles reportedly done by the eighth century missionaries as deserving no credibility. They are either so-called pious frauds or due to the ignorance of unlearned people and missionaries who were "unacquainted with the laws of nature."[210]

Mosheim's attitude toward divine and human involvement in making history is difficult to balance. How is it possible that the same man can sound completely rationalistic and anthropocentric in one moment and yet find room for supernatural causes and divine providence in the next? As Nigg points out, Mosheim did not draw out the full dogmatic consequences of his new historical view. He remained strikingly reserved when it came to making dogmatic assertions. The early church was exempted from criticism by him. Also,

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[207] Ibid., 1:40.

[208] Ibid., 1:43.

[209] Ibid., 1:155.

[210] Mosheim. 2:12.

he never attempted to give a definite answer to the question of miracles. However, it is interesting that amid growing Enlightenment era skepticism toward miracles, Mosheim still gives credence to early accounts all the way to the third century. And when Mosheim begins to discount miracles, it is not because they cannot happen (which would seem to concede the argument to the Enlightenment critics and demand Mosheim discount earlier miracles as well) but rather miracles cease because God wants them to. According to his natural disposition, Mosheim always tried to avoid extreme positions. From his historical knowledge he did not carry through to the decisive consequences that would have made him a subverter of the whole of theology.[211] Of course a transcendental world outlook does not necessarily conflict with the search for natural causes if one remembers that God usually works through means. The possibility that Mosheim wrote with this presupposition in mind should not be lightly dismissed.[212]

Mosheim's Relation To The Theological Parties Of His Time

Mosheim's theological position is not easily determined, as the varied opinions of him show. Nigg argues his theological conviction is somewhat blurred because of its transitional nature.[213] Fueter believes that Mosheim was not consciously opposed to the old dogma, but regarding the disputes within protestantism, Mosheim thinks like a latitudinarian without, however, being aware of having given up anything of his protestant and Christian position.[214] Heussi stresses Mosheim's opposition to all theological quarrels. His Mosheim was a peaceful scholar who disliked doctrinal controversies.

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[211] Nigg, 110-11.

[212] For some reason Nigg does not consider this possibility of balancing an open universe dependent upon God with exploring the causes within.

[213] Nigg, 102.

[214] Fueter, 269.

Nevertheless he was not indifferent to theological interests. For instance, when the Chancellor of Tuebingen, Pfaff, took action to unite the Lutherans and Reformed, Mosheim, prompted by friends, published a work in which he stated his position that such a union was impossible as long as the Reformed held to the Synod of Dort.[215] That would seem to say that doctrine did matter, and Mosheim was willing to stand up for something, at least something so basic as the theological topics handled at Dort.

Mosheim stands in the tradition of the Christian philosophy of history systematized by St. Augustine and also adopted by the Reformers, says Spitz. Mosheim's philosophy "was essentially based on the theology of the Reformation."[216] He viewed Luther as the restorer of the true Christian doctrine. "His beliefs were based on revelation and a Biblical interpretation reassured by his trust in the perspicuity of the Scriptures."[217] Spitz concludes that Mosheim agreed with orthodox theology in definition but disagreed with it in emphasis.[218]

Heussi points out that Mosheim avoided delving deeply into the area of the history of dogmas. He felt no inclination to it because he disliked dogmatic formulations, preferring the "simple" formulations of the holy scriptures. Another reason he avoided the area of the history of dogmas was that he did not want to provoke the Lutheran Orthodox.[219] Mosheim was firmly convinced of the truth of Christianity in the Lutheran form, but he does not belong to the Orthodox of his time. Several things separated him from them. Mosheim did not regard the dogmatic formulations of the sixteenth century as

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[215] Heussi, 94-97.

[216] Spitz, 327.

[217] Ibid.

[218] Ibid., 328.

[219] Heussi, 217.

unchangeable. He also did not refrain from contacts with Reformed theologians. Moreover, he was against excessive polemics and the intolerance of dissenters. Instead he favored a certain measure of freedom of research, was open to all non-theological intellectual formation, had a broad historical horizon, and an independent historical judgment different from the traditional Lutheran theology.[220] Nigg claims that Mosheim did not recognize the Lutheran Confessions as binding and that he cannot be counted among the Orthodox, although he never came openly forward against Orthodoxy.[221]

Much also separates Mosheim from Pietism. He indeed shared many things with the Pietists, for instance, the rejection of all scholastic dogmatic subtleties and the preference of the biblical and his sermons were in a great part conversion sermons. But Mosheim's view of the world was different from that of the Pietists. Mosheim did not share the Pietist's aversion of what they called "the world" and warily held at arm's length. Rather he was completely open to the world and was to a certain degree even a man of the world. He had a fine understanding of the aesthetic and loved the beauty of the form for which the Pietist had no room. Mosheim valued worldly knowledge which the Pietists regarded as superfluous. Such knowledge proved important as he sought to unite reason and learning with Christianity.[222]

Spitz points out the tremendous effect Rationalism and the Enlightenment had on historiography. The Enlightenment "not only reduced interest in the historical by placing emphasis on existing institutions, but changed the whole basis of church history."[223] Orthodoxy had judged the course of church history according to "the fortunes of the

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[220] Ibid., 231-32.

[221] Nigg, 102.

[222] Heussi, 232. Nigg corroborates Heussi's position on this issue. See Nigg, 102-03.

[223] Spitz, 329.

correctly believing Christians." Pietism had evaluated it "on the basis of the distinction between the converted and the unconverted" To the Enlightenment, Christianity was acceptable, if at all, only insofar as it expressed the tenets of reason.[224] The practical and ethical received new emphasis. Dogmatics were suppressed. The usefulness of church history was under attack.

What was Mosheim's relation to the Enlightenment? Fueter answers by saying that Mosheim does not belong to the *Aufklärung*. His moderate or mediating position separates him from the historians of the *Aufklärung*. He does not share their polemical view of church history as a collection of frightening examples which showed where superstition and fanaticism could lead man.[225] Spitz, however, asserts that "Mosheim was keenly sensitive to the impact of the *Aufklärung*."[226] He was familiar with the English, French, and German literature of the Enlightenment and was a friend but not a follower of German rationalists.

> While his historical interests tended to detract from his dogmatic interests and from any sympathy with the scientific and ethical narrowness of the Pietists, they also separated him from the hypercritical and non-historical tendency of rationalism. Nevertheless, Mosheim may be identified with the group of theologians in that day moving in the direction which the Enlightenment eventually took.[227]

That evaluation makes Mosheim a bit of his own man, not thick with Enlightenment critics on every point but heading toward that end down a slightly different yet parallel path.

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[224] One characteristic that marked medieval scholasticism was its attitude toward the church fathers and history. Earlier generations felt a connection to antiquity and looked to that era when defining doctrine. Scholasticism, however, with its focus on logic developed a self-sufficiency where they could depend on their own method and felt themselves largely superior to early church which now did not set precedent but was used to illustrate what the logicians developed. Their present was superior. They had progressed. The same could be said of the Enlightenment where reason lifted them (they thought) above the Reformation. The rationalists were, in a sense, neo-scholastics.

[225] Fueter, 269-71.

[226] Spitz, 330.

[227] Ibid., 332-33.

Nigg characterizes Mosheim's relation to the Enlightenment as ambiguous. Mosheim preached against the Enlightenment and disliked its iconoclasm. But he also had much in common with the Enlightenment. Like the Enlightenment, he had no sympathy for monks and mystics and saw many "pious frauds" in the history of the church. His intellectual nature and his frequent emphasis on the ethical also reveal his inclination to the Enlightenment, while his theological viewpoints were close to that broad church inclusiveness of the English Latitudinarians. Nigg thus concludes with others that "[t]he whole disposition of his person and his works betrays the coming Enlightenment."[228]

Heussi also sees many threads connecting Mosheim with the Enlightenment: his intellectualism, his conviction that Christianity should not fear reason, his emphasis on the ethical, and his deemphasis of the denominational dogmatic element in both church history and preaching.[229] Although Mosheim was said to be a solid opponent of Wolff whose reason-oriented philosophy stood dominant over theology, nevertheless the intellectualizing tendency in Mosheim's writings and sermons reveal a congruence if not a kinship with Wolff's thinking. Mosheim also felt a kinship with Leibniz, although there was hardly any direct or immediate influence of Leibniz over him. But, according to Heussi, Mosheim stands in complete opposition to the Deists.[230] Seeberg agrees that Mosheim fought against the English Deists, but according to him, Mosheim was, nevertheless, also influenced by them. This is shown, claims Seeberg, in Mosheim's strong interest in ethics. Although he rejects philosophy as something that does not belong in Christianity, Mosheim,

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[228] Nigg, 103.

[229] Heussi, 233. Heussi also points out that Mosheim's views especially have much in common with the English Latitudinarians. Mosheim's position was not derived from them but rather originated in the context of German Lutheranism after the appearance of syncretism and Pietism. There was a strong dislike for the continuation of confessional polemics among the intellectuals. Mosheim's vast historical knowledge and his contacts with noble circles since his youth were also probably important for his relativism, thinks Heussi.

[230] Ibid, 234.

nonetheless, perceives the cultural significance of Christianity because of its impact on the development and maintenance of moral values.[231] Heussi arrives at the following conclusion concerning Mosheim's standpoint:

> When er auch den intellektualistischen Neigungen der Zeit seinen Tribut zahlte, so vermochte er doch nicht einem extremen Intellektualismus und (philosophischen) Rationalismus zuzustimmen. Das war es auch, was ihn vornehmlich von Wolf und den Wolfianern trennte.[232]

Mosheim certainly can be linked to all the major theological and philosophical parties of his day. Yet as has been shown, Mosheim does not belong entirely to any of those parties. Was Mosheim then a *sui generis* individual, or does he fit in yet another party of like-minded theologians?

Both Fueter and Barnes stress Mosheim's moderate and mediating position. In controversial issues he always tried to find a peaceful compromise, agreeing to a certain extent with each party without completely joining any of them.[233] In Heussi's estimation, compared to the theology of Rationalism, Mosheim was conservative. But that is not all that can be said of him.

> Nur muss man hinzufügen, dass Mosheim in seiner Zeit zu den am weitesten fortgeschrittenen protestantischen Theologen gehörte. Ein grösserer Freisinn, als der von Mosheim in der kirchengeschichtlichen Kritik betätigte, war damals innerhalb der Kreise der Theologen unmöglich. Erst in dem Zeitalter, das auf Mosheim folgte, brach die Aufklärung in das theologische Lager selbst herein.[234]

Spitz remarks that the theology in eighteenth century Germany can be divided into three overlapping periods, transitional theology, neology, and rationalism. "The first was a period of critical inquiry within the limits of dogma and revelation. The second period gave

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[231] Seeberg, 583.

[232] Heussi, 134.

[233] Fueter, 270. Harry Elmer Barnes, A History of Historical Writing, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 133.

[234] Heussi, 45.

up the dogma, but held to the revelation. In the final period both were abandoned."[235] Spitz describes Mosheim's position as "mild orthodoxy, a form of transitional theology." This transition marked a move away from dogmatic theology to exegetical and historical studies. Mosheim focused especially on the historical emphasis while also displaying yet another inclination of transitional theology, namely, the use of reason when presenting the old dogmatics—all done in an elegant style.[236]

Mosheim's biographer, Heussi, reports that despite his importance, Mosheim did not found a theological school, not even as a church historiographer. His latitudinarian approach to dogmatics, his transitional theology, and his own personal disposition all combine to make it next to impossible to arrive at the kind of tight definition that would be used to establish a theological school. But Mosheim exercised a great influence through his personality. His students revered him not only as a great scholar and brilliant teacher but esteemed him also as a human being. Thus he exerted a strong influence on the following generation of theologians who especially pursued his theological latitudinarianism. That was an effect he neither anticipated nor apparently desired.[237] And as Heussi notes, that tendency, when it survived critics' opposition, quickly moved theology in a more rationalist direction:

> The theological latitudinarianism is the transition form to rationalism. The German anti-Deism made no small contribution to disseminate deistic views in Germany. Only this

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[235] Spitz, 328.

[236] Ibid., 328-29. Nigg also arrives at the conclusion that Mosheim was a transitional theologian. "Zusammenfassend ist Mosheim als ein Sohn der Uebergangszeit von der Orthodoxie über den Pietismus zur Aufklärung zu characterisieren. Seine Lebensbemühung erweckt deshalb den Eindruck, dass er mit seinem scharfsinnigen Geist das überlieferte Schema sprengen wollte und doch immer wieder in dasselbe zurückfiel. Mosheim war noch von der gefestigten Weltanschauung des Luthertums getragen. Alle geistige Heimatlosigkeit war ihm noch fremd. Und doch stand sein Antlitz schon im Lichte der neuen, kommenden Zeit der Aufklärung, deren Vorbote er auf dem Gebiete der Kirchengeschichtsschreibung war." Nigg, 103-4.

[237] Heussi, 235-37.

> preparation explains the rapid and brilliant victory of rationalism in the theological field.[238]

It is a tragic irony that Mosheim, who saw so clearly how valuable and indispensable it was to preserve the integrity of the Church, helped to erode this same integrity. Although he did not consciously or deliberately intend this, when he lessened the importance of dogmatic formulations, he contributed to that intellectual vacuum in theology where the rationalists were able to find their place. His moderation, no matter how well-intentioned, was an asset for the enemies of the gospel. His mild orthodoxy did not sufficiently preserve the integrity of the Church in an age that called for a clearly defined and intrepid defense of the truth of the gospel.

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[238] Ibid., 237.

CHAPTER III

JOHANN AUGUST WILHELM NEANDER

Life and Works

Johann L. Mosheim and Johann A. W. Neander lived and worked in different theological environments. Mosheim's age in Germany was dominated first by Pietism and then by Rationalism. Neander, coming several generations later, was preceded by such epoch-making and world transforming individuals as Kant, Hegel, and Schleiermacher. Radical Rationalism, though still to be found, had lost its original power of attraction and was declining in Neander's day. Instead Romanticism with all its variations now carried the day. The writing of church historiography also entered a new period, beginning with Johann Neander. As Philip Schaff points out, Neander contributed to the study of church history not only with his many writings

> but also with a new method of treatment more satisfactory than that of his predecessors. He is therefore called the Father of Modern Church History, and marks an epoch in this field of sacred learning fully as much as Flacius did in the sixteenth, Arnold in the seventeenth, and Mosheim in the eighteenth century.[1]

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[1] Philip Schaff, *Germany: Its Universities, Theology and Religion* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston; New York: Sheldon Blakeman & Co., 1857), 275. [Hereafter referred to as Schaff, Germany]. In another place, Schaff compares Neander with J. C. L. Gieseler: "Neander and Gieseler have been the chief feeders of modern manuals. They supplement each other; the one furnishes a subjective reproduction, the other raw material of Church History. They are not yet superseded." Philip Schaff, *Theological Propaedeutic* 4th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 302. [Hereafter referred to as Schaff, Propaedeutic]. Schaff studied under Neander in Berlin, considered him his favorite historian there and was influenced by his view of the church. He did not follow Neander's theological views on every point but he later acknowledged "that he had gained from Neander's works 'more than from any other historian.'" Henry Warner Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 53. Toward the end of his life, Schaff concluded that his and Neander's objectives had been the same in different settings: to "resist the flood of rationalism and later the destructive criticism of Baur and his school" in an attempt to protect divine truth in Christian history. Bowden, 59-60, see also pp. 42 and 47, note 46.

Schaff's designation of Neander as the father of modern church history is echoed by several other writers such as Alfred Cave,[2] Friedrich W. Kantzenbach,[3] John M'Clintock,[4] and Franklin Weidner.[5] A somewhat less enthusiastic Walter Nigg admits: "Mit August Neander beginnt die noch heute lesbare Kirchengeschichtsschreibung der Romantik."[6] Otto Krabbe concurs with Schaff in placing Neander as a church historian on the same level with Mosheim: "Seit Mosheim hat es keinen Theologen gegeben, der auf den Namen eines Kirchenhistorikers in dem Sinne einen Anspruch erheben kann, wie derselbe Neander gebührt."[7] Krabbe compares Neander's achievements to those of Mosheim especially in the field of the history of heresies.

> Wie Neander überhaupt der einzige Kirchenhistoriker der Gegenwart ist, der mit Mosheim zusammengestellt werden kann und der die von jenem begonnene Ausbildung der Kirchengeschichtschreibung in eigenthümlicher Weise weiter führte, so können auch Neanders Leistungen nach dieser besondern Seite hin als eine Fortsetzung der

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[2] Cave states: "The modern epoch in ecclesiastical theology commenced with Neander." Alfred Cave, *An Introduction to Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), 439.

[3] He states that with Neander started a new epoch of ecclesiastical historiography. Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach, *Theismus und Biblische Uberlieferung: Beobachtungen zur Theologie der Erweckung* (Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1965), 2:26.

[4] John M'Clintock, *Lectures by the Late John M'Clintock on Theological Encyclopaedia and Methodology*, ed. John T. Short (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Welden; New York: Nelson and Philips, 1873), 39.

[5] Franklin Weidner, *Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1910), 2:67. Kaufmann, however, points out that both Neander and Ferdinand Christian Baur have been called "the father of modern church history." Frank Kaufmann, *Foundations of Modern Church History* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 5.

[6] Walter Nigg, *Die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung: Grundzüge ihrer Historischen Entwicklung* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934), 157. Nigg immediately adds that there is a significant difference between Neander and the romantics. Neander was influenced by Romanticism but stood also under ecclesiastical influence, specifically under the revivalist movement. Ibid., 157-58.

[7] Otto Krabbe, *August Neander: Ein Beitrag zu Seiner Characteristic* (Hamburg: Agentur des Rauhen Hauses, 1852), 7. Krabbe, writing soon after Neander's death, offers a comprehensive treatment of Neander's life, the theological milieu of his time, and analyzes each of his major and some of his minor writings.

eingehenden Studien angesehen werden, welche Mosheim auf den Gnosticismus verwandt hatte.[8]

Neander was born at Göttingen on January 17, 1789, to the Jewish couple Emmanuel and Esther Mendel.[9] His original name was David Mendel. His father was a Jewish peddler and usurer who neglected to provide for his family, and David's mother left her husband soon after the birth of her youngest son and for the sake of a better home environment and education she moved with her five children to Hamburg where she struggled to support them.

Neander was able to receive a formal education only with the help of a certain Councilor Steglitz. At the Gymnasium in Hamburg, where he studied between 1803 and 1806, Neander developed a strong interest in Plato, a development some see as a preparation for his conversion to Christianity. Later he was influenced by

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[8] Ibid., 63. Krabbe attributes to Mosheim the beginning of a new direction in church historiography. Mosheim, he says, made a careful, thorough and conscientious examination of the historical material and innovated especially in his treatment of heresies. "Der alte, für das rein geschichtliche Urtheil nur vervirrende Standpunkt, auf welchem man nur von Ketzereien im Gegensatze zur Orthodoxie zu reden wusste, wodurch ein fremdartiges Element in die Geschichtsbetrachtung und Beurtheilung hineingekommen war, war damit auf immer verlassen, und die Häresiologie in eine wahre innere Beziehung zu dem allgemeinen Leben der Kirche, wie zu der Entwickelung ihrer orthodoxen Lehre gesetzt." Ibid., 63.

[9] Philip Schaff mentions, in a work published in 1886, that there had not yet appeared any complete biography on Neander. Philip Schaff, *Saint Augustin, Melanchthon, Neander* (New York: Funk & Wagnales, 1886), 128, note. [Hereafter referred to as Schaff, *St. Augustin*]. This author is not aware of any Neander biography written after that time. Frank Kaufmann, in a work published in 1992, still regards Philip Schaff one of the best sources about Neander's life and work and, with the exception of encyclopedia articles, he does not mention any twentieth century source on Neander—not even Nigg, Kantzenbach and Meinhold. See Kaufmann, 5-6, 175. Kaufmann attempts to analyze and compare the works of Neander and Ferdinand C. Baur employing the method of structural semiotics borrowed from the areas of linguistics and philosophy of language. Through the use of this method he wants to make "accessible the faiths of the authors under investigation, the systems of convictions which generated their texts." Ibid., 8. In the case of Neander, Kaufmann bases his conclusions on a study of Neander's *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church*. The information here presented on Neander's life and works is based, besides Schaff, mainly on Krabbe, Nigg, Kantzenbach, Adolf von Harnack, *Reden und Aufsätze* (Gieszen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1906), and Ferdinand Christian Baur, "The Epochs of Church Historiography," in *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

Schleiermacher's *Reden über Religion* and by Christian classmates and friends. These combined influences led him to decide for Christianity.

