Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University

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1

Introduction

Our universities . . . are our churches.
Hegel

1. THEOLOGY, MODERNITY, AND THE GERMAN UNIVERSITY

In September of 1793, the year Louis XVI met the guillotine, universities throughout France were suppressed by government decree, their endowments, treated as ecclesiastical properties, having already been nationalized the previous March.[1] As the armies of the French Revolution spread social upheaval and uncertainty abroad in the following years, universities across Europe, alongside the aristocracy and the church, fell on hard times. Wherever the French went, university endowments were taken over by the state, curricula drastically altered, and faltering universities shut down or turned into professional and technical schools. The process resulted in the closing of several of Europe's most prestigious universities: Louvain in 1797, Luther's Wittenberg some years later, and Halle, Prussia's educational flagship, in 1807. Between 1789 and 1815, sixteen universities went under in the lands of the Holy Roman Empire alone.[2]

To champions of the Enlightenment, the shake-up of universities was generally a good thing. In the eyes of many late eighteenth-century intellectuals, universities had come to be regarded as antiquated hold-overs from the Middle Ages, confessionally rigid, pedagogically retrograde, socially useless,

[1] R. R. Palmer, *The Improvement of Humanity: Education and the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 105 ff., and Paul Gerbod, *La Condition universitaire en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), 27 ff.

[2] In 1789 Europe had 143 universities; in 1815 there were only 83. See *HUE* iii. 3 ff., and L. W. B. Brockliss, 'The European University in the Age of Revolution, 1789–1850', in M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys (eds.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vi p. I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 89–104. Halle and Wittenberg were later combined and a university was reconstituted in 1817 as the Vereinten Friedrichs-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. It was located in Halle. See *RGG* vi. 1783.

and fiercely protective of their ancient corporate privileges.[3] Not surprisingly, prior to 1789, a number of progressive thinkers and statesmen across Europe had begun to call for the wholesale reform of higher education, and many, anticipating the example of France in 1793, thought that the way forward started with the abolition of the extant institution.[4] During the 1790s, proponents of educational reform in France, such as Charles Maurice de Talleyrand and the Marquis de Condorcet, hardly bothered using the term university, assuming that the exigencies of the day called for an altogether different type of institution, one reflective of the ideals of the Revolution and more receptive to the 'New Science' that had taken root largely outside universities in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[5]

If universities were regarded as backward institutions, their theological faculties were seen as especially benighted. Seedbeds of obscurantism, continuing the Wars of Religion in their uncompromising polemics, these age-old fixtures of the university—in the eyes of a Voltaire, d'Holbach, or Lessing—were obstinate repositories of darker times, yawning sinkholes in the path of progress. In an educational reform programme penned for Empress Catherine the Great of Russia, the *philosophe* Denis Diderot wrote that since theological faculties promote 'controversy' and 'fanaticism', their graduates were 'the most useless, intractable and dangerous subjects of the state'.[6] The 'science' of theology, wrote d'Holbach scoffingly, 'is a continual insult to human reason'.[7] Goethe, Lessing, and other non-university German literati denounced the 'guild theology' (*Zunfttheologie*) of the universities for retarding nobler religious and humanitarian sentiments.[8]

When Napoleon effected educational reforms in his satellite states, theological faculties were often lopped like useless limbs from the universities.[9] In the German-speaking lands of central Europe, where a handful of Protestant

[3] The Scottish universities, seats of the Scottish Enlightenment, represent an important exception to this general rule. See Roger L. Emerson, 'Scottish Universities in the Eighteenth Century, 1690–1800', in James A. Leith (ed.), *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 167 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1977), 453–74.

[4] R. Steven Turner, 'University Reformers and Professorial Scholarship in Germany, 1760–1806', in Laurence Stone (ed.), *The University in Society*, ii (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 501–3.

[5] Condorcet's *Memoires sur l'instruction publique* (1790) and Talleyrand's *Rapport sur l'instruction publique* (1791) were the two most important, if unimplemented, educational reform proposals of the early Revolution. See Robert M. Stamp, 'Educational Thought and Practice during the Years of the French Revolution', *HEQ* 6 (1966): 35–49.

[6] Denis Diderot, 'Plan d'une université pour le gouvernement de Russie', in Œ*vres complètes*, ed. J. Assèzat (Paris, 1875), iii. 438.

[7] Baron d'Holbach, *Le Bon Sens, ou Idées naturelles opposées aux idées surnaturelles* (1772) (Paris: Éditions rationalistes, 1971), 9.

[8] Carl Schwarz, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing als Theologe* (Halle, 1854), 63.

[9] Brockliss, 'The European University in the Age of Revolution', 125.

universities had begun to open up to the Enlightenment, numerous calls were heard for the abolition and/or reform of theological faculties.[10] In his *Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), Immanuel Kant heaped scorn on the so-called 'queen of the sciences' (*regina scientiarum*), suggesting that theology could neither serve society nor true religion unless it first conformed to the universal dictates of reason, which, in Kant's view, were best embodied in the traditionally 'lower' philosophical faculty—or what in the English-speaking world we understand today as 'the arts and sciences'.[11] The Berlin physician Johann Benjamin Erhard (1766–1827) argued that the theological faculty's primacy in the university was increasingly 'ceremonial', and that since it did not conform to modern reason, it should simply be excised.[12] The idealist philosopher J. G. Fichte, made a similar argument prior to the founding of the University of Berlin (1810), contending that unless theology 'cast off its former nature entirely', it should have no place in the new institution.[13] Even Friedrich Schleiermacher, the celebrated father of modern liberal Protestantism, admitted that in modern times the traditional notion that philosophy served as the mere handmaid of theology (*ancilla theologiae*) gave the universities an unacceptable 'grotesque appearance'.[14]

In short, as the nineteenth century dawned, universities and theological faculties were subjected to a stream of hostility and criticism unparalleled in their history. The Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the tumult of the Napoleonic wars had brought a spirit of 'creative destruction' to the educational status quo. From the standpoint of contemporaries, no one quite knew what the future would hold, although it was taken for granted that many once cherished ideals and institutions had reached the end of the

[10] Anton Schindling, 'Die protestantischen Universitäten im Heiligen Römischen Reich deutscher Nation im Zeitalter der Aufklärung', in Notker Hammerstein (ed.), *Universitäten und Aufklärung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1995), 9–19.

[11] Immanuel Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), ed. and Eng. trans. by Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1979). The division of the faculties into the 'lower' or preparatory faculty of philosophy and the three 'higher' faculties of theology, law, and medicine is of medieval derivation. On the history of this fourfold division of the faculties, see Friedrich Paulsen, *The German Universities and University Study*, trans. Frank Thilly and William W. Elwang (New York, 1906), 37 ff.

[12] Johann Benjamin Erhard, *Über die Einrichtung und den Zweck der höhern Lehranstalten* (Berlin, 1802).

[13] J. G. Fichte, 'Deduzierter Plan einer zu Berlin zu errichtenden höhern Lehranstalt', in Ernst Anrich (ed.), *Die Idee der deutschen Universität: Die fünf Grundschriften aus der Zeit ihrer Neubegründung durch klassischen Idealismus und romantischen Realismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 161–2.

[14] Following Kant, Schleiermacher too promoted the primacy of the philosophical faculty. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, 'Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn. Nebst einem Anhang über eine neu zu Errichtende', in Anrich, *Die Idee der deutschen Universität*, 257–8.

line. Hegel spoke for a generation when in 1807 he wrote that 'our time is a time of birth and transition to a new period. The spirit has broken with what was hitherto . . . and is about to submerge all this in the past; it is at work giving itself a new form.'[15]

With the benefit of hindsight we know that across Europe both universities and, if to a much lesser degree, theological faculties weathered the revolutionary/Napoleonic onslaught. In France, Napoleon himself oversaw the creation of a new national system of higher education—the so-called *université imperiale* (1808).[16] To varying degrees, other nations followed suit. The Restoration of 1815 ushered in a period of stability conducive to the rehabilitation of the university as an enduring institution. Even so, tremendous forces of change accompanied its transition through the turbulent 1789–1815 period. Indeed, it was during this period that the ailing, premodern institution most conspicuously began its metamorphosis into the secularized research university that we recognize today. It did so however not by discarding premodern conventions and forms but by adapting them to accommodate novel historical conditions and a distinctly modern scholarly ethos that had deep roots in the previous century.

The story of the birth of the 'modern university' is intimately connected to the development of German—particularly Prussian, Protestant—institutions. Granting the complex antecedents behind all historical beginnings, few would nonetheless gainsay that it was most notably in post-revolutionary Prussia, beginning with the dramatic founding of the University of Berlin in 1810, that *the modern university* first appeared on the historical stage.[17] In the course of

[15] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*; quoted in Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 4.

[16] Palmer, *The Improvement of Humanity*, 306–15. Admittedly, the 'university' system established by Napoleon in 1808 hardly resembled that of the Old Regime. It was rather a centralized, state-dominated series of professional schools and their feeder institutions at lower levels.

[17] Walter Rüegg, 'The Upturn of the University in the Nineteenth Century', unpublished paper, 8. Cf. Thomas Ellwein, *Die deutsche Universität vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden: Fourier, 1997), 109 ff. As is well established, the universities of Halle and Göttingen were especially important harbingers of the University of Berlin; accordingly, it is not without justification that these institutions are often characterized as 'modern'. I shall treat these institutions in ch. 2. In recent years, revisionist scholars have sought to downplay the centrality of the University of Berlin in shaping the modern university, suggesting that the 'myth' of Berlin was largely a creation of the late imperial period. While such arguments have brought about fruitful debate, I am sceptical for two reasons. First, there is enormous evidence prior to the *Kaiserreich*, both among German and non-German institutions of higher education, which suggests high regard for and the tremendous influence of Berlin. Second, such revisionist arguments often make a questionable distinction between the 'idea' and the 'reality' of the University of Berlin, contending that only the former triumphed in university rhetoric but not the latter in actual administration. The point is well taken, but still begs the question of why the 'idea' proved so powerful and why it was repeatedly invoked. Additionally, it is perhaps more

the nineteenth century, what came to be called the 'Prussian model' or 'German model' university would be admired and imitated throughout the Continent,[18] and eventually would cross the English Channel and the Atlantic to have a tremendous impact on higher education and scholarship in the Anglo-American world.[19] 'There is no people', wrote the British scholar and statesman James Bryce in 1885, summing up a widely shared sentiment among foreign educators, 'which has given so much thought and pains to the development of its university system as the Germans have done ... none where they play so large a part in national life.'[20] A genuine university did not exist in America, Abraham Flexner opined in 1930, until the founding of Johns Hopkins (1876) according to the model of the University of Berlin.[21] In short, German universities rose to become 'the global standard in the nineteenth century', as Nicholas Boyle has put it, winning the envy and emulation of scholars and educational leaders throughout the world.[22] How a medieval creation, deemed by many an antiquated relic in the Age of Reason, managed to pull off this feat and become by the late nineteenth century one of the leading organs of intellectual modernity, and today a truly worldwide institution, is among the most fascinating and consequential developments in modern European history.

Unlike the course of development in many countries, where historical forces often pushed theology outside the university to seminaries and other

than a coincidence that many of these revisionist works have been produced by scholars of the imperial period. See Rüdiger vom Bruch, 'A Slow Farewell to Humboldt? Stages in the History of German Universities, 1810–1945', in Mitchell G. Ash (ed.), *German Universities: Past and Future* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1997), 3–27, and Sylvia Paletschek, 'The Invention of Humboldt and the Impact of National Socialism: The German University Idea in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', in Margit Szöllösi-Janze (ed.), *Science in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 37–58.

[18] See Gert Schubring (ed.), '*Einsamkeit und Freiheit' neu besichtigt: Universitätsreformen und Disziplinenbildung in Preussen als Modell für Wissenschaftspolitik im Europas des 19.Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991) and Rainer Christoph Schwinges (ed.), *Humboldt International: Der Export des deutschen Universitätsmodells im 19. und 20.Jahrhundert* (Basle: Schwabe, 2001). Among the first early popularizers of Prussian higher education on the Continent was the French philosopher, Victor Cousin, who published *De l'instruction publique dans quelques pays de l'Allemagne, et particulièrement en Prusse*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1832).

[19] Hermann Röhrs, *The Classical German Concept of the University and its Influence on Higher Education in the United States* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995) and George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 101–12.

[20] Quoted in John Theodore Merz, *A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, i (New York: Dover Publications, 1965; repr. of 1904 edn.), 159.

[21] Abraham Flexner, *Universities: American, English, German* (New York, 1930), 42.

[22] Nicholas Boyle, '"Art," Literature, Theology: Learning from Germany', in Robert E. Sullivan (ed.), *Higher Learning and Catholic Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 89.

private institutions, nineteenth-century Prussian and other central European universities retained theological faculties as an integral, if reduced, part of the state's educational system.[23] Like other university faculties, theological faculties were therefore 'institutions of the state' (*Veranstaltungen des Staates*) as the Prussian Civil Code (*Allgemeines Landrecht*) of 1794 put it.[24] What is more, the nineteenth-century German university largely kept intact the traditional four-faculty structure that had its origins in the Middle Ages. In this system, theology, jurisprudence, and medicine were considered the professional or higher faculties, whereas philosophy, the erstwhile arts faculty (*facultas artium* or *Artistenfacultät*), with its many subsidiary branches (history, philology, mathematics, et cetera) was seen as the preparatory 'lower faculty'. The retention of this model owed much to the efforts of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who, during the founding of the University of Berlin, defended the traditional divisions, while raising the status of philosophy to one of autonomy and regarding theology as a 'scientific' (*wissenschaftlich*) enterprise, which best served the church by fostering close relations with other branches of knowledge. Admittedly, as the nineteenth-century research university gained momentum in Prussia and elsewhere, theology became greatly overshadowed by more secular, dynamic fields of knowledge. It wholly ceased to be regarded as the 'queen of the sciences', a development well underway in the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, the theological faculty, the seat of a new putatively 'scientific theology' (*wissenschaftliche Theologie*), maintained a respectable—or at least tolerated—niche in the state's higher educational system, a niche that, interestingly and despite persistent voices of opposition, has endured until the present.[25] The tale of this adaptive, controversial, often beleaguered niche is of a piece with that of the meteoric rise of the German university in the nineteenth century.

This study pursues the overlapping goals of understanding the evolution of the modern German university from the vantage point of theology and the evolution of modern theology from the vantage point of the university. Its

[23] There is no detailed, general study of the European-wide demise of university-seated theological faculties in the nineteenth century. See F. Scaduto, *L'abolizione delle facoltà di teologia in Italia* (Turin, 1886), which contains some information on non-Italian developments as well.

[24] Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Koch (ed.), *Die preussischen Universitäten. Eine Sammlung der Verordnungen, welche die Verfassung und Verwaltung dieser Anstalten betreffen*, i (Berlin, 1840), 6.

[25] For debates about theology's justification in the university in more recent times, see Martin Heckel, *Die theologischen Fakultäten im weltlichen Verfassungsstaat* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986); Ernst-Lüder Solte, *Theologie an der Universität: Staats- und kirchenrechtlichen Probleme der theologischen Fakultät* (Munich: Claudius, 1971); Rudolf Weth (ed.), *Theologie an staatlichen Universitäten* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972); and Hans-Georg Babke, *Theologie in der Universität: aus rechtlicher, theologischer und wissenschafts-theoretischer Perspektive* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

temporal frame falls largely within what German scholars sometimes call the *Sattelzeit*, the 'bridge period' between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which witnessed a fundamental transformation in the European political, social, and intellectual order. In the ensuing chapters I thus chart the growth of the university from a residually medieval institution in the eighteenth century, through the all-important 1789–1815 period of crisis and rejuvenation, to its status as an exemplary and widely emulated engine of modern research by the eve of the First World War. While not altogether bypassing Catholic theology, I concentrate largely on Protestant theology, in part because the study substantially involves Prussia, a Protestant state, but also because of the different historical dynamics affecting Catholic and Protestant theology during this era.[26] One should keep in mind, moreover, that an ingrained anti-Catholic prejudice was part and parcel of Protestant theological self-understanding throughout the nineteenth century, which one scholar has provocatively described as 'a second confessional era'.[27]

More specifically, I focus on the development of Protestant university theology from an apologetic, praxis-oriented, confessional enterprise in the post-Reformation period to one increasingly 'liberal', expressive of the ethos of modern critical knowledge, or *Wissenschaft*. Relatedly, I examine theology's structural transformation within the university, from its status as the symbolic centrepiece of the medieval and early modern university to its modern status as a minor and often disparaged area of academic commitment, albeit one, paradoxically, deeply influential in the realms of religious and theological scholarship throughout the Western world. This Janus-faced reality, the simultaneous institutional diminution and influential acclaim of German academic theology, is in fact a recurring subtheme of the book.

But, again, why theology? Was not theology, after all, the supreme loser in the rise of the modern university? In treating Protestant theology and university development together, I aim to remedy a scholarly oversight and suggest ways in which debates about both phenomena might be fruitfully reconsidered. Historians interested in the rise of the modern German

[26] To be sure, if one had world enough and time, the inclusion of Catholic academic theology and Catholic universities would make for a fuller comparative study. However, I believe that the progressive, dynamic, science-embracing character of Protestant theology and its profound influence on modern religious thought generally, including modern Catholicism, justifies the more limited scope of this study. Furthermore, the legal position of Catholic theological faculties, as shall be made clear, in the German states of central Europe differed significantly from that of Protestant ones. On nineteenth-century Catholic theology generally in Germany, see Heinrich Fries and Georg Schwaiger (eds.), *Katholische Theologen Deutschlands im 19.Jahrhundert*, 3 vols. (Munich: Käsel, 1975) and Gerald A. McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Seabury, 1977).