David Mendel was baptized in Hamburg on February 15, 1806, at age seventeen. He adopted at that time a new name: Johann August Wilhelm Neander. His self-chosen surname was designed to indicate that he had really become a new man. His brothers and sisters and finally also his mother followed him from the Judaism to Christianity. Neander's conversion was not a sudden change, but rather he underwent a process that can be compared to that of Justin, the Martyr on his way to the Christian faith. Like Justin Neander began his search for the truth in Greek philosophy but gradually arrived at the conviction that only Christianity reveals the saving truth every person needs to know. The church with its ministry and sacraments had little to do with Neander's conversion, and as a result he neither developed a clear concept of the church nor was he able to perceive the importance of confessional identity and loyalty.

At the Gymnasium in Hamburg, Neander also came under the influence of Romanticism in addition to that of Plato and Friedrich Schleiermacher. He was gifted with an extraordinary memory and soon excelled in Latin and Greek. But unfortunately with his strong mind came a weak body and his odd looking, simple-minded appearance made him the object of ridicule by fellow students. He first intended to study law but later he decided for theology, and being very poor, he was supported by a scholarship. He studied first at the university of Halle where he came under the influence of Schleiermacher who was his professor. Schleiermacher's lecture on "Method and purpose of the study of church history" especially made a deep impression on Neander. From that lecture Neander derived his lifelong view about the connection between religious feeling, historical life and the genetic process of development.[10]

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[10] Kantzenbach, 2:28. See also Harnack, 201.

Neander acknowledged his indebtedness to Schleiermacher and they remained both good friends and colleagues through life, although they also differed on important points, as Schaff points out:

> Neander had a much stronger sense of sin, and no sympathy with pantheism, and was more positive and realistic in his religious convictions. He was inferior to Schleiermacher as an original thinker and system-builder, but surpassed him as a regenerator of practical religion among the students of Germany. Schleiermacher was admired and feared; Neander was esteemed and beloved. Schleiermacher stimulated the intellect; Neander moved the heart.[11]

The university of Halle was suspended by Napoleon after the battle of Jena, and Neander together with his friend Neumann then fled to Göttingen, arriving before the end of 1806. After Schleiermacher, the greatest influence upon Neander was the church historian Gottlieb Jakob Planck of Göttingen, who was at the time the best representative of pragmatic historiography. While attending his lectures, it occurred to Neander to replace "external pragmatism" with an "internal pragmatism" as a force shaping the church. In other words, external conditions shaping the church's development cannot be neglected —"external pragmatism"— but heretofore largely ignored factors of the protagonists' character and ideas—"internal pragmatism"—should receive the most attention. As Nigg has shrewdly observed, it was through a proponent of pragmatism that Neander received the last push needed to overcome definitively the pragmatic church historiography.[12]

During his vacation in 1807, Neander happened to meet with a certain professor Frick and with Matthias Claudius. These men did not favor the philosophical-romantic spirit that had become so popular, but instead they defended a biblical Christianity. This led Neander to wonder if Schleiermacher, Schelling and Fichte really interpreted the gospel adequately. From that time on Romantic philosophy receded into the background for

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[11] Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 135.

[12] Nigg, 159.

Neander. He dedicated himself completely to the study of the New Testament and the church fathers as the historical and literal now became important to him in understanding Christianity against philosophical reinterpretations. The person of Christ as the divine Redeemer became the focal point in both his inner life and his historical views.[13]

At the end of his studies in 1809, Neander returned to Hamburg where he was examined for the ministry. It soon became clear that he was better suited for teaching than for preaching and other pastoral activities. In the autumn of the next year he went to Heidelberg where he began his academic career as *Privatdocent* of theology in 1811 with a dissertation on the relationship between knowledge and faith as conceived by Clement of Alexandria. Only one year later he already had moved up and beyond the somewhat uncertain life as a Docent, becoming *Professor Extraordinarius* and publishing a book on Julian the Apostate. This monograph would be followed by several others in the years that followed.

In 1813 Neander was called, through Schleiermacher's influence, to the recently founded University of Berlin where he remained till his death on July 14, 1850.[14] He soon became the most influential teacher on the theology faculty next to Schleiermacher. He lectured initially on church history and New Testament exegesis, and then after Schleiermacher's death on February 12, 1834, Neander also lectured regularly on systematics. In that last area he was basically dependent on Schleiermacher's system,

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[13] Harnack, 202-3.

[14] The University of Berlin had been founded in 1810 and soon rose to the first rank among German universities through the fame of such teachers as Schleiermacher, Neander, Marheinecke, De Wette, Tholuck, Hengstenberg, in theology; Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, in philosophy; Böckh, and Lachmann, in classical philology; Savigny, and Stahl, in jurisprudence; Ritter, in geography; and Ranke, in history. Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 131. Kaufmann remarks about the theological faculty: "This faculty was assembled with the commission to regenerate theology and reawaken the Christian faith, providing the necessary spiritual center for the unification of Germany by Prussia following the liberation wars of the early nineteenth century." Kaufmann, 1.

although not agreeing with him in every instance and being more biblically oriented than Schleiermacher.[15]

Neander dedicated himself intensively to his studies, lectures and writings. "He led the life of a learned Benedictine in the midst of a noisy city."[16] His lecture room was always crowded and he was one of the most popular and esteemed professors at the university during its first half century. Ullmann writes that Neander's uncommon outward appearance was offset by

> his incomparable integrity, purity of spirit, and childlike simplicity . . . [and] a mind possessed of great depth of feeling, great power to bring things into living shape, generous and tender affections, and an uncommonly energetic, firm, and persevering will.[17]

Even Nigg, who thinks Neander's view of church history was inadequate, acknowledges his diligence and perseverance in his work.[18] Schaff points out that Neander prepared himself very carefully for his lectures and gave the students the best results of his studies. The students were not simply fed an old standard line but were exposed to the most recent finding from Neander's own work.

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[15] Krabbe, 148-50. According to Harnack, Neander distanced himself more and more from Schleiermacher with the passing of the years. Harnack, 204.

[16] Schaff relates several amusing stories about the absent-minded professor and although he does not swear about their authenticity he concludes that "it is quite certain that the German professor had less common than uncommon sense, and moved in an ideal world, with his eyes half shut to the real world around him." Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 138. Schaff adds that Neander's outward appearance was singular, he was ignorant of worldly life and business, never married, and was indifferent toward the material side of existence. Ibid., 140. Nevertheless, "[h]is characteristic traits were simplicity, generosity, humility, and love." Ibid., 148.

[17] C. Ullmann, preface to *General History of the Christian Religion and Church* 12th ed., vol. 1, by Augustus Neander (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1871), XI.

[18] "Dass er doch ein so umfangreiches Werk zustande gebracht hat, verdankt er vorzüglich seinem Sitzfleisch, das jeden Tag von Morgens sechs Uhr an in seiner Studierstube sass." Nigg, 174.

> He tried to reach their hearts as well as their intellect, and first and last to lead them to Christ, as the pure source of all wisdom. . . . His lectures were inspiring and edifying as well as instructive.[19]

Neander showed his interest in the students not only in the lecture room but also at other times when he was both a friend and father to them, always helping them and other people in their needs with words of counseling and comfort and even with financial assistance. He used to invite his students to tea in his house on Saturday evenings.[20]

Neander, however, also had theological enemies. "For the Orthodox of the most strict class he was in many points too lax and liberal; for the Rationalist, too positive and firm."[21] But he was reportedly esteemed for "his all-controlling love of truth and justice, his modesty and humility, his moral purity and integrity."[22] Neander's position on the theological currents of his time came to light in his dealings with the *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung*. Neander participated in 1827 in the founding of this periodical which waged a decided combat against rationalism. But Neander soon ran into conflict with the orthodox Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, professor of Old Testament exegesis at Berlin, because of some articles edited by Hengstenberg that criticized Schleiermacher's theology. Neander held his former teacher and then colleague in high regard and could not approve of the position that the *Kirchenzeitung* took on him. When the periodical later criticized Halle professors Wilhelm Gesenius and Julius August Ludwig Wegscheider, Neander dissociated himself completely from it.[23]

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[19] Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 142.

[20] Schaff mentions that Neander welcomed warmly foreign students and friends and seemed especially friendly to American students. Possibly as a result of these relationships, his library was later transferred to the Baptist Theological Seminary at Rochester, N.Y. Ibid., 148.

[21] Ibid., 152.

[22] Ibid., 152.

[23] Krabbe, 109-10.

Neander's Writings

In addition to his lectures, Neander found time for an amazing literary production. First he wrote a series of historical monographs.[24] His most important writings include the following: *Ueber den Kaiser Julian und sein Zeitalter*, 1812; *Der heilige Bernhard und sein Zeitalter*, 1813; *Die genetische Entwicklung der vornehmsten gnostischen Systeme*, 1818; *Der heilige Johann Chrisostomus und die Kirche besonders des Orients in dessen Zeitalter*, 1821 and 1822; *Denkwürdigkeiten aus der Geschichte des Christentums und des Christlichen Lebens*, 1822; *Allgemeine Geschichte der Christlichen Religion und Kirche*, 1826-1852; *Antignostikus, Geist des Tertullianus und Einleitung in dessen Schriften*, 1825; *Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung der christlichen Kirche durch die Apostel*, 1832; *Leben Jesu*, 1837. After Neander's death many of his lectures were published, some in translation: *Christliche Dogmengeschichte; Auslegung der Briefe an die Corinthianer; Katholicismus und Protestantismus; History of Christian Ethics; First John as explained by August Neander; Dogmatic.*[25]

All this prolific production helped prepare Neander for his major historical work. His series of monographs were weighted especially toward the period of the first three centuries, but he had also written about the Carolingian period and the Middle Ages. The need for a new comprehensive church history was deeply and widely felt. "Seit Mosheim war kein Kirchenhistoriker gewesen, der auf den Namen desselben im umfassendsten Sinne Anspruch machen konnte."[26] After a period of hesitation Neander finally embarked on the adventure of writing a general survey. His church history starts at the post-apostolic

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[24] According to Baur, "Neander is the originator of the church-historical monograph." Baur, 208. The list of Neander's works given here is based on Baur and Kantzenbach, 2:29.

[25] Kaufmann, 166.

[26] Krabbe, 94.

period because he had not yet reached conclusions on several important points relating to the apostolic era when he began to write.[27]

Neander's *General History of the Christian Religion and Church* is divided into the following periods: (1) the first three centuries; (2) from the end of the Diocletian persecution to Gregory the Great; (3) from Gregory the Great to the death of Charlemagne; (4) from the death of Charlemagne to Gregory VII; (5) from Gregory VII to Boniface VIII; (6) from Boniface VIII to the beginning of the Reformation.[28] Deteriorating eyesight which began in September 1847 and continued until death on July 14, 1850, prevented him from concluding the sixth volume covering the period culminating in the Reformation. This era required significant research work from Neander because he was relatively unfamiliar with the period and had never written a monograph that would have prepared him for it. Neander died while he was occupied with these studies. The unfinished volume, the fifth in the American edition of Joseph Torrey's translation, was edited by K. F. Th. Schneider and published in 1852.

Contributions to Historiography

Neander's View of Church History

Several authors discuss the relationship between Neander and the historiography of the Enlightenment that preceded him. Lewis Spitz, for example, points to shortcomings of the rationalistic historiography against which Neander reacted.

> The total effect of rationalism on church history was to accelerate the critical approach and to reduce dependence on dogmatic theology, but at the same time by treating the Christian past as the product of human passion, mean motives, and trivial causes it lost a real appreciation for the organic connection and development of the whole. This

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[27] Ibid., 95.

[28] The third volume of the twelfth American edition of Joseph Torrey's translation comprises the third and fourth volumes of the original. Baur, who criticizes Neander's historiography for the lack of the unity of a principle, states that the divisions adopted by Neander "seem to be made according to a very superficial point of view." Baur, 215.

> defect was not really repaired until Neander, under the influence of Schleiermacher, undertook the writing of a more philosophic church history and Ferdinand C. Baur began writing under the influence of Hegel's system.[29]

Harnack also refers to reaction against the spirit of the Enlightenment that treated history with indifference and antipathy. As a Christian and as a Romantic, Neander found throughout history valuable events that deserved to be known. Since as he viewed the gospel as a yeast which had penetrated the world and ran through the ages, he was able to discover the Christian spirit in all centuries, even there where no one had sought it or particularly noticed that spirit before. Neander thus busied himself with the history across all centuries with great zeal and diligence.[30]

Schaff argues that German Rationalism had degraded church history to "a godless history of human errors and follies"[31] and shows how Neander reacted against that degradation.

> Neander affected a revolution. He revealed in it a golden chain of manifestations of Christ's truth and love and a fulfillment of His promise to be with His disciples to the end of the world. He showed it to be a continuous commentary on the parable of the leaven which gradually leaven the whole lump of humanity. He traced the footsteps of the Redeemer in all His followers. He sympathized with everything that is Christian, whether he found it in the Greek or Roman or Evangelical churches, or among persecuted heretics. . . . He thus made church history a book of instruction, edification, and comfort, on the firm foundation of profound and accurate learning, critical mastery of the sources, spiritual discernment, psychological insight, and sound, sober judgment.[32]

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[29] Lewis Spitz Jr., "Johann Lorenz Mosheim's Philosophy of History," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 20/5 (May 1949): 329-30.

[30] Harnack, 207-09. Harnack, however, argues that the period of the Enlightenment was overcome in historiography not by Romantics like Schleiermacher and Neander, but above all by idealists such as Hegel. Hegel and his disciples saw history as the development of the spirit, and each individual phase in it was necessary as they sought to identify the universal behind the individual. Neander himself was influenced by Hegel and even in his later writings he upheld the concept of an historical law. But Neander's emphasis was on the individual historical event rather than on the universal and the ideal, and therefore his opposition to Hegel, Strauss and Baur increased with the passing of the years. Ibid., 211.

[31] Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 136.

[32] Ibid. See also Schaff, *Germany*, 276.

Krabbe chooses to focus on the shortcomings Neander saw in the church historiography that preceded him, arguing it lacked the vivifying spirit of the gospel and did not truly present or lay out the divine saving activity of the redemption. Church historiography had largely been dominated by a dry criticism, by rationalism, and by a psychological pragmatism. Even political judgment had sometimes conditioned the presentation of historical materials. In Krabbe's view, a church history truly permeated by the Christian spirit was still lacking. Several earlier efforts were certainly characterized on a broader scale by a Christian sense or spirit and on that score could be commended, but when it came to the specific study and analysis of the material based on the sources, they instead became quite partisan.[33] On the other hand, "in Neander vereinigten sich dagegen in seltener Weise alle wissenchaftlichen und geistlichen Vorbedingungen, welche eine neue Epoche der Kirchengeschichtschreibung herbeizuführen geeignet waren."[34] Neander apparently was well acquainted with the sources of church history and had experienced the spiritual struggles of his times in his own inner life. He himself was said to have experienced the power of the gospel and had recognized that this power was present in the Christian church throughout every century. Therefore he wanted to present the history of Christ's church as a living witness to this divine power, a witness that should speak, teach, admonish, and warn through all events involved in the development of the Christian church. In this way the history of the church would again become the church's teacher and serve its spiritual edification.[35]

Peter Meinhold portrays Neander as the true representative of the *Erweckungsbewegung* among the historians. This Awakening Movement insisted on the

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[33] Krabbe, 96-97.

[34] Ibid., 97.

[35] Ibid., 97-98.

renovation of man through experience and rebirth. Keeping with this idea of religion making a deep personal difference in one's life, Neander made edification the goal of all ecclesiastical historiography. He put this goal in conscious opposition to the purely pragmatic treatment of church history in the Enlightenment that operated on a more shallow utilitarian level. Neander also did not pursue historical investigation for its own sake, separated from the life of the church. He saw history as teacher of life but he took away from it any superficial moral aim and instead related it totally to the deeper, internal life of the Christian.[36]

In the dedication of the revised first volume of his *General History* to the philosopher Friedrich von Schelling, Neander observes that his own historical method consists in

> striving to apprehend the history of the church, not as a mere juxtaposition of outward facts, but as a development proceeding from within, and presenting an image and reflex of internal history."[37]

Similarly at the beginning of the first chapter in the same work Neander sees church history in terms of a continuous process of development that flows into eternity and is always subjected to the same laws.

> It shall be our purpose to trace, from the small mustard-grain, through the course of the past centuries, lying open for our inspection, the growth of that mighty tree, which is destined to overshadow the earth, and under the branches of which all its people are to find a safe habitation. The history will show how a little leaven, cast into the mass of humanity, has been gradually penetrating it. Looking back on the period of eighteen centuries, we would survey a process of development in which we ourselves are included; a process moving steadily onward, though not in a direct line, but through various windings, yet in the end furthered by whatever has attempted to arrest its

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[36] Peter Meinhold, *Geschichte der Kirchlichen Historiographie* (Freiburg/Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1967), 2: 151-52. Nigg argues that Neander's church history reflects not only his own personality but also especially the whole revivalist movement of the first decades of the nineteenth century in Germany. "Wie Neander in seinem grossen Lebenswerk die Geschichte der christlichen Kirche darstellt, so hat der gesamte Neupietismus die Kirchengeschichte angeschaut. Neander ist nur das Sprachrohr dieser Strömung." Nigg, 161-62.

[37] Augustus Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, trans. Joseph Torrey (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1871), 1: XXXV.

> course; a process having its issue in eternity, but constantly following the same laws, so that in the past, as it unfolds itself to our view, we may see the germ of the future, which is coming to meet us.[38]

Neander affirms of the existence of an historical process of development subject to unchanging laws. That would seem to lead him to suggest a key to interpreting history as a logical corollary. But although he sometimes leaves the impression that he is working with such an interpretational key as a presupposition, Neander nevertheless rejects in principle any dogmatic interpretation of history. Insisting on unchanging laws ruling history while refusing to admit to a regular interpretive pattern would seem to be somewhat inconsistent. This refusal even led the rival historian F. C. Baur to claim that historiography lacks the unity or a principle, specifically "the principle of movement and progressive development."[39] Harnack, looking at it from another perspective, sees noncommittal attitude as an asset, arguing that Neander was not willing to view history through the spectacles of any philosophical or dogmatic school. Neander, he says, often made it clear that the Protestant theologian should not allow his research to be restricted either by any confessional formulas or by philosophical assertions. But Neander could never reach a clear decision when it came to questions where he had to take a position. He did not want to go with the rational-leaning critics, but he also was not willing to agree with Hengstenberg and his party that opposed such criticism. He therefore could not avoid ambiguity when he came to questions about miracles and the supernatural. He was unable

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[38] Ibid., 1.

[39] Baur, 215. Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860) was a contemporary and a fierce critic of Neander. Baur's method is often categorized as hegelian, but Kaufmann argues for the originality of Baur's historical-theological program. Kaufmann, 2. Nigg laments that Neander's church history has no introduction. He states that Neander also began his lectures without dealing with introductory questions. The disadvantage of this is that Neander never explained his method. Nigg finds an explanation for Neander's omission in this area: "Methodologische Fragen sind für Vermittlungsnaturen immer unangenehm und Neander war sich nie ganz im Klaren darüber." Nigg, 162.

to decide between his heart and his critical intellect in such cases, concludes Harnack.[40] Strong resistance to the idea that history should conform to a preconceived philosophical system led him to oppose Baur whose historiography Neander understood to be saw determined by Hegelianism.[41]

Neander leaves no doubt about his position, clearly outlining it in the preface to the first edition of the first volume of his *General History*.

> Nothing but what can stand as truth before the scrutiny of genuine, unprejudiced science—of a science which does not see through the glass of a particular philosophical or dogmatic school—can be profitable for instruction, doctrine, and reproof; and wherever a science relating to the things of God and their revelation and evolution among mankind has not become, by mismanagement of human perversity, an insignificant caricature, or a lifeless skeleton, it must necessarily bear these fruits. Science and life are here designed to inter-penetrate each other, if life is not to be exposed to the manifold contradictions of error, and science to death and inanity.[42]

Neander proposes here the integration of theology with a science uncolored by dogmatism to produce a pedagogical history, a *historiam vitae magistram*, yet not just of life in general but of the Christian life in particular.

Neander always strives to maintain the centrality of Christ in his historical presentation. Ullmann emphasizes this characteristic of history.

> In method of treating Church History, everything proceeds from one and the same centre as the point of departure; and this is none other than the central point of Christianity itself—the living Christ as the son of God and the son of man, the Redeemer of a sinful world, and the eternal kingly head of the church. From this vital centre of the whole, appropriated by himself with a believing heart, Neander judges and appreciates all the historical phenomena.[43]

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[40] Harnack, 213.

[41] Harnack, however, points out that Neander's opposition to the hegelians did not lead him to agree with their antagonists who decided to suppress them through appeals to the secular power. Ibid., 214-15.

[42] Neander, 1: XXXVI.

[43] Ullmann, XXI. Schaff concurs with Ullmann's position and states that Christ was for Neander the center of all history, and that Neander referred everything great, noble, true and good in history to Christ. "The living centre and heart's blood of theology was for him [Neander] faith in Jesus Christ, as the highest revelation of a holy and merciful God, as the fountain of salvation and sanctifying grace for the

Ullmann also notes that Neander as a church historian does not cease to be a believing Christian. Neander is a stranger to the kind of objectivity that tries to be so impartial that it ignores thorough conviction and demands the historian abandon his own faith. Even as a historian, "his only standard for judging of characters and events was the Christian one."[44] Krabbe emphasizes that in view, Christ is the beginning and the objective of all historical life since he came into the world. The greatest and only real function of historiography is to bring this home to its readers. Church history has to show how the saving power of Christ brings new life to humanity. This is the theological aspect of work, according to Krabbe, and in it is found the power that history exerts on theology and the Protestant church of his time.[45]

Already in the title of his work Neander distinguishes between religion and church. As Nigg makes clear, there is for Neander no opposition between the two but a clear distinction. The church no longer stands in the first place. Rather it is only a part of the great Christian religion that is not limited to the church. Christianity itself is not a human creation but a power coming from heaven. On the other hand, the church is, for Neander, indeed also a visible manifestation, although its real essence lies in the invisible. The church is related to Christianity in an external to internal way. Externality refers to the visible church which is unable ever to be completely perfect or totally pure. Yet the church is in a constant process of purification.[46] That external struggle points to the internal

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world." Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 153. Also Harnack praises Neander's Christian personality, his humility and simplicity, his self-abnegation and love, and his Christian faith. Harnack believes it impossible to speak about Neander the church historian without speaking about Neander the Christian. Harnack, 196.

[44] Ibid., XXII.

[45] Krabbe, 108. Krabbe credits Neander with having achieved the mastery of this aspect of ecclesiastical historiography, "dass er die kirchenhistorische Darstellung zu einem lebendigen, ununterbrochenen Zeugnisse von Jesu von Nazareth, dem Sohne Gottes, dem Erlöser der sündigen Menschheit machte und dadurch seiner ganzen Geschichtschreibung jenen geistlichen Charakter verlieh, um dessen willen sie als eine wahrhaft kirchliche bezeichnet werden kann. Ibid., 7.

[46] Nigg, 165.

dimension, that is, to Christianity. In the preface to one of his works, Neander explains how important and central the concept of the invisible church is to his history:

> As it regards the notion of the *invisible church*, which seems in my history to have given offense to many Catholic theologians and to others, it will without doubt still continue to be the fundamental principle in this history of the church; as indeed it must, in my opinion, give the direction to every right treatment of church history generally. It will constantly be my endeavor to trace and wherever I can find it, to seize and exhibit, with a charitable zeal, the manifestations of this truly catholic, invisible church, both among the orthodox and among heretics, and honestly to distinguish it from everything that does not proceed out of the essence of this invisible church.[47]

Krabbe calls attention to the fact that focus on the invisible church causes him to pay less attention to the political in history and, as another consequence, he is not interested in describing the organization and structure of the church but focuses on the universal priesthood of believers. He goes so far as not to differentiate between lay people and ordained clergy. His search for manifestations of the invisible church seems to be responsible for the fact that Neander gives more attention to Christian life than to doctrines in his history of the church.[48]

Closely related to emphasis of the invisible church is his view of heresy, a position noted already in the quote immediately above. Ullmann asserts that Neander had a new way of treating the history of heresies. He neither condemned the heretical spirit narrow-mindedly nor did he glorify it. Instead he started with a thorough explanation of the heretical phenomena and then proceeded to a careful separation of Christian from non-Christian elements present in them.[49] According to Krabbe, Neander opposed principles he thought were decidedly anti-Christian, but otherwise he always sought to harmonize

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[47] Neander, 2: IV.

[48] Krabbe, 100-07.

[49] Ullmann, XVIII.

divergent theological tendencies. He attempted to recognize an element of truth even in heresies.

> Die verschiedenen theologischen Standpunkte und Lehrformen waren ihm etwas Untergeordnetes, nur bestimmt, sich gegenseitig zu ergänzen, damit die Einheit nicht in der todten Einförmigkeit, sondern in der lebendigen Mannigfaltigkeit sich darstelle.[50]

Neander was ecumenically minded, continues Krabbe, and never gave up hope about the rebuilding of a new Protestant-Catholic church that would reunite all Christians.[51]

Every Christian historian is confronted with the question regarding the relation between God and history in general and church history in particular. Neander is no exception, and he answers that question in accordance with his theological convictions. According to Neander history is not controlled by man. "The impelling principles and ideas which constitute history, are of mightier force than the purposes and designs of men."[52] Neander sees especially the development of the church guided and determined by a divine teleology.[53] The relationship between human autonomy and the power of God was one of most central concerns, claims Kaufmann.[54] In the area of church history, Neander affirms an "autonomous activity of the Holy Spirit in the founding and

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[50] Krabbe, 154.

[51] Ibid., 155.

[52] Neander, 5: 275. Neander makes this assertion in a context where he argues that in great epochs of world history when conflicting modes of thinking and feeling oppose themselves in a direct conflict, some people, desiring quiet and peace, attempt to solve the antagonism by a compromise or adjustment. Neander regards such attempts vain and destined to failure, "for it is utterly impossible to sever by outward interference the threads of history, to force back again by some diplomatic mediation or other deep-grounded antagonisms taken in the midst of their development." Ibid., 274-75. Baur criticizes Neander for not having maintained this view for history as a whole. Baur, 222-23, note 23.

[53] Kantzenbach, 36.

[54] Kaufmann, 28.

maintenance of the Church."[55] The human individual is subordinated to the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Meinhold affirms that Neander again brought history into contact and forged an immediate connection with theology. Church history is a legitimate theological discipline because it deals with a side of history not adequately understood by a purely secular or pragmatic view of history in general. According to Neander, exploring this narrower focus is church history's proper theological task. To that end, church history has to present the history of Christianity as a demonstration of the divine power that fills and drives it, that works itself out in shaping of people and history. Church history can be seen as the history of the kingdom of God that continuously clashes with powers that oppose it both within individual human nature and in the wider sweep of history. Neander believes that while times change, human nature relates to Christianity in the same way in every period of history. In that relationship shadow and light always exist side by side so there is no completely "good" or completely corrupted period in history.[56] Kaufmann highlights this radical separation that Neander establishes between the transcendent and the natural realms. Human nature opposes God, and God in turn must counteract human nature in order to accomplish his will.[57]

Neander supports a supernatural origin and nature of Christianity, but like Mosheim he allows the possibility of miracles only into the third century. After the middle of that

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[55] Ibid., 67.

[56] Meinhold, 152-53. In Neander's view, humanity is always the dough more or less leavened by the yeast of Christianity. Baur, 214.

[57] Kaufmann, 69-70. Baur argues that the categories of reaction and opposition have a broader function in Neander's history. According to Baur, Neander explains changes and movement in history with the help of the categories of secularization and reaction. One thing always reacts against another and, thus, "reaction becomes a very powerful lever in Neander's church history. So change and movement, if not progress, come into history, which is so often a repetition. In Neander's historiography the same forms, spiritual tendencies, and antithesis appear again and again." Baur, 218-19.

century Christianity settled back to work only by natural means. Neander does not explain that supposed shift in how God works, nor does he consider that his own position might be inconsistent.[58] Otto Pfleiderer, however, has noted how theological position led him to an ambiguous and confusing view of miracles in which natural and supernatural elements seem somewhat muddled.

> Neander, unable wholly to accept or to dispense with miracles, takes refuge in an emasculated conception of miracle; a miracle he holds to be not anti-natural but supernatural, as resting on higher laws, at present unknown, the sign of a higher order of creative forces acting in our nature, which the ordinary order of nature has by the divine wisdom been eternally predestined to receive. We must also assume various degrees of the supernatural, a less degree in miracles of healing than in some other kinds. Yet even these latter are a little softened down. The water at Cana was not changed into actual wine, but properties merely like those of wine were imported to it . . . In this way the most striking miracles were either partially or entirely got rid of, though others were still retained, in particular the resurrection of Christ himself.[59]

Neander leaves no doubt about his intention in presenting church history. He wants to satisfy the demands of scientific historical investigation and then connect that to practical objectives, hoping that his history might serve to instruct and edify of its readers.

> To exhibit the history of the Church of Christ, as a living witness of the divine power of Christianity; as a school of Christian experience; a voice, sounding through the ages, of instruction, of doctrine, and of reproof, for all who are disposed to listen; this, from the earliest period, has been the leading aim of my life and studies.[60]

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[58] Peter C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 159. Baur criticizes Neander's "uncritical procedure . . . in the area of New Testament criticism and in all church-historical questions connected with it," and believes that in Neander's treatment of the period after the middle of the third century, "the effects of the power of Christianity would seem to be just as truly and actually miraculous as the miracles of apostolic times." Baur, 213.

[59] Otto Pfleiderer, *The Development of Theology in Germany Since Kant, and its Progress in Great Britain Since 1825*, trans. J. Frederick Smith (London: G. Allen & Unwin, [1923]), 219-20. Pfleiderer's comments are based on his analysis of Neander's *Leben Jesu* of 1837.

[60] Neander, 1: XXXVI.

Neander's edification purpose agrees with his view of the whole history of Christ's church as a living witness of the creative power of the gospel.[61] As Nigg argues, Neander did not attempt to be an impartial reporter or to present his subject with cold objectivity. Rather along with being a historian, he also wanted to be a living witness, a Christian who serves the church. In that line, Neander wanted his church history to be related to the present, convinced that the real purpose should be the edification of the reader not only for understanding the past but for living in the present.

Edification is the key for church history.[62] According to Nigg, that aim was surprisingly novel for a time following the Enlightenment, an age whose proponents of the Enlightenment were, when not always enemies of the church, at least completely indifferent to Christianity and unable to understand it. Of all that Christianity has to offer, the Enlightenment could find use only for its morals. Neander broke with this orientation and again embraced Christianity as a positive religion, religion for its own sake. He was the first Protestant church historian to take this step, although he was supported by a general revivalist movement that was afoot beyond his circle of history. This radical change also found clear expression in historical works as he brought about a new view of church history that was a relative advance for that time.[63]

In Ullmann's opinion, Neander reached his objective of edification not by adding practical reflections to the narrative parts and establishing rules of living in his church

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[61] See Krabbe, 27-28. In another place Krabbe states that Neander wanted the truth, which he presented in his historiography, to be an instrument of the Lord in convincing the hearts of the readers. In other words, he wanted to lead his readers to Christ. Ibid., 98-100.

[62] Nigg, 163-64. "Neander liest die ganze Kirchengeschichte als ein einziges grosses Erbauungsbuch, und sein Bestreben geht dahin, sie auch für seinen Leser als ein Erbauungsbuch *par excellence* zu gestalten. Wer Neanders Werk unter einem andern Gesichtspunkt liest, liest es falsch, und eine Analyse von Neanders "Kirchengeschichte", die nicht diesen Gedanken in den Vordegrund stellt, verschliesst sich zum voraus das richtige Verständniss." Ibid., 164.

[63] Nigg, 164.

history but by simply presenting the facts in a Christian spirit. The historical facts have an edifying power in themselves, either revealing the spirit of Christ in his church or standing in reproof and warning us when they proceed from the opposite spirit.[64] Neander himself expresses that conviction:

> That any irreconcilable opposition exists between an *edifying* and an *instructive* church history, is what I shall never be disposed to admit. Edification can proceed only from the clear exposition of truth. Whatever, by the investigation of science, is shown to be a delusion, ceases from that very moment to be a source of edification. . . . The truth, which is a witness to the power of the godlike, cannot, if rightly apprehended, be otherwise than edifying; nay, the less vitiated it is, the more edifying must it become. Nor is it necessary that the bad should be passed over in silence, or concealed out of view: for, without the knowledge of that too, as it is, God's judgments in the history of the world, and the progressive triumphs of his kingdom in its conflicts with evil, cannot be understood. . . . But to be sure, the truth alone, which is its own witness, should here, as it instructs, also edify; which it certainly will do with the more purity and efficiency in proportion as the subjective character of the historian, faithfully open to the self-revealing spirit of Christianity, serves as the organ of it. This is the *objectivity* which I aim at.[65]

Neander's emphasis on edification necessarily prompts him also to consider the existence of evil. He was deeply convinced of the reality of sin, and as a consequence of sin's presence in the world, the history of the kingdom of God cannot be presented without a continuous reference to the kingdom of evil. In fact, the whole history of the world since the appearance of the Savior is one of constant conflict between those kingdoms. More, the conflict is no standoff. Rather in view the kingdom of God experiences an ever greater expansion and progress, always advancing overall toward a more complete victory over the kingdom of this world. It is this view of history, argues Krabbe, that lends to historiography its character of edification. Neander wants to witness in his works to the truth which appeared in Christ.[66] His history also offers an essentially positive view of

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[64] Ullmann, XXVIII-XXIX.

[65] Neander, 2: V-VI.

[66] Krabbe, 99-100. Nigg believes that Neander's intention was not really to present the history of the Christian church but that he had the secret desire of all pious persons to present a history of the kingdom of God. Such goal Nigg regards impossible of attainment by any historian. And so what appears

Christianity's triumph not just in the world to come but in the present reality of life. At the same time, Neander has not abandoned the expectation of a real eschaton and world to come as late nineteenth century classical liberal protestant historiography would do as it saw the kingdom of God coming fully in their own socio-political world. Albrecht Ritschl would champion that approach with his revival of Kantian Idealism including a rejection of metaphysical speculation (read: traditional doctrine) and his assertion that the kingdom of God is built here and now through practical action. Neander may have been optimistic, but he has not left his Reformation era roots so far behind.

As part of his aim to edify, Neander preferred to deal with individual Christian personalities and more narrowly defined topics that illustrated his intent. In so doing, Nigg observes, Neander in effect became the creator of the church historical monograph. That interest in individuals and focused problems or themes carried over from earlier monograph works to his larger, more sweeping history, but done on a larger scale, the method was not successful.[67] Meinhold believes this characteristic of work was not an accidental flaw but an intentional choice. Meinhold argues that in opposition to the idea of continuous development, which was basic to the historiography of the Enlightenment, Neander emphasized that each historical phenomenon deserved to be understood by itself ("an sich selbst") in its own right as a characteristic construction of the Christian spirit for that time, not for the later era of the historian who uses his own day in which he lives as a measure of

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in Neander's church history as being history of the kingdom of God is really history of the Christian piety. But even as an historian of piety, Nigg finds Neander lacking. Neander, says Nigg, is not able to understand any type of piety that does not conform to his own new-pietistic kind of piety. Nigg, 171-72. Neander's purpose of presenting church history for edification is flawed, criticizes Nigg: "Jeder, der nur ein wenig vom Hauch der wirklichen Geschichte berührt wurde, wird sagen, dass die Geschichte und vor allem die Kirchengeschichte das unerbaulichste Schauspiel der ganzen Welt ist." Ibid., 173. It seems clear in view of what has been said above that Nigg is not doing full justice to Neander but distorts the concept of edification held by that author.

[67] Ibid., 167-68.

an earlier epoch's worth.[68] The Enlightenment was particularly guilty of this, judging earlier times by the value they had for the Enlightenment's own era and by the contribution they made to building the Enlightenment which was judged superior to all that came before. Voltaire offered the famous judgment that history had enjoyed four great ages: Periclean Athens, Augustus' Rome, the Renaissance, and his own Enlightenment, the best of all. Or the German Gottfried Leibniz made famous the line that "this [the Enlightenment] is the best of all possible worlds." Yet while Neander opposed the idea of development embraced by the Enlightenment, he nevertheless affirms his own version of an historical development of Christianity as exemplified in his interpretation of the parables of the leaven and the mustard seed.[69]

Neander's view of history is far removed from that of Luther, marked by a fundamental difference. While Luther's view developed in the context of a theocentric, or more precisely a Christocentric theology and while his view was rooted in the idea that Scripture was God's objective teaching, view was based on subjective religious feeling or religious intuition. Although Neander consciously reacted against Rationalism, he himself fell a victim to its anthropocentrism which he could not overcome by simply shifting the focus from human reason to human feelings.

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[68] Meinhold, 2: 152. Baur believes that Neander's preference for monographs was a result of Schleiermacher's influence over him. "Schleiermacher's view of the nature of religion is also the basic principle of Neander's historiography, and in the historical area the significance of this view is as great as it is epoch-making in the area of dogmatics. The claim of individuality is first preserved when religion itself takes that claim into its custody, when religion itself declares that it has its innermost seat and home in the immediacy of consciousness, where the subject possesses only himself." Baur, 211.

[69] M'Clintock says of Neander, "His aim is to set forth the development of the kingdom of God upon the earth." M'Clintock, 39. Nigg claims that Neander understands the parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven as referring to an historical development. The idea of development seems to Neander to be self-evident in the parable of the mustard seed which from a small seed grows to be a large tree. The parable of the leaven also seems to him as presenting a process which can be immediately applied to church history when one thinks about the influence of the Gospel upon law, morality and other areas. Nigg, 163.

Neander's Achievements and Limitations as a Historian

Neander's church history is "[s]cholarly, ingenious, fair, and evangelical" according to Cave.[70] Schaff concurs, praising achievements, although he also sees some limitations in his church history.

> It is characterized by profound learning, impartial judgment, spiritual insight into religious life and the development of Christian doctrines, and by evangelical catholicity and loving sympathy with all types of Christian piety. It is defective in the secular, political, and artistic sections, and somewhat diffuse and monotonous in style.[71]

Several writers emphasize familiarity with the sources. Williston Walker states that Neander distinguished himself by his thorough use of the sources.[72] According to Hodgson: "Neander, more than any other contemporary Church historian, has concerned himself with the task, method, and compass of source-study."[73] Schaff lists masterful and conscientious use of the sources among his strengths as a historian.[74] Cave points to use of sources in connection with other principles in his work which, in Cave's view, make Neander a trailblazer in modern ecclesiastical historiography.

> Three principles guided his entire labours. He critically examined his sources; he scrupulously endeavoured to present the truth and to eschew bias; and instead of cataloguing leading men, events, and doctrines according to successive centuries, he strove to photograph the successive periods in the history of the Church as they appear not in arbitrary times and seasons, but in the Providence of God, using all historical data to show the growth of the Christian spirit. These three principles now govern all ecclesiastical theology worthy of the name, that is to say, scientific study of sources,

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[70] Cave, 450.

[71] Schaff, *Propaedeutic*, 301. Elsewhere Schaff argues that Neander's limitations as an historian do not obscure his indisputable merits: "He is emphatically the evangelical regenerator of this branch of theology. He made it a running commentary on Christ's precious promise to be with his people to the end of the world, and even with two or three of his humblest disciples where they are assembled in his name. Thus church history becomes to the intelligent reader a book of devotion as well as useful and interesting information." Schaff, *Germany*, 277.

[72] Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, revised edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 491.

[73] Hodgson, 159.

[74] Schaff, *Germany*, 276.

> scientific presentation of facts, and scientific inference of general truths; . . . history was another epoch-making book, and just for this reason, that it particularly breathed the modern spirit. The same spirit is now perceptible in all schools of thought, Lutheran, Calvinist, Romish, and Rationalist.[75]

Not all are so kind. Nigg, who criticizes other aspects of work, also does not spare his use of sources. Neander is said to have revived the study of sources in his time, but he used them uncritically. He accepted the supernatural in the Scriptures and did not care for others attacking the biblical books as reliable sources. He also allowed the possibility of miracles into the third century but not after that time. In contrast to his generosity shown toward the early church sources and chroniclers, Neander did not accept the scientific method with the criticisms raised by the pragmatic historians of his own day. Although he defended academic freedom, Neander always remained uneasy and perplexed by the confident air of those engaged in modern biblical criticism[76]

Neander devoted much energy to understand what was unique and singular in history. "In the principal figures of ecclesiastical history he tried to depict the representative tendencies of each age, and also the types of the essential tendencies of human nature generally."[77] Nigg emphasizes gift of empathy which he took from the romantic influence. That effort to develop empathy meant Neander no longer simply repeated the unsympathetic judgments made of their critics by the church fathers, nor did he automatically leap to the side of the eventual winners in those early theological controversies as the partisan pragmatic historians often did. Effort to understand the historical personalities and events of church history in unbiased fashion becomes evident especially in his positive treatment not only of the martyrs and the church fathers, but also

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[75] Cave, 439.

[76] Nigg, 175.