[27] Olaf Blaschke, 'Das 19.Jahrhundert: Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?' *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000): 38–75.

university have not been terribly concerned with the fate of theological enquiry, except perhaps, in an often offhand manner, to suggest its swift obsolescence in contrast to more institutionally vigorous, forward-looking humanistic and natural scientific fields of enquiry.[28] Often such scholars—implicitly perhaps more than explicitly—subscribe to a theory of secularization, a theory that posits rising institutional and intellectual irreligiosity as a necessary consequence of modernizing forces.[29] While I do not dispute the eclipse of theology by the rapid differentiation and institutionalization of other areas of enquiry in the nineteenth century, in what follows I do not assume this eclipse from the outset; rather, I treat it as a problem and probe it carefully, calling attention to the manifold complexities, contingencies, and ironies involved in the momentous displacement of the erstwhile queen of the sciences.

Furthermore, I am persuaded that viewing university development through the lenses of theology helps one see certain otherwise occluded continuities in the making of the nineteenth-century university. Exclusive focus on dynamic and expanding fields such as philology, history, chemistry, physics, and medicine tends, by virtue of the choice of subject matter, to give histories of the modern German university a storyline of distorted discontinuity. Focus on theology, by contrast, restores an element of 'the persistence of the Old Regime' to university history. For while theology lost its former preminence, it insistently justified a continuing existence and occupied a vital role in academic life throughout the nineteenth century. Its influence abroad was considerable as well, not least in my own country, the United States.[30] What is more, we should not lose sight of the remarkable fact that a theologian,

[28] For examples of and bibliographic guides to more studies on the modern German university, see William Erman and Ewald Horn (eds), *Bibliographie der deutschen Universitäten: Systematisch geordnetes Verzeichnis der bis Ende 1899 gedruckten Bücher und Aufsätze über das deutsche Universitätswesen* (Leipzig, 1904–5); Charles E. McCelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Thomas Ellwein, *Die deutsche Universität: vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden: Fourier, 1997); Konrad H. Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); and Daniel Fallon, *The German University: A Heroic Ideal in Conflict with the Modern World* (Boulder, Colo.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1980).

[29] Admittedly, the terms 'secularization' and 'modernization' merit greater elaboration than I offer here. See my previous discussion in Thomas Albert Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W. M. L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17–22. Cf. Steve Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), and Owen Chadwick's classic, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). In short, I am persuaded that a priori notions of secularization have created great historigraphical lacunae, although the term itself is useful in a limited, heuristic sense, particularly when applied to cultural realities in Western Europe since the Enlightenment.

[30] Charles Franklin Thwing, *The American and German University* (New York, 1928), 184 ff.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, served as the principal intellectual architect of the modern German university, whose arguably most renowned and accomplished representative at century's end was yet another theologian, Adolf von Harnack.[31] Professors at Berlin both, these individuals figure prominently in my study. Throughout the nineteenth century, moreover, still other, less well-known theologians occupied positions of prestige and influence within the university system. Their writings, actions, and decisions, paradoxically enough, carved out a secure place for theology while contributing—often unwittingly—to an academic environment famously described by Max Weber as one 'characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world" '.[32]

On a broader note, I hope that this study encourages historians of modern Europe and modern Germany to take theology more seriously as a subject for historical analysis. While recent years have witnessed a laudable new concern for religion as a social and cultural force in post-1789 Europe,[33] theology in large part remains terra incognita for historians. However, as two historians have recently argued, 'theology is eminently worthy of historical treatment, since from the perspective of the historian the conscious or unconscious task of the theologian is to accommodate sacred doctrine to historical conditions and circumstances'.[34] Put differently, because of its venerable pedigree in European culture, theological reflection and its locus in the social field provide an excellent barometer for mapping cultural change and continuity in the modern era, in so far as theological reflection seeks to come to grips with, understand, and/or resist modern realities. Leaving theology unscrutinized as a putative anachronism betrays a Whiggish secularism that serious historical scholarship should expose and question.

In contrast to historians, theologians and scholars of modern religious thought have long been attentive to the far-reaching significance of nineteenth-century German Protestant theology and thought. To make this point clear, one need only mention a few classic titles—Ferdinand Kattenbusch's *Die deutsche evangelische Theologie seit Schleiermacher* (1924), Karl Barth's *Die*

[31] On the significance of Schleiermacher and Harnack for the German university system as a whole, see the essays by Rudolf Vierhaus (on Schleiermacher) and Lothar Burchardt (on Harnack) in Wolfgang Treue and Karlfried Gründer (eds.), *Wissenschaftspolitik in Berlin: Minister, Beamte, Ratgeber* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1987), 77–88, 215–34.

[32] Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 155.

[33] See e.g. the fine collection of essays in Helmut Walser Smith (ed.), *Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in Germany, 1800–1914* (Oxford: Berg, 2001). Cf. Thomas Albert Howard, 'A "Religious Turn" in Modern European Historiography', *Historically Speaking* 4 (June 2003): 24–6.

[34] Susan Rosa and Dale Van Kley, 'Religion and the Historical Discipline: A Reply to Mack Holt and Henry Heller', *French Historical Studies* 21 (Autumn 1998): 611–29.

protestantische Theologie im 19.Jahrhundert (1946), Hans Frei's *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (1974), and Claude Welch's two-volume *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (1972, 1985). In his bibliographic survey, Welch in fact was struck by 'the apparent identification of nineteenth-century Protestant theology with German theology'—something he in turn considerably attests to in his own treatment of the century.[35] However, if theology is often shortchanged by historians of the modern university, it is also true that theologians—by virtue of a penchant to treat ideas and texts rather ahistorically—have often failed to provide richly contextualized accounts of the social, intellectual, and institutional conditions in which modern academic theology in Germany took root. We are left therefore not only with modern university histories short on theology, but also with stories of modern theology short on the history of the university. The view that the two profoundly hang together is the foundational thesis of the present study.

The story of modern German university theology presented here, however, is admittedly a curious one. It is an interpretative survey in some respects, but one that does not strive to be exhaustive. I confess that I make no mention of some of the century's seminal theological works, and I omit a host of crucial figures and debates altogether. Nowhere, moreover, will one find lengthy discussions of theologians' views on the Trinity, the Atonement, the Incarnation, or other important doctrines and ideas; and this is to say nothing of the truly voluminous literature of biblical exegesis and church history. Rather, my focus is largely *external*—on theology's institutional legitimation and position. I concentrate on theology in so far as it occupied, defended, and successfully maintained a limited position within a rapidly modernizing university. In other words, *I focus largely on the fortunes of the theological faculty* (theologische Fakultät) *as a component of the university, not on theology per se.* How does the locus of the theological faculty change as the university changes, I persistently ask, and what does this shifting locus tell us about both theology and the university? More broadly, how do changes in the university and theology reflect broader patterns and trends in German, particularly Prussian, history in an age marked by nationalism and state-building? (The blurry boundary between 'Prussia' and 'Germany' in the nineteenth century is an important topic in its own right, but one I shall happily leave to other scholars, noting only that the two should not be conflated nor can they be entirely separated.)

There is also a more limited *internal* dimension to the study. In the context of the modernizing university, how did the four traditional subdivisions of

[35] Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, i (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 8 ff.

theology—exegetical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology—develop and relate to one another and to the university as a whole?[36] How did the increasing scientization (*Verwissenschaftlichung*), deconfessionalization (*Entkonfessionalisierung*), and professionalization (*Professionalisierung*) of academic life, moreover, affect both the pedagogical and scholarly modus operandi of the various divisions of theology and their interrelationships?[37] Finally, how was this traditional fourfold pattern challenged and sometimes modified in the course of the nineteenth century in the light of the emergence of new theological fields, including the science of missions (*Missionswissenschaft*) and the science of religion (*Religionswissenschaft*). Proponents of the latter sometimes questioned the legitimacy of an exclusively Christian theology altogether.[38]

By privileging here the institutional position and internal organization of theology over the actual content of theology, I do not desire to minimize the intrinsic importance of the latter; I simply aim to accentuate insights derived from isolating the former for historical analysis. Yet in this regard, it is instructive to heed Hayden White's admonition to the historical profession that academic forms, conventions, and modes of organization quite often affect both the nature and reception of content.[39] We should perhaps then not be too eager to distinguish categorically between form and content.