[77] Pfleiderer, 280. See also Ullmann, XXIV-XXVI.

in his treatment of the sects and even of the pagan emperor Julian the Apostate. For instance, in the case of the sects, Neander attempted to present a factual report about them and explain their appearance as a symptom of an illness of the ecclesiastical organism. Thus heretical movements became a preparation for a process of purification of the church.[78] Neander tried to be empathetic and understand in history the role of problem people and ideas rather than quickly condemn and dismiss them.

But was that interest in empathy a problem? Did it cause Neander to pull his punches and back away from criticism when it might have been due? Schaff admits that liberality and attempt to do justice to all, even to heretics and sectarians, exposed him to the danger "of doing injustice to the champions of orthodoxy and the Church."[79] Neander, Schaff argues, lacked the ability to appreciate properly the objective, realistic element in church history. "He is more the historian of the invisible kingdom of Christ in the hearts of his individual members, than of the visible church in its great conflict and contact with a wicked world."[80]

Not only did other proper voices not always ring through but his own could sometimes too easily be heard. Baur initially suggests that Neander displayed a high

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[78] Nigg, 165-66. Nigg points to the extent of Neander's sympathetic understanding: "Er geht sogar so weit, auch in den Verirrungen und Irrtümern der kirchengeschichtlichen Erscheinungen noch das religiöse Interesse ausgraben zu wollen. Unter allen Hüllen und Verkleidungen sucht er den Geist des lebendigen Christentums aufzuspüren. Man muss Neander die seltene Gabe zubilligen, überall das Gute zu sehen und an das Licht zu ziehen, zuweilen auch da, wo es gar nicht vorhanden war. Neander's Kunst der Einfühlung ist das schönste Ruhmesblatt seiner 'Kirchengeschichte.'" Ibid., 167. Pfleiderer attempts to locate the source of Neander's sympathetic appreciation of the most diverse historical characters: "His guiding principle in treating both of the history and of the present condition of the church was—that Christianity has room for the various tendencies of human nature, and aims at permeating and glorifying them all; that according to the divine plan these various tendencies are to occur successively and simultaneously and to counterbalance each other, so that the freedom and variety of the development of the spiritual life ought not to be forced into a single dogmatic form." Pfleiderer, 280. See also Edward Fueter, *Geschichte der Neueren Historiographie* (Munich and Berlin: Druck und Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1911), 486.

[79] Schaff, *Germany*, 276-77.

[80] Ibid., 277.

degree of objectivity in his treatment of history, an aspect in which the pragmatic historians had been lacking,[81] but then commenting on expressed desire to present the voice of Christianity in his work, Baur remarks

> In this voice of the centuries, it is very often his own voice that is heard; and church history, for all its merits as an objective presentation, is also a true image of the subjectivity of its author.[82]

But, according to Baur, subjectivity in historiography in not accidental. Rather it actually is consciously pursued.

> Indeed, for Neander the absolute standard by which historical manifestations are judged is really religious feeling, or the subjective Christian consciousness. There quite naturally emerges, for Neander, a concern lest the divine imprint in phenomena be clouded as soon as those phenomena are not merely considered subjectively, according to the religious feeling or consciousness in which they are rooted as the immediate expression of this imprint, but are objectively conceived in their essential reality. . . . The most important thing, for such a presentation, is always that by which it is able to rediscover the vantage point of its own theory of feeling, its *pectus, quod theologum facit* . . . its rational supernaturalism, the incompleteness and instability that hover somewhere between faith and knowledge.[83]

Neander expressly gave much attention to the individual and personal, but Ullmann actually regards him as less than well qualified to identify and present nuances and characteristic traits in individuals. Moreover, due to his own strongly held views, he had a tendency to bring what was being studied in history into a certain relationship with himself and, as a result, the specific characteristics of the historical things and persons being described were not always clearly brought out while Neander's own personality and

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[81] Baur, 210-11.

[82] Ibid., 223.

[83] Ibid., 225. Neander himself admits a necessary element of subjectivity in his view of history: "But although the contemplation of history enables us to perceive the powers as they are prepared in their secret laboratories, and as they are exhibited in actual operation, yet in order to a right understanding [*sic*] of all this, it is pre-supposed that we have formed some just conception of that in its inward essence, which we would study in its manifestation and process of development. Our knowledge here falls into a necessary circle. To understand history, it is supposed that we have some understanding of that which constitutes its working principle; but it is also history which furnishes us the proper test, by which to ascertain whether its principle has been rightly apprehended. Certainly, then, our understanding of the history of Christianity will depend on the conception we have formed to ourselves of Christianity itself." Neander, 1: 1.

convictions seeped through.[84] In Neander the historical figures "become dim ideal forms, like stars hard to distinguish in the surrounding mist."[85] Neander cast so bright a light himself that he made it more difficult to pick out the stars in the constellations of history.

The attention Neander paid in his historical narratives to the internal life and piety of the church led him to neglect somewhat the description of the wider secular circle with such things as politics and its relationship to the church as an external institution with its constitution or polity and its worship forms. He also failed to give sufficient attention to the broader influence of the church on the world, for example, in the area of Christian art.[86] Schaff thinks chapters on church government and sacred art are especially defective because of lack of qualifications to make informed judgments in politics or the aesthetic fields.[87]

Another area in which Neander revealed shortcomings was in literary style. Ullmann, who in general has praise for work, admits that style is somewhat heavy and monotonous and lacks "more compression, more movement, sharpness of expression, and liveliness of coloring."[88] Schaff also concedes that his admired professor

> is by no means a model as a *writer* of church history. His style is too monotonous and diffuse, without any picturesque alternation of light and shade, and flows like a quiet stream over an unbroken plain.[89]

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[84] Ullmann, XXX. See also Harnack, 212.

[85] Pfleiderer, 281.

[86] Ullmann, XXX-XXXI. See also Nigg, 174, and Harnack, 211. Harnack, however, adds that the Hegelians, on the other hand, could be even worse as they did not offer poor judgments but simply dispensed with what did not fit their notion of Idealism. Ibid., 212.

[87] Schaff, Germany, 276. Elsewhere Schaff states that Neander "felt most at home in the invisible church of thought and spiritual life, and in those periods where religion has nothing to do with politics, nor the Church with the state—except to be persecuted, as in the first three centuries." Schaff, *Propaedeutic*, 301.

[88] Ullmann, XXX.

[89] Schaff, Germany, 275.

Neander's Impact on the Church and Church Historiography

Neander "was one of the best known church historians in Germany during his lifetime."[90] Adolph von Harnack who followed Neander as professor in Berlin and was influenced by him[91] answered the question about significance as a church historian this way:

> Neander hat lebendiges Interesse und Lust an der Kirchengeschichte erweckt, weil er sie mit dem Auge des dankbaren Freundes betrachtete. Neander hat das Quellenstudium der Kirchengeschichte belebt, weil er ein grosses Ziel dieses Studiums kannte—den geistigen Verkehr mit hohen Ahnen. Neander hat die Kirchengeschichte der Theologie zurückgegeben, weil er den Pulsschlag christlichen Empfindens und Lebens auch unter fremden und spröden Hüllen zu entdecken verstand.[92]

Schaff sees chief and lasting merit as a historian in his large-hearted Christian sympathy and catholicity, both of which make him a blessing to all branches of the church.[93]

Both Ullmann and Krabbe offer a flattering portrayal of Neander as a witness who led many future servants of the church to the knowledge of the gospel.[94] Influence upon his students was probably unmatched by few teachers either before or after him.[95] His students loyally stood by him, and even after their graduation he continued to be the counselor and spiritual leader for many of them. Yet he did not spawn a theological school or even inspire a successor to follow in his steps in writing church history. Nevertheless,

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[90] Kaufmann, 1. Kaufmann, who compares the works of Neander and Baur, adds: "Today the name of Baur is widely recognized, while few know the name of Neander or realize the quality and breadth of the latter's reputation during the time of his writing." Ibid., 2.

[91] See Kantzenbach, 26, about this influence.

[92] Harnack, 206.

[93] Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 136.

[94] Ullmann, XVII; Krabbe, 9.

[95] Ibid., 155.

he influenced the whole area of church historiography for decades.[96] Krabbe credits Neander not only with rejuvenating such writing but also with sparking the interest of many Christians in church history, so that at the time of his death no theological discipline was more cultivated than church history. Neander was able to use church history for the common good of his church.[97]

But despite high praise, there are also reservations expressed about legacy. Harnack concludes that Neander cast a double shadow. On one hand, he revived church historical studies, won souls for the gospel, and offered in his person a sublime example of piety and diligence. On the other hand, his influence on his awe-struck students and on the direction of ecclesiastical developments was not altogether favorable.

> Die Entstehung eines Virtuosentums, hinter dem sich Dilletantismus und Unsicherheit verbargen, hat er nicht kräftig genug abgewehrt. Dem Aufkommen einer Richtung, welche die Probleme verschleierte und den Gegensätzen die Spitze abbrach, hat er wider seinen Willen Vorschub geleistet.[98]

In Harnack's view, approach ultimately left the church vulnerable to any influential theologians from either the left or the right who could then impose their own particular theology upon the church.

Integrity and Integration: Integrity

Neander on the First Three Centuries

Neander's history lacks an introduction where he might have stated unmistakably his theory and approach to the history of the church. Consequently his understanding of the more focused concepts of integrity and integration are more difficult to interpret, as one might already gather from the discussion above. Nevertheless, material in the several

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[96] Ibid., 161.

[97] Ibid., 7-8.

[98] Harnack, 217-18.

prefaces to different volumes of history, his paragraphs introducing new sections of his work, and brief comments scattered throughout the texts offer, when put together, a rather clear understanding of his convictions as a historian and theologian. What follows here examines that understanding while also tracing in general the sequence in which Neander wrote the material. An exception, however, has however been made in the first part, corresponding to treatment of the first three centuries, where it seemed more appropriate to arrange assertions under specific topics according to content rather than in time sequence.

Christianity and Human Nature

Neander's view of the relationship between Christianity and human nature is very important because it provides a fundamental clue to his understanding of the integrity of the church. As Neander himself states

> Now Christianity we regard not as a power that has sprung up out of the hidden depths of man's nature, but as one which descended from above, because heaven opened itself for the rescue of revolted humanity; a power which, as it is exalted above all that human nature can create out of its own resources, must impart to that nature a new life, and change it from its inmost centre. The great source of this power is the person whose life its appearance exhibits to us—Jesus of Nazareth—the Redeemer of mankind when alienated from God by sin. In the submission of faith to him, and the appropriation of the truth which he revealed, consists the essence of Christianity, and of that fellowship of the divine life resulting from it, which we designate under the name of the church. Out of this springs the common consciousness, which unites all its members in one, however separated from one another by space or time. The continuance of all those agencies, whereby Christianity has given a new turn to the life of our race, depends on the holding fast to this, its peculiar essence, to the same that has been the spring of these agencies from the beginning. To the Kingdom of God, which derived its origin from these influences in humanity, and which must ever continue to spring up afresh from the same, may be applied the remark of an ancient historian respecting the kingdoms of the world, that they will be preserved by the same means to which they were indebted for their foundation.
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> But although Christianity can be understood only as something which is above nature and reason, something communicated to them from a higher source, yet it stands in necessary connection with the essence of these powers and with their mode of development . . . The connection of which we now speak consists in this; that what has by their Creator been implanted in the essence of human nature and reason, what has its ground in their idea and their destination, can attain to its full realization only by means

> of that higher principle, as we see it actually realized in Him who is its Source, and in whom is expressed the original type and model, after which humanity has to strive.[99]

Neander's statement on Christianity begins by affirming its supernatural origin, the centrality of Christ, the need of faith in Christ and the appropriation of the truth revealed by him. But the focus soon shifts to human nature. Neander argues that in Christianity the divine power works in and through human nature. It transforms human nature. From this inner working of the divine life as a leaven in human nature both Christian life and Christian doctrine gradually develop.[100] In another place where Neander asserts a distinction but also a union between the supernatural and the natural, he holds that Christianity manifested itself historically, in the first place not as a natural but as a supernatural power. To that power belonged the immediacy of inspiration and the gifts of supernatural healing, speaking in tongues, and prophecy. The distinction between natural and supernatural was, however, not meant to last always,

> but to be overcome by the progressive development of Christianity. To bring about the harmonious union of the supernatural and the natural was its ultimate aim; as to remove the discordance which has its grounds in sin, was to be the end of the redemption in its further unfolded effects. The new, divine power, which in its outward manifestations had just shown itself as an immediate one, was to enter into the circle of human instrumentality, and gradually appropriate to itself those natural organs and means which were not as yet given to it on its first appearance.[101]

Neander does not overlook the sinful element in human nature, but he argues that Christianity restores in human nature that original order which had been interrupted by

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[99] Neander, 1: 1-2.

[100] Ibid., 336.

[101] Ibid., 510. Baur criticizes Neander for viewing Christianity and human nature as two different principles which, indeed, interact but are not brought together into a unity. Baur also misses a principle of progressive development in Neander's view of the history of the church. "The Christian church indeed is always taking a new form, but the change of scene is only in external circumstances. Since human nature always remains the same, its relationship to Christianity is also always the same: humanity is the dough always more or less leavened by the yeast of Christianity." Baur, 214.

sin.[102] He views Christianity "as a restoration of the truly human, as an ennobling of the human by the divine."[103] According to him, "by grace nature is not destroyed, but potentiated and ennobled."[104] Transformed human nature becomes the means through which the divine power establishes the kingdom of God. And the more New Testament times fade farther into the past, the more the once pronounced distinction between nature and supernature also fades. As that distinction evaporates, Christianity, conceived as a divine power working in and through human nature, increasingly becomes a vague notion that escapes precise and objective definition. Lacking a specific content, the Christian integrity of the church loses focus and is instead left open to be defined subjectively by the Christian consciousness.

Doctrine and Heresy

Although Neander can survey history and find many times when Christianity was thought to be defined and characterized by what he finally rejects, Neander himself argues that Christianity consists neither in speculative knowledge about God nor in a ready-made

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[102] Kantzenbach asserts that Neander designates the corruption of human nature the material principle of the Reformation and of the Evangelical churches but that this corruption does not exclude for Neander the relation to God existing in the human nature, rather it presupposes that relation. Neander's doctrine of justification, continues Kantzenbach, is also to be understood from this anthropological basis. He views Christianity as a power that heals the corruption lying in human nature. Christianity provides a knowledge that surpasses human nature. Kantzenbach, 30.

[103] Neander, 4: 522. It is interesting that instead of following the common line that one's anthropology will shape one's soteriology, Neander argues that the doctrine of redemption determines the doctrine of anthropology in two ways. First, redemption must be met by "the consciousness of the need of it,—the consciousness of moral insufficiency," and, second, it must be met "by the consciousness of a germ in human nature which is allied to God, and which longs after deliverance; by the consciousness of a moral freedom, as the necessary condition, both to the acknowledgment of sin and guilt, without which no redemption can be talked of, and to the appropriation of the offered redemption itself." Ibid., 2: 616-17.

[104] Ibid. Meinhold commends Neander's view that Christianity means man's renovation through his rebirth. Neander judged the whole course of history according to that idea, according to Meinhold. Neander holds, says Meinhold, that according to the divine plan, Christianity had to come into the world when the world had reached its lowest point. It demonstrated itself through its coming as a means of transformation and salvation in history of the human nature and through this it also became a factor of formation for the entire humanity. It fulfilled the religious longing that moved humanity at the time of the beginning of Christianity and which none of the other religions was able to satisfy. Meinhold, 2: 153.

doctrinal system. Instead of risking skepticism and or assert dogmatism, Neander finds the essence of Christianity in the divine principle of life. This principle, he says, always retains its freshness and vigor, "while dogmatic systems dependent on the changing forms of culture among men become superannuated."[105] Christianity, according to Neander, consists in an announcement of facts regarding a communication of God to mankind, "by which man was placed in an entirely new relation to his Creator . . . The fact of the redemption of sinful man through Christ, constitutes the central point of Christianity."[106] The reception of this message led to modifying or reshaping religious consciousness and from this then resulted "the gradual regeneration in the habits of thinking, so far as they were connected, directly or indirectly, with religion."[107]

Christian doctrines are, for Neander, the result of cooperation between divine revelation and the activity of transformed and enlightened human reason:

> The divine revelation was so delivered and so calculated, that its substantial contents might be elaborated and evolved, through the divinely enlightened reason of man, actuated by the new divine life, in the same proportion as he became more fully penetrated by it, and with the free activity befitting its own proper essence.[108]

Neander views the doctrines formulated by different individuals not as mutually exclusive but as complementing each other in the course of history, so no single formulation can really stand for all time. Doctrines are different forms of apprehending Christianity. Nevertheless, Neander also has room for the idea of a loss of doctrinal integrity in the process, although not an irreversible loss.

> But when, in the after course of development, the power of Christ's spirit, which thus subordinated the human element to itself, no longer predominated, but the human

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[105] Neander, 3: III.

[106] Ibid., 1: 557.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 1: 336.

> individuality asserted its own importance, then partial systems arose, running counter to each other, which, in one way and another, did great injury to the cause of divine truth; and it only remained that the progressive movement and purification of the church should cause that unity to be once more clearly apprehended and restored out of these conflicting elements.[109]

Neander's view of doctrines developing in the course of the history of the church suggests the idea of several tributaries uniting to form a large river which, as it flows down toward the sea, receives now and then muddy waters from certain brooks and creeks but in the process of running over sand and stones eventually clears up again. One has to expect a certain amount of cloudy water (or loose ends and ambiguities in doctrinal expression) along the way.

His position on doctrinal development also is expressed at the end of the first volume of his history where Neander mentions the beginning of opposition between the Alexandrian and the Antiochean schools of theology. Such opposition is necessary "in order that Christianity might not be maimed and crippled by partial human views," and is coherent with Christianity's mission to overcome and reconcile all human antagonisms.[110] He views the first three centuries as paradigmatic for the subsequent history of Christianity:

> And as this process of development and purification is transmitted from one generation to another, so the conclusion of this first stadium contains in it the foretoken and presage of all the succeeding periods, which, by struggles and victories ever renewed, are to prepare the way for the last great struggle and the final victory which is to make an end of all strife.[111]

Neander has a peculiar view of heresy. He regards heresy as the mixing of "the religious tendencies" from paganism and Judaism with Christianity in such a way that the heretics appropriated to themselves "only a part of the whole," and thus lamed "the

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[109] Ibid., 1: 337.

[110] Ibid., 1: 723.

[111] Ibid.

foundation of the Christian faith itself."[112] But in the course of history, says Neander, the term heresy often came to be applied in a different manner,

> being employed by some one dominant sect—that refused to recognize the manifold phases necessarily presenting themselves in the healthy development of Christian truth, and would substitute in place of the unity, exhibiting itself in these manifold forms, a uniformity that suppressed the healthy process of development—to brand as a morbid appearance every deviation from a mode of apprehending Christianity which claimed to be the only valid one.[113]

Neander does not see heresies, as he defines them, as something completely bad, but rather as opposition that led ultimately and positively to a process of development in which Christian consciousness was "more clearly unfolded" and "came forth triumphant from these conflicts."[114] Neander thus sees confirmed the words of Pascal "that all oppositions find themselves resolved and reconciled in Christ."[115] Neander was inclined to look to heresies, as for instance Gnosticism,

> in such a way as to leave room for admitting, that along with the error there was also a fundamental truth—that there was at bottom a true spiritual need, which was only seeking its proper satisfaction, and must find it in Christianity.[116]

But Neander also admits that in the process of seizing and appropriating elements of truth into Gnosticism, "some of its errors might also be unintentionally included."[117]

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[112] Ibid., 1: 338.

[113] Ibid. Neander's affirmations here seem to explain why he cannot accept the Confessions as binding doctrinal documents. Since for him all doctrines are human-made, one is not in itself more true than the other, it may only be more or less complete.

[114] Ibid., 1: 339.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid., 1: 507.

[117] Ibid.

Neander is not only capable of casting a positive light on heresy, but he also sees elements of truth, even "an element of prophecy," in paganism itself.[118] He thinks in terms of religious development or progress, starting in paganism and finding its full expression in Christianity.

> Christianity, in truth, is the end to which all development of the religious consciousness must tend, and of which, therefore, it cannot do otherwise than offer a prophetic testimony.[119]

Neander makes a clear distinction between the lesser natural religion of paganism and the higher and ultimately superior revealed religion of Judaism and Christianity.

View on specific Doctrines

Neander sets forth his view of Holy Scripture at several places in his history.[120] Referring to the edict of Emperor Diocletian in A. D. 303 decreeing that all manuscripts of the Bible should be burned, Neander emphasizes the fundamental importance of the Scriptures for preserving the integrity of the church and Christianity. He argues that if it had been possible to destroy every existing copy of the Scriptures,

> the *very source* would have been cut off, from which true Christianity and the life of the church was ever freshly springing with unconquerable vigor. . . . The transmission of Christianity was not, in itself, it is true, inseparably and necessarily connected with the letters of the scriptures. Written, not on tables of stone, but on the living tablets of the heart, the divine doctrine, once lodged in the human soul, could preserve and propagate itself through its own divine power. But exposed to those manifold sources of corruption in human nature, Christianity, without the well-spring of scripture from which it could ever be restored back to its purity, would, as all history teaches, have

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[118] Ibid., 1: 176.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Kantzenbach affirms that Neander's position regarding Scripture is dependent on Schleiermacher for whom the only significance of Holy Scripture is the fact that it is the first written expression of the redemption consciousness of the community. Kantzenbach, 36. Neander, however, seems to express a more positive view of Scripture in his history as will be seen below. Kantzenbach also points out that Neander does not restrict revelation to the revelation in the Scriptures but rather sees revelation as the divine influence upon human feeling which is for him the innermost part of the religious self-consciousness. Human reason, purified and illuminated by revelation, is the organ for the appropriation of the revelation. Ibid., 31.

> been soon overwhelmed, and have become no longer recognizable under the load of falsehoods and corruptions.[121]

In another place Neander argues for the authenticity of St. Paul's epistles. He asserts that the minor epistles of Paul form "the necessary point of termination in the development of the Pauline theology," and he disagrees with the modern critics who, "without any sufficient grounds," have called in doubt the genuineness of those epistles.[122] He comes close to affirm a doctrine of inspiration when he calls attention to the striking difference between the writings of the apostles and those of the Apostolic Fathers. He concludes this is "a phenomenon which should lead us to acknowledge the fact of a special agency of the Divine Spirit in the souls of the apostles."[123] In another volume Neander points to the difference between Scripture and the church tradition handed down in a corrupted form from the earlier to the medieval church.

> Nor should we fail to notice, that with this tradition there was handed down, in the sacred text itself, a source of divine knowledge not exposed, in like manner, to corruption, from which the church might learn how to distinguish primitive Christianity from all subsequent additions, and so carry forward the work of purifying the Christian consciousness to its entire completion.[124]

Neander becomes more explicitly critical in his remarks about the doctrine of the Trinity which he regards as the doctrine in which Theism, taken in connection with the doctrine of redemption, finds its ultimate completion. But he does not find the doctrine of the Trinity expressly taught in the New Testament and therefore does not consider it a fundamental doctrine.

> This doctrine does not belong to the fundamental articles of the Christian faith; as appears sufficiently evident from the fact, that it is expressly held forth in no one

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[121] Neander, 1: 149.

[122] Ibid., 1: 574.

[123] Ibid., 1: 656-57.

[124] Ibid., 3: 2.

> particular passage of the New Testament; for the only one in which this is done, the passage relating to the three that bear record, (1 John 5,) is undoubtedly spurious . . . We find in the New Testament no other fundamental article besides that of which the Apostle Paul says that other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, the annunciation of Jesus as the Messiah; and Christ himself designates as the foundation of his religion, the faith in the only true God, and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, (John 17:3.)[125]

Neander seems to reduce here the Christian faith to only that which is, at least in his view, centrally important. This would give him room to be very inclusive in terms of integration, that is, everyone who could agree to this most central article of faith would be considered an orthodox Christian. Neander, however, does finally reach a limit as he explicitly rejects the tenets of Deism and Pantheism. On the other hand, while he does not flatly reject the doctrine of Trinity, he says it has to be understood in light of the fundamental article of salvation. Seen from that perspective, Neander argues, the doctrine of Trinity reveals

> the threefold relation in which God stands to mankind, as primal ground, mediator and end—Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—in which threefold relation the whole Christian knowledge of God is completely announced.[126]

The work of the Trinity is there but the idea of the persons distinct yet unified in one essence does not seem to be as important. Of course that language is dogmatic, the sort of formulation that has value in one age but not necessarily throughout history. With his more limited idea of what is essential to the "Trinity," Neander opens up many more possibilities on the integrity side of his equation for expressing the essence while also creating more possibilities for integration.

Regarding the doctrine of Christ, Neander states that the original element preceding all speculation, "is the image which Christ himself left on the consciousness of those who

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[125] Ibid., 1: 572.

[126] Ibid.

received the immediate impression of his life, and were appointed to be witnesses of it."[127] Neander thinks that among the evangelists, John best developed the "intuitive view" of the divinity of the person of Christ. Moreover, "[t]he doctrine concerning Christ as taught by the Apostle Paul, proves that the view of Christ's person as it is presented through all the writings of John, was not one of later origin."[128] Neander points out that the integrity of the church both in regard to faith and life depends on the church's relation to Christ "as the sole ground for salvation."[129] When works of love were converted into a ground of merit before God, a loss of integrity set in.

Neander distinguishes between the visible and the invisible church. The true church is the invisible; the visible church is subject to losses of integrity.

> But this church, though represented in a visible form, is yet in its essence invisible; and to this its visible appearance various elements become attached, partaking in no respect of that inner essence.[130]

Yet while the visible can lose integrity, it is worth noting that the visible church is not the real essence for Neander, so a loss of integrity there, which is loss of something non-essential, is not so debilitating or terminal as one might assume at first glance. But it is easy to see how confusion can arise. Neander argues it is difficult to distinguish and separate foreign elements from the true essence of the church. Nevertheless, although difficult, the early communities sought to separate themselves from what were for them clearly foreign elements stemming from paganism and those communities, therefore,

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[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid., 1: 574.

[129] Ibid., 1: 257.

[130] Ibid., 1: 217. According to Ullmann, Neander views the church as God's appointed organ for conveying the powers of redemption and sanctification to the human race. Neander, continues Ullmann, is "persuaded that Christianity must at all times be represented under a regular and orderly church organization." Ullmann, XXI (contained in Neander 1). Nevertheless, argues Ullmann, Neander distinguishes "between Christianity itself, and its temporal, churchly, humanly individual features" where the limited and sinful manifest itself. Ibid.

resorted to the use of church discipline.[131] Unfortunately the identification of foreign elements became more problematic as time passed and the church moved farther from its original cultural context. Yet efforts to maintain its identity even by discipline, continued.

Keeping with his distinction between invisible and visible church, Neander views the sacraments as outward signs of spiritual realities.

> The *visible church* required *visible* signs, for the spiritual facts on which its inward essence rests. Hence Christ, who meant to found a visible church, instituted *two outward signs*, as symbols of the invisible fellowship between him, the *Head* of the spiritual body, and its members, the believers, and of the union of these members not only *with himself*, but *with one another*—visible means of representing the invisible heavenly benefits to be communicated by him to the members of this body; and with the believing use of these signs, furnished to the *outward* man of *sense* in behalf of the *inward spiritual* man, was to be connected the enjoyment of that fellowship and of those heavenly benefits.[132]

Neander's position regarding the sacraments as described above stands much closer to the symbolical view of the Reformed church than to the doctrine of the Real Presence of the Lutheran church. Consequently, it can not be expected that his views on the preservation or loss of integrity in the area of the sacraments should conform to the confessional Lutheran position. Neander also offers a definition of each of the two sacraments. He describes baptism as

> the sign of the first entrance into fellowship with the Redeemer and with the church, the first appropriation of the benefits which he bestowed on mankind—the forgiveness of sins and the inward union of life thence resulting—the participation in a sanctifying, divine spirit of life.[133]

Although the statement above can be read as implying that baptism is an objective means through which forgiveness of sins is granted, that does not seem to be conviction. His view of baptism as a mere outward sign becomes more obvious when he discusses

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[131] Neander, 1: 218.

[132] Ibid., 1: 304.

[133] Ibid.

infant baptism. He believes that at first only adults were baptized and that infant baptism was not an apostolic institution.[134]

> But when, now, on the one hand, the doctrine of the corruption and guilt, cleaving to human nature in consequence of the first transgression, was reduced to a more precise and systematic form, and on the other, from the want of distinguishing between what is outward and what is inward in baptism, (the baptism by water and the baptism by the Spirit,) the error became more firmly established that without external baptism no one could be delivered from that inherent guilt, could be saved from the everlasting punishment that threatened him, or raised to eternal life; and when the notion of a magical influence, a charm connected with the sacraments continually gained ground, the theory was finally evolved of the *unconditional necessity of infant baptism.*[135]

Neander describes the Lord's Supper as

> the sign of a constantly progressive perseverance in this fellowship [begun in baptism] and enjoyment of these benefits; both [baptism and the Lord's Supper, represent] the essentials of the whole Christian life within, in its first rise and in its progressive development.[136]

As could be expected from his view of baptism, Neander holds a symbolical view of the Lord's Supper—a view that can be reconciled with the Reformed position but which disagrees with the Confessional Lutheran definition.

> Hence Christ said, when he distributed wine and bread among his disciples, that this bread and this wine *were to be to them*—and consequently to all the faithful of all times—his body and his blood—the body which he offered for the forgiveness of their sins, for their salvation, for the establishment of the new theocratic relation; and as these outward symbols represented to them his body and his blood, so would he himself be hereafter spiritually present with them, just as truly as he was now visibly among them; and as they now sensibly partook of these corporeal means of sustenance, which represented to them his body and his blood, so should they receive him, the Saviour, present in divine power, wholly within them for the nourishment of their souls; they should spiritually eat his flesh and drink his blood.[137]

Clearly Neander seems removed from a sixteenth-century understanding of integrity, although he himself would no doubt insist on being in that tradition.

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[134] Ibid., 1; 311.

[135] Ibid., 1: 313.

[136] Ibid., 1: 304.

[137] Ibid., 1: 324.

Another doctrine to which Neander refers, although only briefly, is the resurrection. He upholds it and emphasizes its importance.

> The *doctrine of resurrection*, inasmuch as it relates to the persistence and exaltation of the entire being of the individual, is most intimately connected with the peculiar essence of Christianity, . . .[138]

The doctrine of resurrection is a kind of drag anchor on Neander's view of historical development. It seems he believes in the bodily resurrection and a future, transcendent kingdom of God and does not think only in terms of a development that results in a perfect kingdom of God on earth. On this point he seems not to have strayed fro the doctrinal continuity of the church.

Christianity and Culture

According to Neander Christianity stands above nature and reason, but it penetrates them with its power and transforms and purifies them.[139] Neander defends the idea of God's activity in the whole world, preparing it for the advent and continued expansion of Christianity. Especially the Jews, Greeks and Romans were involved in this preparation.

> The three great historical nations had to contribute, each in its own peculiar way, to prepare the soil for the planting of Christianity—the Jews on the side of the religious element; the Greeks on the side of science and art; the Romans, as masters of the world, on the side of the political element. When the fullness of the time was arrived, and Christ appeared—when the goal of history had thus been reached—then it was, that through him, and by the power of the spirit that proceeded from him—the might of Christianity—all the threads, hitherto separated, of human development, were to be brought together and interwoven in one web.[140]

Analyzing the influence of the Greek preparation for Christianity, Neander observes that Platonism was for some a point of transition to Christianity. But he also affirms that the integration of these individuals in the church could pose a negative effect on the larger

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[138] Ibid., 1: 654.

[139] Ibid., 1: 2-3.

[140] Ibid., 1: 4.

integrity because of their previous beliefs, inasmuch as they might carry over with them to Christianity many foreign elements which were a part of their previous opinions.[141]

Neander argues that pagan religion was so clearly interwoven with the entire social and civil life that when Christianity began to spread and attack the old religion, it necessarily also came into conflict not just with the governmental state but with the whole society. The early Christians prized so much the integrity of the church that they were not willing to compromise with paganism, sacrificing the essence of the faith simply for the sake of integration. Neander believes a heavier emphasis on integrity rather than on integration was appropriate for that particular period.

> This conflict might, in many cases at least, have been avoided, if the early Church, like that of later times, had been inclined to accommodate itself to the world, more than the holiness of Christianity allowed, and to secularize itself in order to gain the world as a mass. But with the primitive Christians this was not the case; they were much more inclined to a stern repulsion of everything that pertained to paganism, even of that which had but a seeming connection with it, than to any sort of lax accommodation; and assuredly it was at that period far more wholesome, and better adapted to preserve the purity of Christian doctrine and of the Christian life, to go to an extreme in the first of these ways than in the last.[142]

Neander points out that later in the early church there arose two opposing views of the relationship between Christianity and culture. Montanism most decidedly repelled the existing elements of culture, while the Alexandrian school attempted to reconcile the existing culture with Christianity.[143] Neander shows that Christianity has to have an impact also on culture in order to be effective when he writes about the early spread of Christianity to barbaric tribes in Germany. He admits that the power of Christianity is able to reach and affect people in any era in civilization but adds that

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[141] Ibid., 1: 34-35.

[142] Ibid., 1: 70. It is significant that Neander recognized the later loss of integrity caused by accommodation to culture for the sake of wider acceptance. But then rather than hold up the early church as the desirable paradigm, Neander is willing to do some of that same adapting himself, as will be seen below.

[143] Ibid., 1: 527.

> it is also certain, that Christianity would nowhere long maintain itself with purity, in its distinguishing essence, unless it entered deep into the whole intellectual development of the people, and unless, along with the divine life proceeding from it, it gave an impulse, at the same time, to all human culture.[144]

So integration is essential for survival and expansion, but at what cost?

Loss of Integrity

Neander does not idealize the early church. Rather, starting from his notion that in Christianity the divine element comes into contact with impure human elements, he concludes that the early church actually suffered more corruption than the church of later times.

> In the ferment which Christianity produced on its first appearance, many impure elements necessarily became mixed with it, which were destined to be expelled during the purifying process of its development.[145]

Neander regards the corruption of the church and the constant struggle against it as something unavoidable. A perfectly pure and holy church on earth is an impossibility due to the constant attacks it suffers from the power of sin.

> The church itself which truly answers to its conception, the church of the regenerate and sanctified, continues ever to be inwardly affected by the reactions of this principle of sin never wholly overcome; and hence in continual need of cleansing.[146]

Looking at things from another angle, Neander sees the early church being no better or having no advantage over the church in subsequent periods. At least the divine power which operates in the church is always the same and cannot be weakened by the passing of times.[147]

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[144] Ibid., 1: 85.

[145] Ibid., 1: 157. This passage provides a description of Neander's notion of loss of integrity. He understands it as a temporary mixture of foreign, impure elements with Christianity.

[146] Ibid., 1: 217.

[147] Ibid., 1: 249.

Neander points to several specific instances of the loss of integrity in the early church. Even in the early church there were persons who became Christians for wrong reasons and did not have a true Christian faith nor live a Christian life.[148] "Far be it from us, then, to be looking for any such appearance of the church in which it was found without spot or blemish—a condition of it never to be realized till the final consummation."[149]

Neander also sees a loss of the church's integrity when, after the end of the apostolic age, the original idea of the universal Christian priesthood was gradually replaced by a particular priesthood.[150] A similar loss of integrity is evident when the equality or parity of all congregations was replaced by the subordination of some of the communities to others. Such system was not wrong in itself, according to Neander.

> Yet, since this relation was not sufficiently interpenetrated with the free and free-making spirit of the gospel it operated, by its undue preponderance, to check and interrupt the development of Christian doctrine and of church life.[151]

Another example of loss of integrity appeared in the way the church remembered its martyrs. At first the communities celebrated the memory of those who had died as witnesses for the Lord, but at least as early as the time of Cyprian an excessive veneration for the martyrs was beginning to appear.[152] More integrity was sacrificed as the church underwent a shift in its own self-image as the idea of the church as an *unio mystica* with inward or abscondite dimensions gradually came to be conceived instead as wholly

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[148] Ibid., 1: 252-54.

[149] Ibid., 1: 254.

[150] Ibid., 1: 179-201.

[151] Ibid., 1: 202.

[152] Ibid., 1: 334-35.

outward. Such notion required an outward unity, and this idea "was the germ from where sprang the papal monarchy of the middle age."[153]

From the End of the Diocletian Persecution to Gregory the Great

Neander insists on the notion that Christianity is a power that transforms first the lives of individuals and then the whole outside world. This happens not only as the church starts but through subsequent ages.

> Christianity, after having, in the first place, practically demonstrated its power to transform man's nature, in the lives of individual men who had submitted to it from free conviction, proceeded next, as we have said, to evolve a new principle for the remodeling of the objective world; and we saw how this principle went on to develop itself triumphantly through a conflict of three hundred years with the principle of the ancient world, which was rooted in the ancient religion.[154]

Sinful human nature, however, continued to oppose the divine power active in Christianity, a problem Neander highlights as he comments on different ways in which a loss of the church's integrity became evident in this later period of the early church. First he mentions the externalization of the concept of the church in connection with the notion of theocracy that had as its central point "the idea of a visible, outward priesthood, serving as

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[153] Ibid., 1: 211. Nigg notices that Neander is able to see a dark side in the history of the Christian church and that even in the early church he already sees deviations from the New Testament paradigm. Nigg comments that Neander views such deviations as a mingling of Christianity with paganism and refers to them, for example, as a "darkening of the consciousness," an "obscuring of the original Christian idea," or a "degeneration." The main concept Neander uses to depict the change of Christianity in the course of time is "externality." Christianity in such cases transfers its center of gravity from the internal to the external. But, says Nigg, although Neander detects stains and wrinkles in the church, he does not speak of a fall or decay of the church. Since such an idea would not fit his purpose of edification. Instead he refers only briefly to negative events and aspects of the church history and tries to explain them away. Nigg, 169. Meinhold observes that the first three centuries of the history of Christianity are of special importance for Neander, and the epochs that follow are judged according to them. At the same time, Neander tried not to view the subsequent development of Christianity as if it were simply being played out under the model of the fall, that is, as if the historic development was only deviation from the original and ideal form of Christianity. Under that model, the original form was perfect, and whatever came after might have echoes of the original but was itself a degenration or corruption. Meinhold, 2: 153.

[154] Neander, 2: 1.

the medium of connection between Christ and the church."[155] The transition from the idea of an inward church of the spirit to an external church was accompanied, according to Neander, by the shift from the idea of dominion established and held by the power of the gospel to an outward, political dominion.[156] The idea of the special priesthood as a separate sacerdotal caste within the church as distinguished from the laity led to the false notion of an antithesis between spiritual and secular. As a result the expectations for the Christian life of the laity were lowered and the clergy were viewed as "super-earthly beings, [who] must withdraw themselves from all contact with the things of sense."[157] One of the consequences of this line of reasoning was the idea that the clergy had to be celibate since they had to keep themselves free from all earthly ties. But if that setting apart were thought to bring a positive result with higher expectations made of priests, then the idea that priestly ordination conferred "magical powers," as Neander put it, undid that good as it led many to regard the theological training for the office superfluous.[158] When temporal advantages came to be connected with the church offices, many who had neither an inward call nor the qualifications were attracted to such offices merely for the sake of material gain. This resulted in the introduction into the church of every sort of corruption. But even well intentioned persons who were admitted to spiritual offices without any

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[155] Ibid., 2: 179.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid. This sacred-secular distinction held fast until the Reformation when Luther tore down the wall and restored the dignity and value to secular vocations with good works done by those estates, not just by the clerics. See Luther's famous appeal "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 44 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 115-217.

[158] Neander 2: 182.

preparatory training were unable to guide the church in the truth and therefore by default contributed to the confirmation and spread errors.[159]

Neander repeats his opinion that the origin of the papacy stems from the confusion of ideas about the visible and the invisible church and from the notion of a need for external unity of the church. These ideas, he argues, led to the conclusion that there must be "an uninterrupted outward representation of this unity, necessarily existing at all times."[160] This idea was then transferred to the *cathedra Petri* in Rome. By the fifth century, the Roman bishops thought of themselves as being the successors and representatives of Peter, having universal dominion over the church.[161]

One of the results of the end of the early church persecutions and the embracing of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine was a great increase in the numbers of nominal Christians who lived half in paganism and half "in an outward show of Christianity."[162] Especially after the Edict of Milan in A. D. 313 it became increasingly fashionable to follow the imperial lead into the church. But many then lived in the delusion that they could live in sin and yet obtain salvation. They also corrupted many Christian ideas and believed that Christianity consisted in assent to a formal intellectual orthodoxy or in a series of outward ceremonies.[163]

Neander also returns to his argument that the "habit of confounding the external sign with the inward grace . . . caused an undue value to be attached to infant baptism" in

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[159] Ibid., 2: 184-85.

[160] Ibid., 2: 199.

[161] Ibid., 2: 202.

[162] Ibid., 2: 258.