Both the internal and external foci of the study have drawn me towards specific types of historical sources and documents, which one might classify as discipline-reflexive and institution-specific. By 'discipline-reflexive' I mean sources by theologians, university personnel, clergymen, and others concerned with evaluating the very rhyme and reason of academic theology as it confronted the various and multifaceted quandaries of modernity: what is the purpose of theology within the modern university? What sort of knowledge does it purport to foster? Can theology justify itself as a science? How does it fit in with other branches of human knowledge? And how, in the context of the German university, does it relate to the other two 'higher' faculties—law and medicine—and to the 'lower' philosophical faculty?

[36] The fourfold division of theology is generally held to have originated with Andreas Hyperius's *De Theologo seu de ratione studii theologici* (Basle, 1572). For an informative discussion on the internal organization of theology and its history, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 346–440.

[37] See Charles E. McClelland, *The German Experience of Professionalization: Modern Learned Professions and their Organization from the Early Nineteenth Century to the Hitler Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[38] See the entries 'Missionswissenschaft', *RGG* iv. 1013–15 and 'Religionswissenschaft', *RGG* v. 1038–42.

[39] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

A typical title in this regard was the rectorial address (*Rektoratsrede*) of Georg Heinrici at the University of Marburg in 1884: 'On the Character and Purpose of Protestant Theological Faculties'.[40] Addresses of this type proliferated in the mid- and late nineteenth century, often grappling with what some perceived as a crisis of the theological faculty.[41]

By 'institution-specific' sources I refer to the copious literature on particular German universities and their faculties. While I draw from a number of these works, it will be clear that only a few institutions truly command my attention. In Ch. 2, I concentrate on developments at the universities of Halle (1694), and Göttingen (1737), and to a lesser extent Wittenberg (1502), Helmstedt (1558), and Jena (1576)—all key educational and theological centres in the early modern period. In Ch. 3 I narrow my focus to the Prussian University of Berlin (1810). This new flagship of a rising Prussia and German nation-state, described once as the 'spiritual center of a national world power', then occupies the lion's share of the rest of the book.[42] While I readily admit that Berlin does not constitute the final word on German academic theology, I am also persuaded that rarely in European history has a single university so served as a symbol of the age and set the pace for its sister institutions. One would have to go back to the University of Paris in the thirteenth century perhaps to find an institution that compared in influence and prestige to what Hegel called the 'Universität des Mittelpunktes'.[43] 'The University of Berlin', Philip Schaff wrote in 1857, 'occupies the first rank of all similar institutions in Germany not only, but in the world.'[44] 'The Berlin university', an American visitor reported, '[is] the first great school of the world for science, philosophy, and letters.'[45] One might certainly correct for some hyperbole in these statements, but not before considering what occasioned it in the first place.

To be more specific with respect to sources, I have drawn from treatises on university organization and reform; general university statutes as well as

[40] Georg Heinrici, *Von Wesen und Aufgabe der evangelisch-theologischen Facultäten* (Marburg, 1885). Cf. August Dillmann, *Über die Theologie als Universitätswissenschaft* (Berlin, 1875).

[41] As Ernst Troeltsch put it in 1907: 'Wer die in den letzten Jahren von Theologen gehaltenen Rektoratsreden überblickt, wird hier sehr häufig die Fragen wiederkehren sehen: "Ist die Theologie eine Wissenschaft, und ist sie berechtigt innerhalb des Rahmens der Universität?" Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Trennung von Staat und Kirche, der staatliche Religionsunterricht und die theologischen Fakultäten* (Tübingen, 1907), 3. Cf. E. H. Haenssler, *Die Krisis der theologischen Fakultäten* (Leipzig, 1929).

[42] *Berlin in Bildern, 1810–1910* (Berlin, 1910), HUB Ay46214.

[43] Hegel, 'Berliner Antrittsrede', in *Gesammelte Werke*, xviii, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968), 13. The comparison between Berlin and Paris was sometimes made in the nineteenth century. See Gerhard von Zezschwitz, *Der Entwicklungsgang der Theologie als Wissenschaft inbesondere der Praktischen* (Leipzig, 1867), 4–5.

[44] Philip Schaff, *Germany; its Universities, Theology, and Religion* (Edinburgh, 1857), 63.

[45] John W. Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar* (New York, 1934), 122.

statutes of particular theological faculties; university histories; guidebooks for students beginning theology; relevant government memoranda; theological journals and reference books; rectorial, inaugural, and other ceremonial university orations; introductory theological textbooks or 'theological encyclopedia' (*theologische Encyklopädie*) as they were called in the nineteenth century; not to mention relevant letters from professors, students, clergymen, and government officials.

Although I do not neglect statistical evidence in this study, my primary concern, as should be clear from the foregoing, is with words, written and (once) spoken, and in their complex relationship to historical development. Understanding the dialectic between language as a cultural mirror and language as an agent of cultural change forms the principal theoretical impulse behind my analysis. More fully, I aim to show why and how a variety of individuals, institutions, and relevant 'communities of discourse' brought to expression particular descriptions of the purpose and place of academic theology in a period that witnessed prodigious changes in the general university landscape—changes that contributed not only to the scientific or liberal reconstitution of theology, but also to theology's steady institutional decline.

2. ON THE STATE AND MODERN SCIENCE 'IN THE GERMAN SENSE'

Besides the obvious categories of 'university' and 'theology', the categories of 'the state' (*Staat*) and 'science' (*Wissenschaft*)—science, that is, 'in the German sense'[46]—are also significant for this study. With respect to the former, I refer in particular to the modernizing, bureaucratizing Prussian state in the early nineteenth century, after the defeat by Napoleon in 1806, but also—and to a degree by extension—to the imperial German state established in 1871 under Prussian hegemony. Throughout I contend that the workings of universities in general and theological faculties in particular were not autonomous and independent, as their representatives championed or at least strove for, but more often than not reflected developments in the broader social, political, and intellectual fields. During the period treated in this study—which, again, concentrates heavily on the early nineteenth century but reaches back into the

[46] In addition to appearing in the title of Schleiermacher's 1808 book on the university (discussed in Part III), the phrase 'in the German sense' was a qualifier sometimes added to the word *Wissenschaft* by those trying to impress on non-Germans the particular associations and meanings of this word. See Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism*, 123.

early modern (and even medieval) period and pushes forward into the first decades of the twentieth century—far-reaching changes took place in the realm of European and German statecraft and in the aims and practices of modern science and scholarship. What is more, both the political authority of the state and the social authority of science underwent processes of extensive social magnification during this period—processes regularly captured in the useful, if cumbersome, German terms *Verstaatlichung* and *Verwissenschaftlichung*.[47] Not surprisingly, nineteenth-century German academic theology, with other domains of culture, often reflected the magnified authority of the state and science. By the late nineteenth century, in fact, Protestant theologians, like much of the rest of the university professoriate, understood themselves as dutiful servants of the new national state and avant-garde practitioners of modern science who should be taken seriously by their peers in more secular fields.[48]

To be sure, such an understanding of the social role of the theologian was not entirely without precedent in German history. Protestant scholastic theologians, one might point out, in the post-Reformation period often regarded their work as an exercise in *scientia* even as they saw themselves as servants of their particular sovereign within the Holy Roman Empire. However, the nature of the nineteenth-century state (an increasingly centralizing, industrializing, imperial leviathan) and the nature of science (a progressive, dynamic, and functionally secular enterprise) made late nineteenth-century conditions qualitatively different from those of previous epochs, when the political landscape was extremely fragmented and when science was regarded more often in traditional Aristotelian terms.[49] I find it, therefore, unsatisfying to understand the position of nineteenth-century theologians *vis-à-vis* the state and science simply in terms of longterm continuity with the post-Reformation, confessional era, as some studies have suggested.[50]

What is particularly noteworthy about the nineteenth century, especially its latter half, is the degree to which theologians sought to legitimize their roles in society, not by appeal to church authorities or the sapiential, credal traditions of Christianity, but from the political community of the nation-state and the academic community of science.[51] Of course, churchly connections and

[47] These terms are difficult to bring into English, but might be rendered as 'becoming an aspect of the state' and 'becoming an aspect of science'.

[48] See Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 127.

[49] Peter Peterson, *Geschichte der aristotelischen Philosophie im protestantischen Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1921).

[50] Paulsen, *German Universities*, 34 ff., 137 ff.

[51] Hermann Mulert, *Evangelische Kirchen und theologischen Fakultäten* (Tübingen, 1930), 37.

concerns were thick and numerous among theologians throughout the century, but, increasingly, significant and influential numbers identified their loyalties more with *Staat* and *Wissenschaft* than with the faith communities they putatively served. The theologian Richard Rothe (1799–1867), for instance, went so far as to contend that in the modern world churches were becoming superfluous entities because the state and its institutions were better suited to transmit the ethical teachings of Christianity to society. 'The moral community, the modern state,' Rothe reasoned, 'has done more to bring man to a condition befitting the will of Christ than all the churches of Jerusalem or Rome or Wittenberg or Geneva.'[52] While Rothe is an exceptional case, his words nonetheless bear witness to altogether new theological possibilities, which in turn attest to fundamentally altered historical conditions.

In a rectorial address of 1875, 'On Theology as a University Science', the Old Testament scholar August Dillmann (1823–94) of the University of Berlin called attention to a 'contradiction between traditional doctrine and modern knowledge'. 'Only in an atmosphere of science,' he concluded, could this contradiction be resolved: '[I]t is not a matter left to [church] synods or majorities, but rather to theological science.'[53] Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) even argued that theology conducted under ecclesiastical auspices was positively injurious to true *Wissenschaft*; such a theology, he believed, could never match university theology in its ability '[to] contribute to the edifice of modern German science and culture'. Thus the state had an abiding interest in protecting theology against excessive ecclesiastical meddling.[54] Similarly, Berlin's Friedrich Paulsen affirmed that despite their obligation to train future ministers 'professors of theology are state officials just as much as those of other faculties'. For Paulsen this was a salutary arrangement: 'a Protestant theology based . . . upon the authority of the church would have no value at all'.[55]

As one might well imagine, more than a few pastors, particularly those of pietist or confessional leanings, evinced displeasure at this climate of opinion. Many, such as Friedrich Bodelschwingh (1831–1910), complained that academic theology, held captive by 'state institutions' and the 'scientific method', had become a thorn in the side of the church. 'My son's faith was shipwrecked at the university,' he reported hearing from many parents, and proposed as the solution the establishment of theological faculties more congenial to the

[52] Quoted in Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1972), 604.
[53] Dillmann, *Über die Theologie als Universitätswissenschaft*, 15.
[54] Adolf von Harnack, 'Über die Bedeutung der theologischen Fakultäten,' *PJ* 175 (March 1919): 362–74.
[55] Paulsen, *German Universities*, 137, 139.

needs of the church.[56] In 1895, a Prussian church conference convened to discuss what for many had become the 'most serious question' of the day: 'the unholy alienation between theology and church' resulting from the scientific, statist character of the theological faculties. If the church did not regain influence over theological education, one Philipp Zorn complained to his fellow churchmen, then she risked presiding over her own 'self-destruction as a church'.[57]

What worried many in 1895 was recognized by a few much earlier. 'Theology students do not have it easy,' a pastor opined in 1829, 'because learning (*Wissenshaft*) and faith (*Glaube*) are so far apart from one another. In the interior of the student, this must eventually lead to an internal contradiction, which can endanger their spiritual lives.'[58] Sizing up the shape of academic theology in the mid-nineteenth century, Søren Kierkegaard, who had studied at the University of Berlin, lamented that 'Christianity has completely merged with [modern] science—that is, Christianity no longer exists.'[59]

Examining the emergence of such an academic milieu—extolled by the likes of Rothe, Dillmann, Harnack, and Paulsen, and deplored by many pious pastors and the iconoclastic Kierkegaard—constitutes a significant element of this study.[60] Furthermore, I suggest that such a milieu appears actually quite remarkable when taken outside the purview of modern German intellectual history and viewed from the broader perspective of the history of Christian thought.

To dramatize this point, it might be instructive to consider the fathers of the Western Church. It was, after all, no less an authority than Augustine, who, during the infancy of Christian theology, sought to relativize the powers of the *civitas terrena* in the light of the *civitas dei*, comparing the former to 'the fragile splendor of a glass which one fears may shatter at any moment'.[61] With Clement of Alexandria, Augustine argued that theological reflection,

[56] Friedrich Bodelschwingh, 'Eine kirchliche theologische Fakultät' (1895), GStA PK VI NL Althoff AI Nr. 35. Cf. Martin von Nathius, *Wissenschaft und Kirche im Streit um die theologischen Fakultäten* (Heilbronn, 1886).

[57] Philipp Zorn, 'Der Staat und die theologischen Fakultäten, Vortrag für die landeskirchliche Versammlung zu Berlin am 8.Mai 1895' (Berlin, 1895) and 'Die theologische Fakultäten und die preußische Landeskirche,' *National Zeitung* (16 May 1985), GStA PK VI NL Althoff AI Nr. 34.

[58] Peter Dietz (ed.), 'Briefe des Antistes Jakob Burckhardt an seinen Freund Johann Jakob Frei', *Baseler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 53 (1954): 124.

[59] Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1975), iv. 463.

[60] With justification F. W. Graf speaks of an intra-Protestant *Kulturkampf* that pitted 'liberal' Protestants against 'positive' ones. In this conflict, the theological faculties became a major bone of contention. See the introduction to F. W. Graf and Hans Martin Müller (eds.), *Der deutsche Protestantismus um 1900* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 10.

[61] Augustine, *City of God*; quoted in Oliver O'Donnovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7.

while it might freely borrow from pagan storehouses of knowledge, was ultimately a matter of *sapientia*, divine wisdom, not *scientia*, knowledge derived from human sources alone. Significantly, it was Clement who first gave full expression to the notion that human knowledge served well when it served as the handmaid of theology. In accord with practically all Church Fathers and numerous subsequent theologians, moreover, both Augustine and Clement affirmed the ecclesial framework of theology and argued that theological knowledge and scriptural interpretation, on which theology was necessarily based, were matters dependent on the spiritual well-being of the individual scholar's soul. 'The spiritual eye must be very clear from sin,' echoed the 1389 statutes of Vienna's theological faculty, 'in order to discern the lofty themes of theology. . . . The schools of theology must be not merely schools of science, but still more, schools of virtue and good morals.'[62]

In other words, from the vantage point of premodern Christianity, or at least influential strands thereof, normative theology was regarded as essentially suprascientific, wary of worldly political powers, and integrally tied to the doctrinal, spiritual, and practical concerns of the church, the *ecclesia*.[63] By contrast, numerous nineteenth-century German theologians, mirroring Harnack, Dillmann, and others, wound up holding an almost fundamentally opposite view: to avoid succumbing to ecclesiastical obscurantism, theology, in step with secular academic disciplines, should be rigorously scientific, intentionally aloof from church direction, and capable of thriving in a state-supported university environment.[64] The liberal theologian Martin Rade, for example, defined theology as a strictly 'historical-cultural science' whose subject matter happened to be Christianity.[65] Keeping theological faculties under a 'state educational ministry', Hermann Mulert averred, was an expression of Protestantism itself, allowing for the development of free science and preventing conservative ecclesiastical influences from effecting 'a devolution of the Protestant spirit [back] into a Catholic one'.[66]

[62] Quoted in Karl von Raumer, *German Universities* (New York, 1859), 25.

[63] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 8–10. In addition to Pannenberg, my reading of Augustine and the Early Church on political and scientific matters is indebted to Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Rudolf Lorenz, 'Die Wissenschaftslehre Augustins,' 67 *ZKG* (1955–6): 29 ff.; John Neville Figgis, *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God'* (London, 1921); and David C. Lindberg, 'Science and the Early Church', in David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (eds.), *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 19–48.

[64] e.g. see Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, *Die wissenschaftliche und die kirchliche Methode in der Theologie: Ein encyklopädischer Versuch* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1897).

[65] Noted in Graf and Müller (eds.), *Der deutsche Protestantismus um 1900*, 10.

[66] Hermann Mulert, *Evangelische Kirchen und theologische Fakultäten* (Tübingen, 1930), 36–7.

Summing up the situation of Protestant academic theology in 1908, Ernst Troeltsch could thus observe that theological faculties in Germany had grown 'indifferent to the problems of the church' even as they had adopted for themselves 'the normal scientific methods of [their] sister faculties'. What is more, Troeltsch noted that theological faculties operated in 'an educational system that was fully under the state and centralized'.[67] For such reasons, Troeltsch concluded that a 'frightful gulf' had developed between the life of the church and university theological faculties.[68] A representative at a Prussian church synod conference in 1903 similarly worried that a 'tension' in society threatened to become a 'rift', in which 'on one side stood science, represented by theology, [and] on the other side the unscientific belief of the congregation[s]'.[69]

How had such a situation come about? And what does it tell us about the confluence of German academic realities and the development of Protestant thought in the nineteenth century?

Admittedly, the foregoing considerations cry out for more precise definitions of how I understand 'the state' and 'science' in the nineteenth-century Prussian/German context. To keep the reader from having to guess, I shall briefly lay out conceptions on these subjects that inform this work. Thereafter I outline the principal parts of the book and highlight a few key arguments before offering some closing introductory considerations.