[163] Ibid., 2: 258-59.

the Christian church.[164] Even so he criticizes the practice, current especially in the East after the middle of the third century, of delaying baptism as long as possible. Neander points out that such custom sprang from a false notion that the grace of baptism, once lost by sin, could never be recovered. He counters that through baptism, children properly "would have been immediately introduced into a certain connection with the church" and therefore would not have been exposed only to pagan superstition in their infancy.[165]

Neander thinks the doctrinal controversies that arose after Constantine resulted from the absolutizing of partial views of the whole doctrine. What was wrong, in opinion, were not so much the different views proposed but rather the insistence of each party that its one-sided, myopic position was the only valid and orthodox one. This line of reasoning agrees with concept that in Christ all contradictions are solved, but it also reveals Neander's weak regard for doctrinal integrity.[166]

From Gregory the Great to Gregory VII (590-1073)

Neander asserts that the form of Christianity with which the Germanic tribes first became acquainted was not that of the pure gospel. Many foreign elements had by then become mixed up with the gospel. Yet the "one and only foundation" of Christianity still stood firm although hidden under many human additions,

> the foundation of faith in the redeeming love of God, revealed through, and in Christ, as the Redeemer of sinful man—[this foundation] was able to manifest its divine power to transform, to train, and to refine mankind; and with the implantation of this one principle in humanity was given also the element from which would proceed, of its own accord, the reaction against these foreign admixtures.[167]

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[164] Ibid., 2: 355.

[165] Ibid., 2: 357.

[166] Ibid., 2: 380-82.

[167] Ibid., 3: 2.

Neander sees a struggle being waged between the divine principle and the foreign elements added to the Christian tradition. That struggle extended itself through the entire Middle Ages until its culmination in a thoroughgoing process of purification in the church.[168] Integrity is under pressure here.

The pressure continues to grow as reports on the church's efforts to integrate are put forth and hearers are expected to accept them. Neander is suspicious about reports of miracles in this period. He states that in the propagation of Christianity by missionary monks among the English people, certain happenings appeared as miraculous to the people and even to the missionaries themselves, although Neander is skeptical about such things being facts as reported.[169]

Neander mentions the existence of corruptions in the church in the Carolingian era, but he seems to view these corruptions less seriously than the sort just noted—not so much a loss of integrity but rather as vestiges of paganism that had not yet been overcome by Christianity. Neander alludes to distortions such as consulting the Bible for oracles or appealing to the judgment of God supposedly revealed through the result of combat or through trial by fire and water. Neander sees other mistaken ideas about Christianity in the administration of justice, the seeking of justification in outward works, or the worship of saints and other quasi-magical practices. Yet Neander always seems eager to point out that the church of that time was not completely awash in these corruptions, but that voices

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[168] Ibid. Meinhold points out that Neander sees the medieval history as a grand process of purification that finally found its completion in the Reformation and that Neander finds himself unable to characterize any period in history as a period of total fall. Rather, Neander views as the final aim of his historiography to embrace everything Christian with true love, so that the ecclesiastical historiography begins under his hands to lose the polemical character and assumes ecumenical features. Meinhold, 2: 153-54.

[169] Neander, 3: 12.

driven by the Christian spirit were speaking out in reaction to such superstitions and delusions.[170]

Neander also reports about doctrinal corruption in this period when he refers to Gregory the Great's teaching that no one can have certainty of his salvation. This view, Neander observes, continued to be held in the western church in the following centuries. Such a view gave occasion

> to a tormenting species of asceticism, to dark and melancholy views of life, and to various kinds of holiness by works or superstitious observances, which were started into existence by the oppressive feeling of this uncertainty; but Gregory still directed the anxious soul to trust in the objective promise of divine grace in Christ.[171]

In Neander's eyes, the sects of this period represent a one-sided tendency and do not embrace "the Christian truth in its purity and completeness."[172] Nevertheless these sects were also expressions of the Christian consciousness within the church as it reacted against the combination of Christian and foreign elements. In the early church these sects had reacted against the union of Christianity with Judaism, and later in the early middle ages they stood against the doctrines and institutions growing out of that mixture, "and in so far, this opposition might serve to prepare the way for the purification of the church."[173]

The corruption of the papacy in the tenth and eleventh centuries,[174] the abuses stemming from the influence of secular power on the church,[175] the corruption of the

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[170] Ibid., 3: 129-40.

[171] Ibid., 3: 146.

[172] Ibid., 3: 244, see also 243.

[173] Ibid., 3: 244.

[174] Ibid., 3: 346-99.

[175] Ibid., 3: 400-06.

clergy,[176] the corruption of the monks due to the riches amassed by the monasteries[177]—all these abuses, argues Neander, called for reform. He describes the tenth century as "dark times," times "inauspicious to pure religion," "times of gross darkness," in which many in of the church lived in almost complete spiritual ignorance and mired in vice.[178] Yet Neander hastens to add that even in such an age, "individual instances were not wanting of a countervailing influence, proceeding from organs of a purer, Christian spirit."[179] For Neander there is never a complete fall of the church even in the darkest times. But in this case even he seems to abandon his optimism and become discouraged when he adds,

> Such solitary examples and organs of the genuinely Christian spirit . . . could not, however, oppose any effectual check to the superstition which had fastened itself upon the worship of saints and relics, and other corrupt elements in the doctrine of the church, and which was promoted rather than fought down by the multitude of incompetent ecclesiastics.[180]

From Gregory VII to Boniface VIII (1073-1294)

Neander sees both corruption and a corresponding reaction against it in this period as integrity comes under pressure. At the beginning of this age,

> [t]he corruption of the church, threatening its utter secularization, had now reached its highest pitch; and that very circumstance had called forth a reformatory reaction on the part of the church.[181]

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[176] Ibid., 3: 408-14.

[177] Ibid., 3: 414-24.

[178] Ibid., 3: 441.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid., 3: 445-46.

[181] Ibid., 4: 82.

In addition to a secularizing spirit, Neander also observes that amassing excessive riches helped lead the church astray from her true calling.[182] Describing the corruption in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Neander reiterates his view that the church's history is subject to a predetermined process of development as he writes about hope for a better future arising in the hearts of people who deplored the degeneration in their own day.

> Especially does the kingdom of God, in the course of its development from beginning to end, form a connected whole, and it strives towards its completion according to sure and certain laws. The germ of the unknown future is already contained in the past. . . . Out of the consciousness of the corruption of the church sprang the presentiment of a future regeneration, for which the way must be prepared by some violent process of purification. To longing hearts, a contemplation of the corruption of the secularized church served as a sort of foil, enabling them to picture forth, by the rule of contraries, the image of the better future.[183]

At the start of the twelfth century, Neander sees the beginning "of a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit" that caused repercussions for a long time.[184] He says that new energy came from several sources such as the measures taken by Gregory VII to reform the church, the powerful preaching of the crusades, the impact of distinguished preachers in general, and the founding of the Franciscans and Dominicans as two new orders of mendicant friars. New energy was found among more than the clerics and religious. Neander also detects many signs of genuine piety "even among the laity."[185]

Neander identifies the revival of preaching as one of the elements introducing "new excitement of the religious life in the beginning of the twelfth century."[186] But he adds that many people paid no attention to preaching and continued to busy themselves with external

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[182] Ibid., 4: 215.

[183] Ibid., 4: 216.

[184] Ibid., 4: 293.

[185] Ibid., 4: 293-94.

[186] Ibid., 4: 313.

ceremonies.[187] Another element of that religious revival was the translation of the Bible into the vernacular. These translations were eagerly received by the laity, but church authorities soon opposed the general circulation of these versions, and since the sects were also instrumental in distributing the Bible among the people, a synod at Toulouse in 1229 prohibited vernacular translations of the Bible and the reading of such versions by the laity.[188]

Although Neander views the dawn of the twelfth century as a time of spiritual awakening, he does not fail to point out that at the time many continued in superstition, skepticism, a dead faith, fanatical veneration of the saints and relics, and more. False customs and doctrines arose or were more fully developed such as the doctrine of transubstantiation, the festival of *Corpus Christi*, the distribution of the Lord's Supper under one species, and the abuses connected with the doctrine of penance.[189] Neander explains such deviations from the church's true doctrine and practice by noting that the work done by divine power always meets reactions "which have their ground in the essence of the natural man, and are directed against the principle of faith and the recognition of the supernatural generally."[190]

Neander reveals a concern for correct doctrine as well as a sense for the focus of his own tradition of Lutheran theology when he singles out the doctrine of justification and criticizes the erroneous views that prevailed in the Middle Ages, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Justification was then understood as "the internal work of making just—sanctification through divine grace, which should manifest itself by good works

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[187] Ibid., 4: 313-20.

[188] Ibid., 4: 320-24.

[189] Ibid., 4: 324-54.

[190] Ibid., 4: 324.

proceeding from faith, and working by love (the *fides formata*)."[191] This notion made people rely for their salvation "on something unsettled, subjective, and incapable of being defined by an infallible mark," and the consequence was that people often were led either to doubt their salvation or to spiritual pride and works righteousness.[192] In another place Neander argues that this subjective view of justification stemmed from Augustine and contributed "to keep the religious consciousness in a state of dependence on the tutelage and mediation of the church and the whole churchly theocratic system" during the Middle Ages. In other words, the people saw the priesthood and the church as instrumental in attaining grace, and as a result, people became more and more dependent on them.[193]

The subjective view of justification, breeding uncertainty about salvation, filled people with distress and anxiety as they thought they lacked certain marks of the state of grace.

> The striving after certainty with regard to the salvation of their own souls, to be obtained by certain excitements of feeling, supernatural revelations, visions, and other evidences of this sort, gave birth to fanatical tendencies.[194]

From Boniface VIII to the Beginning of the Reformation

Neander restates his view of historical development as a necessary process in his opening remarks on the sixth period as he divides history. He views the era leading into the Reformation as a time of transition and inevitable change. The old period "showing signs of decay and an ever increasing tendency to corruption is passing over to the new one

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[191] Ibid., 4: 304.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Ibid., 4: 509, 514.

[194] Ibid., 4: 514.

which was destined to succeed it."[195] Neander traces the growing corruption until it reached its zenith, and he follows the corresponding reaction of the Christian spirit. For Neander, both are something inevitable. In such transition periods he sees "the first unfolding of those germs in which the future lies hidden."[196] The history of the papacy during that period illustrates Neander's point.

> The power of the papacy, having its seat in the affections of men, and resting on their most profound convictions, could not be overthrown by any force coming from without. Every struggle, as we have seen, in which it was aimed to effect this overthrow, resulted eventually in a failure, so long as this power in the mind of the nations was a necessary one in the historical progress of the church. But this power must prepare the way for its own destruction by its increasing worldliness, and desecration to subserve selfish ends; and thus were called forth, in ever increasing force, the reactions of the Christian spirit struggling for freedom, and attempts at reform constantly growing more violent.[197]

As Neander depicts the papal schism following its return from Avignon, the papacy both experienced and caused corruption worse than what existed during its so-called "Babylonian Captivity" in that preceding period. In fact, such an increase in corruption was necessary in view, all part of unfolding historical development.

> But it seems to have been necessary that the corruption of the church should reach its highest point, in order to make every one sensible of it, and to awaken a more general attention to the causes of so great an evil.[198]

But that increase of corruption was risky business, threatening the church's integrity. The increase also prompted others to rise in search and defense of that same integrity.

In reaction to such corruption of the church in the last centuries of the Middle Ages there emerged

> a party which attacked the reigning system at its very foundation, demanding a regeneration of the church on the basis of the original Christian principles, foretokening

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[195] Ibid., 5: 1.

[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Ibid., 5: 47.

> the renovated and Christian spirit, which afterwards broke triumphantly forth in the German Reformation.[199]

A clear reaction against the prevailing corruption, not only in practice but also in doctrine, was evident in John Wyclif. Neander is generous in his assessment when he writes, "The true protestant principle comes forth in Wiclif [*sic*] when he ascribes the whole work of salvation to Christ alone. He expresses it in opposition to the worship of saints."[200]

Wyclif's voice was given an enthusiastic but limited hearing, leaving a great deal to reform on a much wider field. At the beginning of the fifteenth century the church was "corrupted and stained with sin in all its parts, and deeply sunk in worldliness."[201] In those early decades John Hus raised his protest in a context in which religion had been "reduced entirely to a round of outward ceremonies," the people lived in a "superstition which gave countenance and support to immorality,"[202] and "the degenerate Bohemian clergy and monks" lived worldly lives.[203] His was a conservative reforming voice, trying to recapture old elements of integrity, a voice that also was silenced by those whose positions were threatened. Hus' execution did not do anything to give hope of recovering the church's integrity.

Some Conclusions on View of Integrity

In Neander's case it is impossible to speak about a loss of the integrity of the church without qualifying the term integrity. He certainly reports many cases of abuses,

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[199] Ibid., 5: 48.

[200] Ibid., 5: 168.

[201] Ibid., 5: 77.

[202] Ibid., 5: 237.

[203] Ibid., 5: 235.

deviations, or contradictions in every period he identifies in church history, but he views them in final analysis as temporary mixtures of foreign elements with the Christian elements. The aberrations were not a permanent loss of integrity and could be set right. Human nature may rise up and derail the church's efforts at holding and displaying its integrity, but that temporary opposition to what God wants for his church will, Neander trusts, be overcome by divine power in due time over the course of history. In optimistic view, all contradictions are solved in Christ. Momentary opposition to the truth only serves to bring out more clearly the true essence of the church as it fights against perversion of its integrity.

Integrity thus becomes for Neander not so much content that can be clearly defined or described but, rather, a principle. Loss of integrity is consequently not so much apostasy from biblical doctrine as opposition prompted by sinful nature. It is a reaction against divine power or principle that develops the church in history much like leaven permeates and works in a subtle yet ultimately dramatic way to change the loaf. Perhaps for this reason Neander focuses more often on moral decay in the church than on doctrinal corruption. The decay Neander condemns outright, while the corruption he often explains as a one-sided position that is not really wrong but rather is deficient, a reaction against some error being tolerated in the church.

At least two important reasons may account for inability to see the significance of integrity and the importance of maintaining it in the church. First, he followed Schleiermacher in a thoroughly subjective theology of inner feelings, and second, he held a highly deficient concept of the church. The church of day had already lost true biblical and confessional integrity and did not—could not!—offer Neander any guidance in his quest for faith, for spiritual identity and stability. Instead personal search for the truth started with his own study of Platonism while the institutional church played no part in the process that led him to faith. In short, it was virtually impossible for Neander to appreciate the

need for integrity in the church's message when the church he knew first hand really had none to model.

Neander has come a long way from the view of history held by Luther and early Lutheran historians. He replaces Luther's solid, stable theocentric view with the notion of a process of historical development. Yet that process cannot become a regular, reliable interpretational key as the Hegelians argued. Neander professes to be Christocentric but his view of Christ is subjective, that is, not biblically informed. Neander reverses Luther's Copernican revolution with his view that human faith or consciousness defines Christ and every doctrine and practice in the church.

Integrity and Integration: Integration

The First Three Centuries

Neander's view on the integration of the church conforms to his whole theological outlook that leads him to search for truth throughout history, even in movements opposed to Christianity from pre-Enlightenment times that presuppose the union of natural and supernatural elements in Christianity. He argues there are

> two tendencies which necessarily belong together in the Christian process of transforming the world—but of which either one or the other is ever wont to predominate—the world-resisting and the world-appropriating tendency of the Christian mind. The undue predominance of either one of these is, in truth, attended with its own peculiar dangers. In connection with this stands another antithesis. Christianity is based upon a supernatural revelation; but this revelation would be appropriated and understood by the organ of a reason which submits to it; since it is not destined to remain a barely outward thing to the human spirit. The supernatural element must be owned in its organic connection with the natural, which in this finds its full measure and complement. The fact of redemption has for its very aim, indeed, to do away the schism between the supernatural and the natural—the fact of God's becoming man is in order to the humanization of the divine, and the deification of the human. Hence there will ever be springing up two tendencies of the theological spirit, corresponding, as must be evident, to the two just now described, and of which the one will feel itself impelled to understand and represent the supernatural element of Christianity in its opposition to, the other, the same element in its connection with, the natural: the one will seek to apprehend the supernatural and supra-rational element as *such*; the other will strive to apprehend the same in its harmony with reason and nature—to present the supernatural and supra-rational to consciousness, as that which is still conformed to nature and to reason. Thus there comes to be formed a

> predominance of the *supernaturalist* or of the *rationalist* element, both of which should meet together in order to a sound and healthy development of Christian doctrine; while from the predominance of the one or the other of these elements, opposite dangers arise.[204]

In view integration thus consists in the union of supernatural and natural, of divine and human elements. Although he insists that reason submits to revelation, it is not clear where the limits of action of both are to be set. He seems inclined to surrender much to the natural and rational, especially since he believes that redemption puts an end to the separation between supernatural and natural and causes the deification of the human. Given this higher importance placed on the natural, so easily seen and comprehended by people, it is only reasonable to emphasize that half of this natural-supernatural pair in making an appeal to the world, that is, in attempting to integrate.

Neander claims that in its early years the integration of the church required Christian preachers to perform miracles (or at least to claim them) because that age unquestioningly believed in magic powers. It is interesting that on one hand Neander admits it is impossible to "draw a sharp line of demarcation between what is supernatural and what is natural in the effects proceeding from the power of Christianity," a position that does not obligate him as a post-Enlightenment man to deny absolutely that miracles could have happened in ancient days or to allow positively that they still could occur in his own. On the other hand, even though he may have his doubts, he is willing to let the stories stand, especially in light of the early, miraculous expansion of Christianity. So he indicates that miracles were performed, for the sake of the spread of the Christian faith, until after the middle of the third century.[205] Miracles, incredible though they may seem from day, at least are one way of explaining Christianity's meteoric rise.

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[204] Ibid., 1: 507-8.

[205] Ibid., 1: 72. Neander describes miracles in an ambiguous way in a context where he discusses the part alleged miracles had in the conversion of individuals in the early church. He does not deny their reality openly but tries to explain away the supernatural element by pointing to the effects certain acts or

But despite the dramatic externals, Neander regards the divine power of the gospel, acting inside individuals and showing its attractive force in the outward appearance and actions of the Christians, as the main cause of the conversion of the heathen. The supernatural may be spectacular but the natural—Christian conduct—served as a more powerful witness over the long run. The lives of Christians were so different from those of the pagans that they could not fail to call attention to the Christian faith. Their heroic deaths as martyrs impressed many minds, leading the curious to inquire why Christians were willing to sacrifice everything.[206] Integration happens through ordinary believing men and women living in a hostile society, living out their witness and so drawing others. Given public pressure, becoming Christian had to be considered seriously.

From Constantine to the Middle Ages

Neander argues that after the time of Constantine, problems with integration grew as many embraced Christianity "only by outward considerations," often privately retaining old paganism under an outward profession of Christianity. Others more openly held to a religion that mixed paganism and Christianity.[207] From the side of the church working toward integration, some catechists and bishops attempted to lead those who had come to them to repentance and an honest understanding of the faith. But other bishops only wished "to make the conversion of Christianity a right easy thing for the Pagans" and

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words had in the minds of people. When he refers to Irenaeus' claim that dead were raised, Neander explains: "i.e. such as seemed to be dead." Ibid., 1: 74. And a little further he states: "It is a remarkable fact, attested by Tertullian and Origen, that so many were conducted to Christianity by extraordinary psychological phenomena. . . . We shall, indeed, have to trace these phenomena, not so much to a divine miraculous agency, operating from without, as to the power with which Christianity moved the spiritual life of the period. From the manner in which the divine principle of life in Christianity—the new force that had come in among mankind—and the principle of paganism came into collision with each other, extraordinary phenomena in the world of consciousness could not fail to result, through which the crisis in the religious life of individuals must pass, ere it arrived at its end." Ibid., 1: 75.

[206] Ibid., 1: 75-77. See also, Ibid., 2: 38.

[207] Ibid., 2: 38.

therefore taught them only what to believe intellectually but made no reference to the expectations of the Christian life flowing out of this faith.[208] Those who had converted to Christianity in such a false and shallow way certainly not only could show no effects of true Christianity in their lives, but this discrepancy between their confession and their actions became an obstacle for converting those still clinging to paganism.[209] In other words, the lack of integrity in the area of Christian life was detrimental to the integration of the church at the time.

Neander claims that Christianity, as the expression of the kingdom of God, was destined to have dominion of the world. To be sure, in the first stage of its development Christianity stood in opposition to the world, but this stage was soon to be followed "by a period of appropriation and assimilation, extending uninterruptedly through all future time."[210] The appropriation of the world by Christianity passed, however, through various stages before Christianity's dominion over the world was complete. Neander is well aware of the danger facing the church in terms of losing its integrity in this process.