The broad political background for this book is what R. R. Palmer famously called 'the Age of Democratic Revolution', that epochal period in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which witnessed a fundamental reorientation of political authority across the Western world. In this reorientation, societies based on hierarchical order and religious tradition gradually—and in some cases explosively—gave way to ones expressing liberal, nationalistic, and individualistic principles. Institutions once sanctioned by age-old custom and divine mandate increasingly fell under the direction of human agency, deliberate amendment, and the expanded administrative ambitions and capacities of the state.[70]

Although it has often been posited that German-speaking lands did not experience political modernity fully, or else only 'peculiarly', notably failing to produce a liberal polity that measured up to that of France, Great Britain, or

[67] Troeltsch, *Die Trennung von Staat und Kirche*, 41.

[68] Ernst Troeltsch, 'Rückblick auf ein halbes Jahrhundert der theologischen Wissenschaft', *ZWT* 51 (1908): 97 ff.

[69] *Verhandlungen der fünften ordentlichen Generalsynode der evangelischen Landeskirchen Preußens, 15.Oktober 1903–4.November 1903* (Berlin, 1904), i. 645–6.

[70] R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), i. 5–13.

the United States, it is also recognized that the sweep of events by no means bypassed Germany, but left an indelible mark on German institutions, educational and ecclesiastical no less than political. The spirit of the French Revolution transmitted by the Napoleonic wars coloured nearly every aspect of German life in the early nineteenth century, especially after 1806 when the French army routed Prussian forces at the battle of Jena. Of particular significance for the future of Germany were the ensuing reforms in Prussia, effected by progressive statesmen such as Karl Friedrich Freiherr von Stein (1757–1831), Karl August von Hardenberg (1759–1822), and Karl Sigmund Franz von Altenstein (1770–1840). It was under such men and at this time, Thomas Nipperdey has remarked, 'that the foundations of the modern state . . . in Germany were laid'.[71]

But what kind of state was established at this time and how did its make-up and evolution affect the university and the church, the two institutions most relevant for understanding the social position of academic theology? To be sure, there has been no dearth of commentary on the rise of the modern German state in general and the so-called Prussian Reform Era (1807–15) in particular. Here I do not intend to review this impressive body of scholarship, but three points from it merit mention.

First, it is important to underscore the significance of the ability (as a consequence of the Napoleonic upheaval) of the state bureaucracy to establish itself in a position of power apart from the wishes of the monarch as under eighteenth-century 'enlightened despotism'. Indeed, Prussia's bureaucratic elite demonstrated extraordinary skills after 1806 to wrest powers from the monarch and achieve major social and political reforms. Otto Hintze has famously characterized the post-1806 reforms as the replacement of 'absolute monarchy' by 'bureaucratic monarchy'.[72] Similar scenarios played out in other German states. The reforming civil servants of this era served as the vanguard of the emerging educated middle class (*Bildungsbürgertum*), a historically important social group, which, though numerically small, dominated key positions in government, university, and church throughout the nineteenth century.[73] The progressive, rationalizing, meritocratic, and statist social vision they brought to these institutions informs the entire sweep of nineteenth-century history.

[71] Thomas Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck, 1800–1866*, trans. Daniel Nolan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 19.

[72] Otto Hintze, 'Das preussische Staatsministerium im 19.Jahrhundert,' in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, 2nd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), iii. 530 ff.

[73] R. Steven Turner, 'The *Bildungsbürgertum* and the Learned Professions in Prussia, 1770–1830: The Origins of a Class', *Historie Social-Social History* 13 (May 1980): 105–35.

Second, in the early nineteenth century, Prussia's new bureaucratic brain trust worked towards the establishment of a particular kind of state, one often described as a culture state (*Kulturstaat*) or tutelary state (*Erziehungsstaat*), a state that numbered among its paternalistic duties the goal of inspiring and educating its people to become 'appropriate citizens', ones who understood that their aspirations should coincide with the high and morally serious purposes of the emergent nation-state. Rooted in the ethos of German idealist philosophy, this new political ideology, Matthew Levinger has witten in a provocative study, sought 'to foster the moral and intellectual development of its people. . . . This tutelary ideal became central to Prussian political discourse largely because many intellectual and political leaders believed that it was vitally necessary to harmonize the desires of the people with the will of the state.'[74] Such an understanding of the state received consummate expression in J. G. Fichte's well-known *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1808), which called for a new 'national education' (*Nationalerziehung*) superintended by the state and removed from all corporative and ecclesiastical influence.[75]

Third, although the post-1806 reforms liberalized many quarters of Prussian society, the same reforms were accompanied by an unprecedented degree of state centralization. On the one hand, this can be seen as a continuation of eighteenth-century absolutist tendencies. Yet the reforms also represent a distinctly *modern*, post-revolutionary phenomenon in several respects. Officials had the ability to draw concrete examples from the Napoleonic reforms; France served simultaneously as a model, a driving force, and a catalyst, as well as an opposing pole for a variety of state-centralizing measures. What is more, the political situation in central Europe created by the French imperium provided officials with altogether new powers and opportunities against forces of feudalism and particularism—powers that far superseded those available to eighteenth-century statesmen. Finally, the new ethos of German idealism conferred on the state a 'philosophically revolutionary' character as the appropriate vehicle to realize modernity's universal aims against the particularist forces of the Old Regime.[76] To quote Nipperdey again, the Prussian reforms, 'deeply influenced by philosophy', would 'concentrate and intensify the power and effectiveness of the state; it would make it more rational and effective against all forms of feudal and particularist rule, and it would establish for the first time its sovereign power within its own borders, right down to the last inhabitant'.[77]

[74] Matthew Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 37.

[75] J. G. Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (Berlin, 1808).

[76] Hajo Holborn, 'German Idealism in the Light of Social History', in *Germany and Europe: Historical Essays by Hajo Holborn* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1971), 2.

[77] Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 20–1.

Both universities and churches were regarded by bureaucratic reformers as bastions of guild-like particularism *par excellence*, and thus as potential impediments to state-fostered modernity. Not surprisingly, these institutions were often selected for extensive reform and heightened government involvement, the result of which was a veritable sea change in the relationship of government to the educational and religious spheres of society.[78] Although I shall discuss the impact of these reforms in greater detail subsequently, something now should be said about the church–state relationship because of its crucial bearing on academic theology. For comparative purposes, it is illuminating to contrast the Prussian evolution of church–state relations in the early nineteenth century with that of the United States, my own country. Doing so presents a stark contrast.

In the United States, the period from the ratification of the Constitution (1787) to the middle decades of the nineteenth century witnessed what Nathan O. Hatch has called 'the democratization of American Christianity', an extraordinary upsurge of religious activity fuelled by populist preachers, increased denominationalism, and a diffuse egalitarian sentiment stemming from the American Revolution itself. The absence of a European-style national church, moreover, compounded by the radical separation of church and state in the Constitution's First Amendment, provided the legal and political framework for the spirit of religious voluntarism and the renewal of piety generally referred to by historians as 'the Second Great Awakening'.[79] Alexis de Tocqueville encountered this reality in the 1830s, and, though troubled by aspects of it, offered a generally positive evaluation. 'Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society,' Tocqueville wrote, 'but nevertheless it must be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country; for if it does not impart a taste for freedom, it facilitates the use of free institutions.'[80] As numerous commentators have noted, the religious voluntarism identified by Tocqueville and others, whatever its liabilities, laid a powerful groundwork for the development of private social activism, philanthropy, and independent moral judgement. The French neo-Thomist thinker Jacques Maritain has regarded such religious voluntarism as vital to shape 'a tradition of initiative and critical judgment' apart from 'the things that are Caesar's'.[81]

[78] Winfried Speitkampf, 'Educational Reforms in Germany between Revolution and Restoration', *GH* 10 (1992): 1–23.

[79] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Cf. Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 161 ff.

[80] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 287 ff.

[81] Jacques Maritain, *Christianisme et démocratie* (New York, 1943), 59. Cf. Norman A. Graebner, 'Christianity and Democracy: Tocqueville's Views of Religion in America', *JR* 56

By contrast, Prussia in the early nineteenth century (owing both to bureaucratic reforms after 1806 and the political and legal legacy of eighteenth-century absolutism) entered upon what I term an *Erastian modernity*,[82] a process whereby the churches were virtually annexed to the modernizing state and subjected to major government oversight and regulation, which extended down to theological education and parish life—and at times even to liturgy and doctrine.[83] To be sure, such development would not have been possible without historical antecedents in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[84] Further, the Prussian Civil Code of 1794 had already made it clear that all '"church societies" [were] subject to state authority'.[85] However, the extent of state centralization arrived at after 1806 brought with it a virtual cessation of any vestige of ecclesiastical autonomy in Prussia. Church affairs were handed over to the the newly established Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Education (*die Sektion des Kultus und des öffentlichen Unterrichts*), a division of the Ministry of the Interior, elevated in 1817 to a self-standing ministry (the so-called *Kultusministerium* or, imprecisely translated, Ministry of Culture).[86] Among its first tasks were the abolition of traditional church governing bodies or consistories (*Konsistorien*), the secularization of church

(1976): 263–73. Despite his contempt for many aspects of American culture, even Max Weber believed that the American religious system 'encouraged individual initiative and efficiency and was a source of self-respect'. See Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'Max Weber in America', *American Scholar* 69 (2000): 106. Cf. Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States or the American Idea of Religious Liberty and its Practical Effects* (New York, 1888) and Milton B. Powell (ed.), *The Voluntary Church: American Religious Life, 1740–1860, Seen Through the Eyes of European Visitors* (New York: Macmillan 1967).

[82] 'Erastianism' refers to the ascendency of the state over the church in ecclesiastical affairs. The term derives from the sixteenth-century Swiss doctor and theologian Thomas Erastus (1524–83). His works, especially in their English translations, spread the notion that spiritual and religious affairs must be subordinated to the civil laws of the state. See *RGG* ii. 538. In this study I use the term rather loosely to refer to state intrusion in ecclesiastical and theological matters and/or to the belief that the church's submission to the directives of the state and the state's authority is a salutary social arrangement.

[83] See Hartmut Lehmann, 'The Role of Religion in Germany and America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in Elizabeth Glaser and Hermann Wellenreuther (eds.), *Bridging the Atlantic: The Question of American Exceptionalism in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69–81.

[84] See Heinz Schilling, 'The Reformation and the Rise of the Early Modern State', in James D. Tracy, (ed.), *Luther and the Modern State in Germany* (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1986).

[85] Rudolf von Thadden, *Prussia: The History of a Lost State*, trans. Angi Rutter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 98.

[86] Ernst Müsebeck, *Das preussische Kultusministerium vor hundert Jahren* (Stuttgart, 1918), 44 ff. For the sake of convenience, I shall often refer to this ministry as the Ministry of Culture, although admittedly 'culture' is an imprecise translation of 'Kultus', which has more specifically religious connotations.

properties, and the development of a more centralized educational system at all levels.

The Erastian measures of the early nineteenth century were tied to a novel supraconfessional conception of Christianity prevalent among key sectors of Prussian officialdom. This conception had two sources. On the one hand, it grew out of longstanding, practical political needs. Ever since the conversion of Johann Sigismund (1572–1619), Elector of Brandenburg, to Calvinism in 1613, the House of Brandenburg had faced the problem of how best to govern a confessionally mixed population, whose majority religion (Lutheranism) differed from that of the ruling house (Calvinism).[87] This problem had often led ministers to pursue policies of harmony between the major Protestant confessions, while promoting a policy of guarded toleration towards Catholics, Jews, and Nonconformists. Elements of this sensibility were driven to their logical conclusion under Friedrich Wilhelm III (r. 1797–1840) in his 1817 state-orchestrated merger of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches into one Protestant Union Church (*Unionskirche*). With the acquisition of more Catholic territories along the Rhine after the Congress of Vienna (1815), the confessional dilemma thickened. This led to additional measures by officials to achieve 'parity' between Catholics and Protestants with respect to their relationship to the state—even if the former were still widely regarded as culturally inferior.[88]

The politics of confessional harmony (among Protestants) and parity (with Catholics) was augmented in the early nineteenth century by a new intellectual tendency, growing out of idealist philosophy, that sought simultaneously to validate the state as a positive moral force and to define religion not in particular credal terms but in terms that emphasized religion's thought- and morality-inducing qualities and its social value for *Nationalerziehung*. The particular creeds and infighting among actual churches, by contrast, were viewed as wanting when judged by this more philosophically refined, socially instrumental conception of religion. Many of the major Prussian ministers, and especially Karl von Altenstein, a devotee of Fichte and Hegel and the powerful Kultusminister from 1817 to 1840, had been influenced by this aspect of German idealism and did not hesitate to use the authority of the state to promote it.[89] Accordingly, in marked contrast to the anticlericalism of the

[87] Robert M. Bigler, *The Politics of German Protestantism: The Rise of the Prussian Church Elite in Prussia, 1815–1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 6.

[88] Troeltsch, *Die Trennung von Staat und Kirche*, 41 ff., and Solte, *Theologie an der Universität*, 92–6. See 'Parität' in *ESL* 1471.

[89] See Eduard Spranger, 'Altensteins Denkschrift von 1807 und ihre Beziehung zur Philosophie', *FBPG* 18 (1906): 107–58 and Frank Schuurmans, 'Economic Liberalization, Honour, and Perfectibility: Karl Sigmund Altenstein and the Spritualization of Liberalism', *GH* 16 (1998): 165–84.

French Revolution and the religious free-for-all of the young United States, Prussia embarked on a modernizing course that not only blurred the boundaries between state and church, but actually assigned to the state the task of harnessing religion to serve its own progressive, tutelary ends.

A consequence of this view, however, was that the church's relevance as a concrete, historical force and as an intermediary institution between the individual and the state was greatly attenuated. Religion was spiritualized, made immanent in the general experience of humanity, divorced from the necessity of particularist, ecclesiastical manifestations. Since in idealist thought 'the state was the realization not only of law but also of morality', notes Hajo Holborn, then 'the church loses any vital role it had in history'.[90] Admittedly, few idealist thinkers, minister-reformers, or the Prussian king would have put it quite like this, and none went as far as Richard Rothe who, as we have seen, came to view churches as superfluous to the realization of religious values on earth. Nonetheless, the steady (occasionally aggressive) *Verstaatlichung* of the church through the agency of the Ministry of Culture bears witness to the greatly diminished importance of ecclesiastical and doctrinal realities in the eyes of the new reform-minded bureaucratic class. In a word, churches represented both the dogmatic excesses and particularist intransigence of the Old Regime. As such, they became the objects of a state-orchestrated 'revolution' in their polity, through which the government sought to remake them and press them into the service of its own progressive, bureaucratic, and, indeed, very religious ideals.[91]

The implications of such a religious policy for this study are threefold. First, since clergymen, society's future religious leaders, were required to pass through theological faculties before seeking ordination, the state in the early nineteenth century began to take a much more active interest in the operations of these venerable university bodies. In order to blunt confessional distinctions, the state deliberately encouraged a theology—and an academic ethos generally—more latitudinarian and scientific than apologetic or confessional in orientation. The University of Berlin was founded, for example, to 'completely repudiate' the confessional character of the older territorial universities.[92] One sees this policy, furthermore, in the efforts by Johannes Schulze, the key aide of Altenstein in the Ministry of Culture, to establish theological seminars intended to foster historical and philological criticism (*Kritik*) as the foundation of theological excellence. One observes the same tendency in the ubiquitous state examinations (*Staatsexamen*) required for

[90] Holborn, 'German Idealism in the Light of Social History', in *Germany and Europe*, 1–32.
[91] John Groh, *Nineteenth-Century German Protestantism: The Church as Social Model* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 1–25.
[92] Paulsen, *German Universities*, 54.

parish candidates, recent graduates of theological faculties. Increasingly, standardized exams, which served simultaneously as accrediting mechanisms, agents of professionalization, and means of state oversight, came to emphasize scholarly exertion over practical, doctrinal, or apologetic considerations.[93]

Second, the sanctioning of a less confessional, more scholarly theology allowed the state to adopt a more sanguine view of academic freedom than had hitherto been the case. To be sure, theologians, like other faculty who promoted potentially subversive political views, were rarely left alone. Still, those whose academic pursuits led them beyond the boundaries of strict orthodoxy often continued to receive state support and patronage, even after the repressive Karlsbad Decrees (1819), which ushered in a period of political and religious reaction. A case in point is the official support offered by the Ministry of Culture in 1830 to the rationalist theologians Friedrich Gesenius and J. A. Wegscheider at Halle against the pleas of their orthodox and pietist critics.[94] Thus, despite the well-documented conservatism of the Vormärz period (1815–48), the ideal of freedom of enquiry continued to gain saliency (if furtively at times) and eventually it received a legal guarantee in Prussia's 1850 Constitution—'Die Wissenschaft und ihre Lehre ist frei' (§20)—and this became the foundation of subsequent constitutional measures in Germany.[95] However, throughout the nineteenth century Prussia's much-vaunted academic freedom coexisted uneasily with the state's extensive control of higher education.[96]

Finally, the government became more involved in the actual composition of theological faculties through the process of hiring. Throughout the nineteenth century, churches and church bodies had little genuine power over the candidates who received university appointments in theology. Professors too had little say in picking their future colleagues, except the right to make suggestions (*Vorschlagsrecht*) to the Ministry of Culture; but these were often only perfunctorily considered or outright denied.[97] Instead of basing

[93] While such state examinations go back to the eighteenth century, they were greatly overhauled at the beginning of the nineteenth century. On the *Staatsexamen* in Prussia, see the article on 'Pfarrervorbildung' in *RGG* v. 293–300. Cf. Edward Robinson, 'Theological Education in Germany. Part III: Examinations, Ministerial Standing, etc.', *Biblical Repository* 3 (July 1831): 414 ff. and Paulsen, *German Universities*, 384 ff.