> Now if this was a necessary progression, in the process of unfolding, still it was attended with this peculiar danger, that if the side of *antagonism* to the world which was to be appropriated, should ever be lost sight of, as an essential moment, the consequence would be a *confusion* of the church with the world which she was to appropriate, whereby the church would forfeit her purity, and, while seeming to conquer, would herself be conquered.[211]

Christianity's appropriation of the world especially involved the christianization of the state, argues Neander. The danger here was that instead of christianizing the state, Christianity itself would be turned into a civil polity and be secularized. One step in this

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[208] Ibid., 2: 120.

[209] Ibid., 2: 38.

[210] Ibid., 2: 161.

[211] Ibid., 2: 161. Emphasis in the original.

christianizing was winning over the Roman emperors to the side of Christianity. At the same time, that shift also opened the possibility of their interference in church matters.[212]

Neander reveals his tendencies when working on integration when he admits to appreciating heresies to some degree. He attempts to justify their existence even if he does not go to the point of approving them. So heresies are the products of Christian interest and consciousness, although admittedly they may be disturbed reactions.

> Such phenomena of the Christian life are often very significant symptoms of disease in the life of the church: they betoken deeper wants of the Christian consciousness, which are seeking after their satisfaction. Opposite errors, or tendencies bordering on error, by which they are called forth, lend them a partial justification. As reactions of the Christian consciousness, although they may be in many ways disturbed reactions, they point to a purer reaction reserved for the future, which shall some time or other push its way victoriously through.[213]

So in the integration process, heresies are likely to arise. Although not what the church would like to produce, they are at least better than paganism in one way: they show that the integrity of the Christian message is being considered, although it comes through in a warped form.

The Middle Ages

Neander sees the corruption of Christianity at the beginning of the Middle Ages stemming from externalizing the idea of the kingdom of God as outward ceremonies become substitutes for faith and the special outward or visible priesthood takes the place of the universal priesthood of Christians, a priesthood that formerly had been the focal point. The idea of the kingdom of God was thus gradually transformed along the lines of the Old Testament theocracy. In so doing, different Jewish and Christian points of view were

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[212] Ibid., 2: 161-62.

[213] Ibid., 2: 765.

mixed together in the Christian church in many ways. Surprisingly, Neander actually sees the loss of integrity as an advantageous for the integration of the church.

> But this Old Testament form, adopted by the church, proved to the rude tribes, who were not yet prepared to take the gospel into their life in its pure spirituality, an intermediate stage, for training them to the maturity of Christian manhood, which they were destined to attain as soon as they were ready for it, by means of that reaction, the elements of which already existed in the Christian consciousness.[214]

Neander's observation raises a kind of chicken-or-egg question. Did the church have the foresight to adapt for the sake of integration, even if, as Neander notes, this meant compromising somewhat? Or did the church try to carry its message intact into this new age only to be forced to change in order to make progress? Did adaptation pave the way for integration, or did less-than-successful efforts at integration force the issue on adaptation? observations obviously prompt those kinds of questions, but he himself attempts no answer.

In contrast to the position sketched out in the quotation above, the forced conversion of the Saxons stood as a move that Neander considers detrimental to the church.

> In this way, the transfer of many pagan customs to Christianity was encouraged; and thus arose various superstitions, growing out of the mingling together of Christian and pagan elements.[215]

It is not clear why Neander thinks that a semi-pagan stage such as the Saxons' could not be an intermediate level before arriving at Christian maturity while a semi-Jewish stage would lead someone to true belief. Neander simply does not comment on this inconsistency.

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[214] Ibid., 3: 2. Schaff thinks that Neander's own moderate theological position also was helpful to reach those affected by skepticism in his age. Schaff, *Germany*, 274.

[215] Neander, 3: 78.

Neander believes that the history of the church exhibits "the power of the gospel to mould and transform the world."[216] But due to the vast geographic expansion of the church as it spread during the Middle Ages, it was only "by slow degrees" and "by gradual steps" that Christianity gained influence on the minds of the germanic peoples.[217] Continuous religious instruction was necessary to counteract the effects of foreign, pagan elements that had readily attached themselves to Christianity and threatened to lure the recently christianized peoples back to their former superstitions.[218] Once the bridge back to paganism was burned, the next step was to create a new Christian culture among the now converted germanic nations.

> As in the first centuries it was necessary that the leaven of Christianity should gradually penetrate the entire intellectual life of the *cultivated nations*, before a new spiritual creation, striking its root in the forms of the Grecian and the Roman culture, which Christianity appropriated, could in those forms completely unfold itself; so after the same manner it was necessary that the leaven of Christianity, which in the preceding period had been introduced into the *masses of the untutored nations*, should gradually penetrate their whole inward life, before a new and peculiar spiritual creation could spring out of it, which should go on to unfold itself through the entire period of the middle ages.[219]

Neander criticizes Wyclif's "altogether too dogmatic zeal"[220] in Wyclif's reasoning against the doctrine of transubstantiation and in this context Neander reveals his own position on dogmatic formulations that he views as historically conditioned and subservient to the task of the church's integration. This integration, Neander believes, may even require formulations that are less than orthodox. He says this of Wyclif's uncompromising rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation and of the adoration of the host:

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[216] Ibid., 3: 1.

[217] Ibid., 3: 123.

[218] Ibid.

[219] Ibid., 3: 456.

[220] Ibid., 5: 156.

> We recognize here that one-sided dogmatic tendency of protestantism, which is inclined to lay an undue stress on formal conceptions. But at the same time we should carefully keep in mind, that before men were in a condition to understand the real historical process of development of the religious life and its relation to doctrine, they must have been quite incapable of understanding the relative necessity of certain doctrinal modes of expression for certain times, in a certain spiritual atmosphere, though such modes of expression objectively considered, may be incorrect.[221]

Neander revealed a keen interest in the integration of the church not only in his writings by also in his practical life. Krabbe points out that Neander always recognized the importance of mission work and promoted it. In 1824, for example, he thus gave his ardent support to plans for founding the Berlin Mission Society. He was convinced that the domestic German church was experiencing the beginning of a new revival, and therefore he tried to carry that spirit over to foreign efforts, insisting that those who themselves had experienced the love of Christ should now also proclaim the gospel to the pagans. He believed the whole humanity should be the Lord's vineyard, and therefore there could be no difference between planting a new vineyard and cultivating the one already long rooted in Germany.[222] Philip Schaff also refers to abiding interest in missions, a concern that extended to the very end of his life.

> Even only eight days before his death, on the occasion of a visit of Gützlaff, who was then regarded by some as "the apostle of the Chinese," he made an address with youthful freshness on the Chinese mission, and looked forward with cheerful hope to the future triumphs of the kingdom of God, the description of whose growth, under the guidance of the twin parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, was the principal business of his life.[223]

According to Krabbe, in lectures on New Testament exegesis he did not consider the critical and philological elements to be the most important components, nor did he see his function as the preparing of his students to be critics and specialists. Rather Neander

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[221] Ibid., 5: 57. See Baur's comment on this passage in Baur, 223, note 23.

[222] Krabbe, 82-83.

[223] Schaff, *Germany*, 267-68.

wanted to shape them to become faithful servants of the church.[224] As Ullmann points out, as a writer of church history Neander attempted to broaden his field of service to the church, making efforts to minister "to the truly edifying instruction of all Christians who were capable of receiving it."[225]

Highlights in Theology

James Hastings Nichols claims "Neander was one of the greatest religious influences in German academic circles in the nineteenth century."[226] Krabbe also emphasizes the impact Neander exercised on the church both as a writer and as an academic lecturer.

> Nur durch die innige Verbindung beider Seiten erklärt sich der mächtige und ausserordentliche Einfluss, den Neander auf die theologische Wissenschaft und auf die evangelische Kirche in dem Maasse ausgeübt hat, dass er als einer der Haupträger des wieder erwachten Glaubenslebens, ja recht eigentlich als einer der Erneuerer und der geistlichen Väter der evangelischer Kirche in unserer Zeit angesehen werden muss.[227]

The question about the theology of such an influential personality certainly deserves some attention. Some indications of theological position have been provided in the preceding sections. Nevertheless, additional light can be shed on this subject by highlighting some of his main emphases and especially by attempting to locate Neander in the complex theological spectrum of his day.

In Harnack's view, Neander had never been a Jew in the spirit of the Talmud but rather in the spirit of Philo, and when he became a Christian, Neander also did not convert

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[224] Krabbe, 144-45.

[225] Ullmann, XVIII.

[226] James Hastings Nichols, *History of Christianity 1650-1950: Secularization of the West* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), 171.

[227] Krabbe, 143.

to a dogmatic sort of Christian confession.[228] Baur claims that Neander can consider faith to be divine even if the dogmatic tenets in which it takes shape are human. Neander himself expressed this view in his monograph on Emperor Julian the Apostate where, according to Baur, Neander argues that Julian had a divine faith in spite of the fact that he was a pagan. Julian was submissive to the will of the gods and trusted in them.[229] The specific doctrinal ideas may not seem as though they belonged to Christianity, but the act of believing was genuine, giving value to the beliefs. Schleiermacher's definition of religion as the feeling of absolute dependence certainly lies behind conclusions in this case. Like Schleiermacher, with Neander it is not so much the objective content toward which the feeling is directed that matters, but rather the subjective consciousness itself is the all-important factor which establishes, defines, and validates the divinity of someone's faith and piety.

Neander does not regard the doctrine of Trinity as a fundamental doctrine, although that can still be confessed if arrived at honestly as a product or confession of one's believing heart. Instead the fundamental principle in dogmatics is Jesus as the Redeemer. Kaufmann asserts that the conviction of Jesus' resurrection is central and determines all other elements in faith.[230] Of course defining those terms can be slippery business, a huge

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[228] Harnack, 200. Harnack comments on a written statement Neander had handed to the pastor who baptized him and concludes that Neander's concept of Christianity was neither biblical nor dogmatic but rather was derived from philosophical speculation and revealed syncretistic characteristics. "Hier ist das Christentum dialektisch-romantisch als die absolute Wahrheit aus den Entwickelungsstufen der Religion Konstruirt. Neben Schleiermacherschen Elementen tritt ein Böhme-Schellingsches deutlich hervor. Als das spezifisch Christliche gilt das Verschmelzen mit dem Unendlichen, die Liebe als die Identität aller Gegensätze, und der dem irdischen Staate gegenübergestellte Verein der Seelen zur Anschauung des Unendlichen, die Kirche, deren erste Keime Neander in dem Freundschaftsbunde der Pythagoreer finden will. Doch fehlte ein kräftiges Pathos für die Person Christi schon damals nicht. Aus der Gruppe der 'Virtuosen der Religion' tritt der Erlöser deutlich hervor." Ibid. It should, however, not be overlooked that this statement was based on the confession of faith written by a newly-converted Neander whose theological development still lay in the future.

[229] Baur, 226.

[230] Kaufmann, 68.

pitfall highlighted by Kantzenbach when he cautions that Christology does not explode the anthropocentric basis of his dogmatics. According to Kantzenbach, for Neander there is in all believers a Christ-like indwelling of God. This indwelling in Christians is reflective of the divine indwelling of God in Jesus Christ, only in Christ is this inhabitation original and absolute according to Neander.[231] Neander's anthropological point of departure, expressed in his concept of religious consciousness, pushes the word of God to a subordinate position. Kantzenbach points out how this influenced Christology. "Die Normativität des Wortes Gottes droht völlig verflüchtig zu werden zugunsten des religiösen Bewusstseins, das aus sich selbst ein Christusbild produziert."[232] Krabbe insists that Neander saw the confession—that is, the act of confessing and not first the content—of the person of Jesus Christ, true son of God and of man, and the confession of justification by grace through faith alone as the center and heart of all dogmatic considerations. But Krabbe admits that since Neander arrived at saving knowledge without the aid of any Christian confession or denomination, he had a highly personal, independent, and subjective view of Christian truth and was not able to understand the importance of the doctrine about the church and of the role that teaching played. Neander likewise did not understand and appreciate the differences between the confessions or denominations.[233]

Krabbe argues that Neander believed there should be a mutual interaction between theology and the life of the church. Rationalistic theology had exercised a destructive effect upon the faith of the church. Neander was convinced it was time for a different theology to contribute to the transformation and renewal of conditions in the church. He wanted

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[231] Kantzenbach, 31.

[232] Ibid., 34.

[233] Krabbe, 56-57.

theology and the study of the same to be practical and to edify the church.[234] Thus in spite of the restrictions, the narrow focus, and the qualified, limited commitment to content in theology, Krabbe believes Neander was able to make a positive contribution to the life of the church in his day.

> So hat Neander das abgefallene Geschlecht seiner Zeit durch die Macht der Geschichte, welche er reden und zeugen liess, wiederum zu Christo gerufen und eine Wiedergeburt evangelischen Lebens und Glaubens durch die Kräfte einer gottseligen und geheiligten Wissenschaft angebahnt.[235]

The all-important question naturally arises here: can such an attempt of integration be successful if the issue of integrity has at least been neglected if not all but abandoned in its original sense? In other words, does it really matter that someone be brought to Christ if the "Christ" being announced is a subjective construction of one's own religious intuition?

Krabbe points out that Neander views Christian experience as something antecedent to faith.

> Die Theologie ist durch ihn wiederum eine Wissenschaft göttlicher Dinge geworden, welche erlebt und erfahren werden müssen, um erfasst, geglaubt, begriffen werden zu können.[236]

Schaff sees the "principal force and charm" of theology "in the vital union of profound learning and personal piety."[237] Theology was for Neander more than an exercise of the mind. It was also an occupation of the heart and should therefore be concerned with a person's eternal destiny.[238] Neander chose as his motto *Pectus est quod theologum facit*,

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[234] Ibid., 78-79.

[235] Ibid., 173.

[236] Ibid., 172-73.

[237] Schaff, *Germany*, 273. Schaff's positive estimation of Neander's loose and more modern approach is telling in light of his own problems with his German Reformed brethren who were highly suspicious of Schaff whom they thought had compromised traditional dogma for the sake of gethering believers in America.

[238] Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 153.

the heart makes the theologian. In the preface to the second edition of his *General History*, Neander remarks about his motto which he had affixed to the first edition:

> We need not be ashamed of this maxim; shame rather to those who were bold enough to ridicule it. They have pronounced sentence on themselves. It was the watchword of those men who called forth theology from the dead forms of scholasticism to the living spirit of God's word. So let this be our motto still, in despite of all starveling or over-crammed *Philisters*—of all the foolish men who wrap themselves in the conceit of their own superior science, or who allow themselves to be dazzled by such vain pretensions.[239]

Ullmann reports that because of insistence on Christian faith, feelings, and heartfelt experience, Neander was sometimes derided as a pious or pectoral theologian, and classed with the pietists or mystics.[240] Schaff admits that Neander sympathized with the emphasis on the practical side of religion of the pietistic school of Spener and Francke, but, argues Schaff, Neander did not share the pietistic narrowness or provincialism. His historical studies had enlarged his mind to the most comprehensive catholicity.

> He never lost his sound and simple sight for the main object—the life of Christ proceeding from a supernatural source—but he thought too highly of this to compress it into the narrow bounds of a human formula, or some single tendency or school. He saw in it rather such an inexhaustible depth of sense, as could be in some degree adequately expressed only in an endless variety of gifts, powers, periods, and nationalities.[241]

Nigg shows less sympathy toward Neander since, as he states, Neander refused everything that opposed his theology of the heart. That commitment explains opposition to rationalism, to Semler, to Spittler, and to Hegel and his followers. It also led Neander to dissociate himself ever more clearly from Orthodoxy, especially as it was led by Hengstenberg. Even so, Nigg acknowledges that Neander always attempted to forge a

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[239] Neander, 1: XXXIII.

[240] Ullmann, XXIII.

[241] Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 154.

cordial reconciliation with his opponents and served as a conscious champion of the Kaiser's 1817 evangelical union.[242]

According to Krabbe, Neander decisively favored the Prussian Union of the Lutheran and Reformed churches.

> Das grosse Werk protestantischer Union, wie er es von seinem Standpunkte aus bezeichnet hat, war ihm Herzenssache und war mit seiner ganzen theologischen Anschauung auf das innigste verknüpft.[243]

Neander searched church history for Christian elements both in the form of Christian catholicism and also in the heretical sects and tendencies. If he could find positive examples in that broad sweep, it is no wonder then that Neander could also recognize and cling to what the two protestant denominations held in common.[244] Krabbe believes that Neander was unable to recognize important differences between the denominations because his development happened in the midst of a predominant indifferentism and in a time of massive ignorance of the Christian churches' own doctrinal heritage. Thus when Frederick Wilhelm III conceived of the Union, Neander concurred with Schleiermacher's enthusiastic approval. Neander demonstrated his own commitment—confessed his faith—when he took part in the first united celebration of the Lord's Supper on October 31, 1817.[245] Integration was hurtling full speed ahead, and integrity seemed to have been jettisoned, lightening the load.

The lack of regard Neander showed for the theological orthodoxy of the religious personalities depicted in his writings[246] was symptomatic of his own lack of commitment

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[242] Nigg, 160.

[243] Krabbe, 55.

[244] Ibid., 56.

[245] Ibid., 56-58.

[246] See Nichols, 171.

to any well defined theological position. He wanted to be free in his theological reflection, not willing to be a slave of any school or system.

> Popery of all sorts is my abhorrence—whether it be a state church, a doctrinal, a pietistic, or a philosophic, an orthodox, or a heterodox popery. May the Lord preserve in his church the liberty he has achieved for it; and may none who are his disciples suffer themselves to be the slaves of any man or of any human mind.[247]

According to Kantzenbach, Neander adopts a broken position regarding the confessions of the church, criticizing orthodoxy and rejecting the authority placed in the Symbolical books. Among the confessions used by Lutherans he accepted only the Apostle's Creed. Yet in the opposition to Roman Catholicism, he nevertheless admitted that the essence of Christianity can be found within Lutheranism's confessional documents and that these can be used to judge the differences between the denominations. Thus Neander was at least able to acknowledge the substance of meaning in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology. But for all that, concludes Kantzenbach, Neander nevertheless had an interconfessional or interdenominational view and desired the union of the denominations, hoping for a new symbol corresponding to "the new standpoint of the development of the church."[248] Schaff comments that theological views were sometimes hazy, without clear and sharp outlines. Thus he never confined himself to the measure of

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[247] Neander, 2: V.

[248] Kantzenbach, 32, this author's translation. Krabbe argues that Neander was somewhat conditioned by Schleiermacher in his view of the Lutheran Confessions and that he did not take a negative position regarding the Confessions. Neander accepted the Augsburg Confession and its Apology insofar (a key qualifier!) as they are expressions of the material principle of the evangelical church. He was, however, not able to perceive the importance and power of the Confessions in relation to the establishment of the church. Krabbe attempts to show how Neander's lack of awareness of the importance of the Confessions was connected to his whole dogmatic position and flowed from it. "Je weniger sein dogmatischer Standpunkt zu einer scharfen und bestimmten Fixirung des Dogmas hindrängte und je weniger das Talent kirchlicher Organisation ihm einwohnte, desto erklärbare ist es, dass ihm die schöpferische und organisirende Macht des Bekenntnisses entgehen konnte, und dass er deshalb wohl bisweilen die Berechtigung dieser theologischen Richtung mehr verkannt hat, als er gesollt hätte." Krabbe, 151-53.

the symbolical books and "conscientiously refused to sign the Augsburg Confession."[249] Elsewhere, Schaff says this about Neander:

> It must be confessed that his theology in many respects falls short of the proper standard of orthodoxy. He did not admit the binding authority of the symbolical books even in a restricted sense. His views on inspiration, on the sanctification of the Lord's day, and on the Holy Trinity, are somewhat loose, vague and unsatisfactory.[250]

Schaff attempts to excuse and minimize insufficient orthodoxy by pointing out that, first, was an age of universal rationalism, and he actually was one of the first theologians to react against it. Second, liberalism or latitudinarianism served as a bridge for many who could not otherwise have been rescued from skepticism. Finally, in spite of these defects, Neander had a strong conviction of Christianity's divine character and a profound and sincere piety.[251]

At the beginning of his professional career, an attitude of indifference and even hostility towards Christianity was still prevalent in the widest circles, as Ullmann points out.

> The dominant schools of theology went on the principle of divesting it [Christianity] entirely of its positive and divine character, and, by separating away from it those integrant parts which are the most deeply religious, of shaping it altogether into conformity with those points of view which have regard only to morals and to practical utility.[252]

Neander reacted against Rationalism. For instance, in the preface to his 1848 second edition of *Der Heilige Bernhard und sein Zeitalter*, he wrote critically about a

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[249] Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 153.

[250] Schaff, *Germany*, 274.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ullmann, VIII.

> shallow, spiritless, and heartless Enlightenment, whose motto was, "How gloriously far we have come!" which in the darkness of a sprawling poverty despised the greatest and most glorious aspects of previous centuries.[253]

Nevertheless, even an author such as Krabbe, who always attempts to justify Neander's position, admits that Neander himself still felt the aftereffects of a vanishing Rationalism.

> Neander war zu sehr ein Kind seiner Zeit, hatte zu sehr, wie er selbst äussert, alle Schmerzen und Wehen derselben empfunden, als dass nicht auch sein Werk das Gepräge derselben hätte tragen sollen. Es kam hinzu, dass die Exegese des neuen Testamentes, die biblische Kritik, die Untersuchungen über die Bildung des neutestamentlichen Kanons und andere hier einschlagende oder hiermit zusammenhängende Probleme in einem Umschwunge begriffen waren, und dass auf diesen Gebieten überall die Einwirkungen und Nachwirkungen der historisch-kritischen und der rationalistischen Periode der Theologie noch nicht überwunden waren.[254]

Specific reference to Neander's relationship with Schleiermacher has already been made above and the influence on Neander is readily apparent, but some additional remarks seem to be in order. Neander held Schleiermacher in high regard, once referring to him as "that great teacher of our nation, from whom it has still much to learn in reference to the development of the future . . ."[255] Nigg points out how much Neander was affected by Schleiermacher and dependent on him.

> Schleiermacher's Religiosität, die platonisches Erbe, romantische Unmittelbarkeit und herrnhutische Gefühlsinnigkeit miteinander verband, kam Neanders Veranlagung sehr entgegen. Er gab sich Schleiermachers Gedankenwelt vorbehaltlos hin und kurz vor seinem Tode bekannte Neander noch, wie stark ihn gerade das pantheistische Element in Schleiermachers Reden "Ueber die Religion" angezogen und welch mächtigen Anstoss er von diesem Buche empfangen habe. . . . Seine kirchenhistorischen Arbeiten sind zu einem grossen Teil einfach Anwendungen und Uebertragungen der Schleiermacherschen Theologie auf die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung.[256]

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[253] Quoted in Baur, 208, note 10.

[254] Krabbe, 124-25.

[255] Quoted in Baur, 228, note 31.

[256] Nigg, 159.

Kantzenbach agrees that Neander shares, for the most part, Schleiermacher's concept of religion.[257] Schaff also admits that Neander was influenced by Schleiermacher but at the same time points to differences between the two, making Neander even a bit more conservative than Kantzenbach had done. Schaff states that Neander

> had no sympathy with the pantheistic and deterministic elements of his [Schleiermacher's] system, and was more positive and realistic in his religious convictions, laying great stress upon the doctrine of sin as a free act, or rather abuse of freedom, and upon the personality of God.[258]

While Neander absorbed much from Schleiermacher's Romanticism, he avoided the excesses of Pietism, and opposed both the Orthodoxy of Hengstenberg and what he saw as the pantheistic Idealism of Hegel. Schaff says this in regard to rejection of the two last positions:

> Neander saw in these opposite tendencies two dangerous extremes, which threatened to rob the youth of Germany of the treasure of evangelical freedom, which he prized above all things. From the Hegelian philosophy he feared the despotism of thought; from the strict orthodoxy the despotism of the letter. He hated the one-sided intellectualism and panlogism of the former, the narrow spirit and harsh judgments of the latter. . . . Yet, after all, he had a sincere personal regard for Hengstenberg, who stood firm as a rock against the waves of Rationalism, and who fully reciprocated the esteem of Neander.[259]

Neander seemed to realize that he would not please any theological party of his time.[260] As a mediating theologian he tried to walk a theological tightrope in an effort to please simultaneously the demands of critical scholarship and to preserve those elements of faith

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[257] Kantzenbach, 30.

[258] Schaff, *Germany*, 265. In another comparison between the two men Schaff states: "Schleiermacher first built a bridge over the abyss that divides the dismal swamp of skepticism from the sunny hills of faith, and kindled again the flame of religion and of the Christian consciousness. Neander enriched this new theology with the experience of a pious heart, and the treasures of church history of all ages and nations." Ibid., 320.

[259] Schaff, *St. Augustin*, 151-52. Hengstenberg was a younger colleague of Neander. See also Kantzenbach, 36.

[260] See Harnack, 216-17.

that many Christians regard as indispensable.[261] His desire for integration was restrained to a certain point by his awareness of the need to preserve the integrity of the church although he never arrived at a clear definition of the content of that integrity.

It seems that the historian Neander senses some importance in acknowledging integrity at least as an echo still heard from the past, although he is not interested in embracing that actively in the same way he prizes and pursues integration. Compared to other contemporaries, Neander was more conservative, held in check somewhat by his sense of history. Compared to other historians before him, however, Neander certainly had distanced himself from the late Reformation where this study began when looking at efforts to balance integrity and integration.

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[261] Pfleiderer states about Neander: "Too much influenced by the modern historical spirit consistently to exclude criticism on principle, and yet too much of an emotional theologian to make thorough-going use of it where it assailed treasured and beautiful traditions, Neander never freed himself from that hesitation and want of thoroughness which strikes us so painfully in his *Life of Jesus*." Pfleiderer, 281, see also p. 219 and Walker, 490-91. Nichols views Neander, alongside with Schleiermacher, as a founder of the mediating school of theology. Nichols states that the mediating school "was closer to the confessional Lutherans than to the Hegelians. It tended to find its ecclesiastical base rather in the Union Churches, especially of Prussia, and for that reason had a less rigid confessional basis than the Lutherans. The chief point of debate between the two was in the area of sacramental theology, especially the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. This "mediating school" was also more aware of the apologetic problem and made more concessions to the liberals. In doing so, however, the mediating theologians appealed to Schleiermacher and Neander rather than to Hegel." Nichols, 176.

CONCLUSION

This investigation confirmed the author's initial hypothesis that the theologians/historians here analyzed are familiar with the concepts expressed by the terms integrity and integration, although those terms themselves are not used. All were aware of the church's need to defend and preserve its essence and distinction from the world. All of them also recognized the need for the church to enter into a relationship with the world, although not all of them understood and viewed this task in the same way.

Luther, who saw all history as God's activity in which people serve properly as instruments of his will, was very much concerned with integrity. For centuries the church had been experiencing a continued loss of its integrity, and Luther therefore dedicated his life to the recovery of the message of the Word as proclaimed in Scripture and to the rebuilding of the church according to that message. But Luther also wanted to reach out to people with that message. He was no ivory tower theologian but was creative and innovative in his day in his efforts to communicate Law and Gospel effectively. He made extensive use of the newest means of mass communication available, namely, the printed page. He couched his message not in the form of a comprehensive work, in some *loci theologici*, but often used a format until then disdained by many intellectuals, the pamphlet. He prepared writings for all educational and age levels, translated the Scriptures, reformed the liturgy, and composed hymns in the language of the people. Thus Luther revealed an intense desire for integration. Even history was viewed by him as a tool for integration since it teaches Law and Gospel through examples.

Flacius and his colleagues who collaborated in the production of the *Magdeburg Centuries* reaped the harvest of the reform effort and put the doctrine of justification through faith, rediscovered by Luther, at the center of their interpretation of the history of

the church. They wrote history from a theological, transcendental point of view, but at the same time they drew on sources, albeit selected ones, and therefore could write reliable history even as they gave it a decided interpretation. As they worked, the Centuriators were above all concerned with the integrity of the church in their historiography. The need for integration was not yet a major concern. But the situation was soon to change and integration would receive a new meaning in the times that followed.

Luther and Flacius still lived in a culture that identified itself as Christian, but the Western people of the following centuries lived in an increasingly secularized world. In Europe a tendency started during the Thirty Years War which saw massive devastation justified in no small part in the name of religion. After armies had come and gone, laying waste to huge areas, they left in their wake an understandable hostility toward religion, especially toward doctrinal purists championing integrity. Other criteria for identity became more important. As the early modern era was giving way to modernism, the growth of absolutist nation-states was on the rise as national loyalty and the well being of the state became more important and put religion in a secondary place where it had less and less to say in political, economical, social, and other important areas of everyday life. Increasing numbers of people now wanted to be guided only by their reason and gloried in their own achievements. Religion's function was increasingly restricted to the role of a guardian of morality, and doctrinal tenets were treated as a matter of cultural happenstance and personal preference.

Communicating the Christian message of God's judgment and love to this new society and culture posed a challenge to such individuals as Mosheim and Neander and, to a lesser degree, also Seckendorf. They had to learn the language and the world views of that new era and be willing to put the integrity of the church at risk in the attempt to communicate effectively the message in an understandable and winsome way. But if they wanted to remain faithful to the content of the message they had to be careful not to lose the

healthy tension between integrity and integration. Were they successful in achieving this objective?

This study showed that Seckendorf, living in an age that was growing tired of religious controversies and wars, already revealed some significant changes in his theological views when compared to Luther and Flacius. Seckendorf, admittedly, was still a staunch champion of the integrity of the church, but he was also greatly distressed by the division of Christendom and was interested in efforts toward unity. He believed that Christianity was not limited to the Lutheran Church and advocated dialogue and cooperation with the separated Christian groups. He emphasized ethics and practical Christianity, foreshadowing subsequent movements. A willingness to compromise the integrity of the church for the sake of peace with the surrounding world begins to emerge in Seckendorf. His heart was still in the right place, but he inadvertently helped to open a Pandora's box whose content he probably could not even have imagined.

In Mosheim's days the changes had become much more apparent. Controversial and denominational history was being abandoned in an attempt to write what they thought was scientific and objective history. Mosheim, considered the author of the first scientific and comprehensive church history, discarded the predominantly theological point of view in historiography and began to approach the history of the church from a historical viewpoint. He still revealed both an awareness and a regard for the integrity of the church. Scripture was the source and norm for Christian life and doctrine for him, but he preferred simple and plain truths and disliked doctrinal intricacies and confessional controversies. For instance, his treatment of the sacraments is brief and his definition of the same is vague, possibly to avoid controversy with the Reformed. He realized that true integration ultimately is wrought by the Holy Spirit and that integration should not be promoted at the cost of the truth. He noted many instances, especially in the Middle Ages, when the

sacrifice of integrity for the sake of integration was carried too far. At the same time, Mosheim felt a responsibility to do his part to facilitate integration.

Mosheim was convinced that Luther's Reformation was instrumental in recovering the lost integrity of the church and that the Lutheran Confessions are correct expositions of the Holy Scriptures. But he also believed that the budding truth discovered and proclaimed by the Reformer went trough a process of improvement and progress in subsequent times so that the theologians in Mosheim's own day had a broader and clearer theological perspective than the Reformers. Mosheim still took theology seriously and concerned himself with the integrity and integration of the church. but he believed he lived in an era when the truth had been carried to a higher level than at the time of the Reformation.

Mosheim felt uneasy with some of the concepts of his Lutheran predecessors. He no longer saw God as the one who makes and moves all history, rather for him man is at the center and is the active force in all historical happenings. He also attempted to overcome the traditional dualistic perspective, to leave behind the cosmic clash that often marked church historiography. Although he still admitted in theory that Satan is active in history, in practice he ascribed historical events to people not to the devil. God also was more retiring, evidence that the modern world was closing the universe. While Mosheim leaned clearly to an anthropocentric view of history in some parts of his work, he did not categorically exclude supernatural causes and divine providence in principle, but God's voice is softer since Luther's day. Mosheim always attempted to avoid extreme positions.

Mosheim's theological position defies any easy classification because of its transitional nature. He cannot be classed with any of the theological parties of his time, although he probably would have defined himself as an orthodox Lutheran since he never spoke openly against Lutheran Orthodoxy and agreed with it in principle, although sometimes disagreeing with it in particulars.

Luther's insistence on integrity as decisive for proper integration underwent a clear change under Mosheim. It is true that Mosheim still spoke out for integrity, but his eagerness for integration made him vulnerable to sacrifice unknowingly too much of the integrity in order to please the world and not scandalize it with a proclamation that would sound too odd to the ears of the world. Mosheim's unwillingness to take a clear stand on doctrinal issues, preferring instead to lean toward moderation and compromise between conflicting positions, was in the end highly detrimental to the cause of preserving the integrity of the church.

Neander lived in a different world than Mosheim. By Neander's day, Rationalism had already enjoyed full opportunity in Germany to exercise its destructive effects both on the church and the world, widening the gulf between the two and making the traditional message of the church seem unintelligible and irrelevant to modern needs. Theology in general was experiencing a critical moment, struggling to make a transition from Rationalism to a new and in some areas yet undefined form. Historiography was involved in this critical search for a response to the questions raised by theology in general.

Neander reacted against Rationalism, but he made the transition to a new day by shifting its emphasis on human reason to an accent on human feelings or intuition, not back to a theocentric view of history. Neander, indeed, recognized God's activity in history but he thought of it in terms of a union between the supernatural and natural in history. Such cooperation between divine power and transformed human nature also resulted in Christian life and doctrine in Neander's view.[1]

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[1] There are some very significant differences between Neander's and Luther's views of history. Luther's was informed by Scripture which alone he regarded as clear while he saw history as obscure. Neander's view was based on religious feeling or intuition. The fundamental resulting difference was one between a theocentric and an anthropocentric view of history. Luther believed that God directs history according to his own inscrutable will. Luther had no place for an autonomous historical process and excluded the possibility that the historian could find a key to interpret history. All interpretation instead gave evidence of faith. So Luther had a theology of history. Neander postulated the notion of a continuous historical development in which the presence and action of Christianity is symbolized by the ideas expressed

Lacking roots in traditional Lutheranism, Neander's theological development bore the marks of his odyssey through Greek philosophy and influence exercised over him by the mediating theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. But Neander felt that there was more about Christianity than he had been able to learn from philosophers and theologians. His contact with the Scriptures convinced him of the reality of sin and the centrality of Christ as Savior of the world. Something, however, hindered him from arriving at a clear biblical and confessional definition of integrity. The idea of integrity, or better, a longing for a lost integrity, can still be found in Neander but the substance of integrity is in danger of being obliterated and all that is left is an empty, pale, shallow notion of integrity. Lurking within is a Christian consciousness which, in its own subjective way, now defines the meaning or the essence of the church's integrity. As a result, doctrines were seen by Neander as time-conditioned human formulations subservient to the task of the integration of the church. Sacraments were regarded as outward signs of spiritual realities. The Lutheran Confessions had no binding authority, and the differences between the separated Christian groups were minimized. Doctrinal controversies were described as resulting from the absolutizing of partial views, not from inherently wrong positions. Loss of integrity was viewed as a temporary mixture of foreign elements with Christian, but a solution is always in view due to an ever ongoing process of purification running throughout the church's history.

Neander intended to serve the cause of edifying the church with his historical writings. What hindered him from defining integrity in a more sound, biblical way? Was it his overwhelming concern for integration? Although we cannot look into his heart to answer with absolute certainty, his writings seem to reply in the affirmative. He paid

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in the parables of the leaven and the mustard seed, at least as Neander interpreted them. Foreseeable moments of reaction and purification occur during this process of development. Luther sought to maintain a sound tension between integrity and integration. Neander bent decidedly to the side of integration in the desire to be "scientific" and to speak to his age even if this required the sacrifice of what previous generations embraced as eternal truth.

much more attention to integration and neglected integrity because of his optimistic belief in an inevitable process and the certain advance of the kingdom of God—confidence in sure progress where the power of the Gospel marches through successive victories, although not without opposition, to its final triumph when the leaven has completed its task of working through the whole fabric of human nature and culture.

Changes in the notion of integrity also necessarily reflect on the concept of integration. Thus with Neander, the idea of integration was also recast so that it no longer meant reaching out with Law and Gospel to bring those outside the church into the communion of Christian believers. Instead it referred to an attempt to make the church more open to the world, to bring the church closer to the ideas of the world, its wisdom and world views.

To be sure, Neander showed some awareness of the dangers of the church losing its integrity in the process of integration. He knew that Christianity runs the risk of being confused with the world. His undecided, vague and subjective view of integrity, however, cannot be regarded as a healthy contribution to establish clear and reliable guidelines for the integration of the church. So with Neander, a new era began in terms of the way integrity and integration were defined in church historiography. After Neander, that era of nineteenth century protestant liberalism would branch out in different directions and demand attention beyond the scope of this study. Neander serves as the boundary here, having brought historiography just over the threshold to a new chapter.

This study showed that integrity and integration belong together. One cannot exist without the other. A proper emphasis on the integrity of the church should, therefore, not be regarded as an obstacle to the church's task of reaching out to the world with the Gospel. Rather such emphasis should be viewed as a real asset in the promotion of a true integration. This is valid not only theologically but even logically, for one can reach out and share something with others only if he himself first possesses that which he is willing

to share. Trying to maintain integrity by excluding integration is unfaithful to Christ's commission to preach the Gospel to all the world and signals an insensitivity to the needs of people. To attempt integration without maintaining integrity sells out the birthright and invites confusion. And redefining integrity, as Neander essentially did, offers no direction, no criteria for evaluating theological positions even as the church is assimilated by the world and the salt loses its savor.

Only further statistical investigation can determine if the theologians/historians examined here were truly representative of the prevalent attitude of the church of their times, but a sampling of lesser lights suggests that these men are well known for a reason, that is, because their ideas have had consequences as they influenced others who wrote after them. In the end, this study reveals a situation in which, as the world grew increasingly indifferent and hostile to the church, the theologians/historians in succession emphasized integration more and more while they relegated integrity to a secondary place. Their always growing concern was for an integration understood as an opening of the church to the world, an accommodation to the concepts and prevailing ideas of the world, an eagerness to be relevant and to speak the language of the world. The church seemed to be more concerned to justify itself before the world than to please God. The result, as can be seen today, was not that the world became responsive to the message of the church but a loss of the integrity of the church that found itself saying the same thing as the world, except that it sometimes still said it in religious language (and often did not say it as well). Instead of endearing the church to the world, the strategy led to an even greater loss of impact on the world, so that today many are speaking of a post-Christian era.

Beyond studying the historians, on another level this study shows that historical theology is relevant to the needs of the contemporary church. Today Christians are still called to take a stand in regard to the integrity and integration of the church. History shows the different tacks chosen before and what consequences each has brought. The question is

not whether history teaches but whether we are willing to listen to its lessons. The motif of integrity and integration could be applied in other areas of historical investigation as, for example, in a comparative study of representatives from major theological movements affecting the church in its history, or in an examination of conspicuous theologians in the areas of biblical, systematic, and practical theology to determine if a similar development as observed in historiography also holds true there. This motif, however, is not only helpful in the area of history. It could also be profitably employed in other fields in the thought and life of the church.

Applied to theological education the notion of integrity will serve as a constant reminder that all sound theological reflection and teaching must conform to the biblical content, and that the final purpose of theological education is the salvation of sinners. At the same time, the concept of integration will always lead to an awareness that theological students need to be equipped adequately so they can effectively communicate the message of salvation in Christ wherever they are called to do so.

Fruitful results can also be achieved through the knowledgeable use of the integrity/integration concepts when making practical decisions in everyday life of today's church—in questions relating to worship, liturgy, hymnody, ecumenical involvement, and contemporary issues such as those proposed by liberation and feminist theologies. To communicate Law and Gospel effectively a pastor must know both the message and the people to whom he is called to proclaim it. A dialogue with the world can make the pastor aware of the needs of his people that are not noticed at first glance. Mindful of the sciences such as psychology, sociology, and history, a pastor concerned for integration will look for points of contact—*Anknüpfungspunkte*—with his listeners' world. At the same time, an awareness of integrity will constantly warn the pastor lest he become anthropocentric, letting the needs of people determine the content of his proclamation.

Finally, what can integrity and integration mean to such a relatively small church body as the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil), counting less than two hundred thousand members, in its attempt to witness in one of the world's largest countries—a country where the population majority is nominally Christian but an astonishing and rapidly growing number of people are involved in spiritism or in syncretistic cults, where in both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches an overwhelming desire for integration has resulted in a loss of concern for integrity and a concentration on social and political concerns? A church in such a situation faces the danger of letting itself be overcome by the fear of losing its identity and so it makes no changes and will not. Or that same church may hasten in error to change just for change's sake, concerned to look relevant and modern, anxious about keeping up with the latest theological trends. To view such a situation from the perspective of integrity and integration will admittedly not automatically solve all problems, but it can help give direction in the midst of a confusing and perplexing environment and constantly remind the church of its true mission so that it neither becomes totally absorbed in itself ignoring the world around, nor forfeits its inheritance while eager to be accepted and listened to by the world or by other Christian groups.

In an ideal world there would be no tension between integrity and integration, but in reality each period of history poses new questions and dilemmas that defy easy answers if they can be answered at all. Each generation has to take a position once again and make decisions about how the Christian message can be both preserved and communicated in its new and not repeatable historical moment.

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