[94] Müsebeck, *Das preussische Kultusministerium*, 211–20. This episode will be treated in Ch. 4.

[95] Solte, *Theologie an der Universität*, 10.

[96] E. R. Huber, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte seit 1789* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1957), i. 265.

[97] On this score, a major difference between Protestant and Catholic faculties existed. The Catholic Church secured the right for bishops to reject a theology professor 'because of serious doubts concerning his orthodoxy or his conduct'. This separate legal arrangement often inspired liberals all the more to charge that Catholic theological faculties were unworthy of university status. See Mulert, *Evangelischen Kirchen und theologischen Fakultäten*, 1–9.

appointments on doctrinal or collegiate considerations, the Ministry of Culture increasingly turned to disciplinary and scholarly criteria in making their decisions. Not surprisingly, this tended to raise the rigors of scholarship at the expense of doctrine as the more important determinant for both receiving a position and gaining preferment. While doctrinal criteria by no means vanished (state officials in fact often extolled a policy of parity in hiring and promoting rival theological outlooks), an overall heightened emphasis on scholarly aptitude represented a major shift away from the confessional rigidities of the premodern university; and if this is not the only factor, it is at least a highly significant one for explaining the 'singular burst' of theological scholarship in nineteenth-century Germany.[98]

In sum, throughout this work I contend that the Prussian state in general and its policies towards the church and university in particular were of great consequence for the operations of theological faculties and the shaping of Protestant academic theology. By promoting confessional harmony, emphasizing critical scholarship over apologetics, standardizing and mandating state-run accrediting procedures, and maintaining a firm grip on hiring procedures, the state managed to exercise tremendous influence over the religious sphere in society in general. While certain social groups—ultramontane Catholics and Jews obviously, so-called Old Lutherans (who resisted the Church Union of 1817), a minority of free church advocates, and some disgruntled pietists—fell outside the scope of this policy or ran foul of it, mainstream Protestant academic theology as a whole was integrated remarkably well into the *Kulturstaat* ideal. This outcome contributed significantly, by the post-1871 imperial period, to an ascendant 'Kulturprotestantismus' or 'Bildungsprotestantismus', which in turn, in the words of F. W. Graf, functioned as the 'civil-religious foundation' of the German Empire.[99]

While I contrasted these 'Erastian' tendencies in Prussia with the situation in the United States, where near religious anarchy prevailed in the young republic, I should make clear that I do not intend to suggest that the Prussian-Erastian model was necessarily a peculiarly German development—a church–state 'special path' or *Sonderweg*, so to speak. While the magnitude and consequence of the Prussian measures stand out and should be noted as such, one observes family resemblances in other European state-church systems; and one could find variant 'civil religions' in many modern political cultures—not least in the United States.

[98] Claude Welch, 'The Problem of a History of Nineteenth-Century Theology', *JR* 52 (1972): 9.

[99] See Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, 'Protestantische Theologie in der Gesellschaft des Kaiserreichs', in Graf (ed.), *Profile des neuzeitlichen Protestantismus: Kaiserreich* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1992), ii. 16.

What is more, the reach of the Prussian state over churches and universities resembles the actions of many modernizing, reforming states in another, more general respect. In his wide-ranging work on modern statecraft, James C. Scott has argued that a recurring pattern in bureaucracy-driven, modern states, whether in Europe or elsewhere, has been a tendency to place a premium on 'an imperial or hegemonic planning mentality' that disparages the historic role of local, practical, and traditional knowledge—knowledge presumably often anchored in religious communities. Such a tendency is amply borne out by the actions of the Prussian Ministry of Culture toward the religious sphere throughout much of the nineteenth century. From the aforementioned policies of Altenstein and Schulze in the early nineteenth century to the heavy-handed actions of Adalbert Falk (1827–1900) and Friedrich Althoff (1839–1908), among the more important cultural bureaucrats of the late nineteenth century, this Ministry actively, if not invariably, sought to encourage theology's scientization and modernization. Using the parlance of Scott, the Ministry undertook efforts to 'simplify' academic theology, transforming it from a residually apologetic and sometimes obscurantist enterprise, potentially disruptive to the *Kulturstaat* ideal, 'into a legible and administratively more convenient format', one more in step with the high-minded Protestant and scientific directions of the state.[100] Again, it carried out such measures through minimizing confessionalism (at least among Protestants), pursuing parity among church factions, standardizing and implementing examination procedures, limiting the influence of church bodies in theological hiring and education, and sanctioning a critical-scholarly understanding of the theological vocation, one that drew its criteria of excellence and evaluation largely from *wissenschaftlich* standards shared by non-theological disciplines. The result was a theology truly remarkable in the history of Christian thought for its detachment from credal and ecclesial interests, for its many-layered connections to a modern state, and for its critical rigour and scientific aspirations.

Science was central to the *Kulturstaat*. One even finds the terms *Kulturstaat* and *Wissenschaftsstaat* used interchangeably. How then are we to understand science, or *Wissenschaft*, during the period covered by this study? As is regularly noted, the German word *Wissenschaft* does not lend itself to easy translation into English: while 'science' might be appropriate in some cases, 'enquiry' or 'knowledge' or other cognate terms might be more suitable in others. Unlike the English 'science', moreover, *Wissenschaft* never carried the strong connotation of natural or physical science, but always

[100] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 6 ff.

included the cultural or human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) as well. In short, rigorous, systematic enquiry into whatever subject might be considered *wissenschaftlich*.[101]

As I shall elaborate more fully in Ch. 3, the term first gained its distinctly modern currency among idealist thinkers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At this time, *Wissenschaft* came to convey a monistic, totalizing, even Promethean attitude to human knowledge, something that both provided a comprehensive worldview and allowed enquiry into the transcendental principles justifying all systematic method and explanation. In this sense, Fichte wrote with unflagging exuberance on 'the science of knowing', *Wissenschaftslehre*.[102] A *wissenschaftlich* cast of mind, Friedrich Schleiermacher wrote in 1808, allowed one 'to lay open the whole body of learning and expound both the principles and the foundations of all knowledge'.[103] The theme of organic wholeness, suggested here by Schleiermacher, was widely expressed by idealist thinkers—hence the recurring phrase 'totality of science' (*Ganzheit der Wissenschaft*) in the literature on the subject. The preoccupation with unity is also seen in the numerous 'encyclopedias' produced in the nineteenth century. An eighteenth-century genre invigorated by idealism, these encyclopedias were regarded as comprehensive accounts of individual disciplines and knowledge in general—a genre that arguably received consummate expression in Hegel's famous *Encyklopädie* (1817, 1827).

With justification, R. Steven Turner has characterized early nineteenth-century idealist conceptions of *Wissenschaft* not so much as science per se but as a set of beliefs or an ideology about science (*Wissenschaftsideologie*), a devout faith in the mind's duty and capacity to enquire into and represent the basic essence of things, and through such activities to improve human character (*Bildung*).[104] This conception of *Wissenschaft* was prevalent at the time of the establishment of the University of Berlin, extolled in many of the

[101] For the sake of convenience, I shall often translate *Wissenschaft* simply as 'science' or leave it untranslated.

[102] Among his most important works, the *Wissenschaftslehre* of Fichte was first published in 1794. See Rolf-Peter Horstmann, 'The Early Philosophy of Fichte and Schelling', in Karl Ameriks (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 118–27.

[103] Schleiermacher, 'Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn, nebst einem Anhang über eine neu zu errichtende (1808)', in Eduard Spranger (ed.), *Fichte, Schleiermacher, Steffens über das Wesen der Universität* (Leipzig, 1910), 126 ff. Schleiermacher elaborated on his conception of science and human knowing in various lectures on 'dialectics' offered in Berlin's philosophical faculty. See Schleiermacher, *Dialektik (1811)*, ed. Andreas Arndt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986).

[104] See R. Steven Turner, 'The Growth of Professorial Research in Prussia, 1818–1848—Causes and Context', in Russell McCormmach (ed.), *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences* (Philadelphia, 1971), iii. 137–82.

treatises occasioned by this institution's founding. Its importance for shaping the modern academic enterprise, while subject to exaggeration, has been considerable. As Jean-François Lyotard has written, this conception of science served as 'the philosophy that legitimated the foundation of the University of Berlin and was meant to be the motor both of its development and the development of contemporary knowledge'.[105]

Ascendent during the heyday of German idealism, the new *Wissenschaftsideologie* was shaped and altered by yet newer intellectual currents as idealism declined in the university shortly before mid-century. Scholars therefore often distinguish between early (roughly 1790s–1830s) and later (post-1830s) understandings of *Wissenschaft*.[106] At the beginning of the century, the idealist conceptions held true: usages of *Wissenschaft* reflected typically idealist monistic, synthetic, and encyclopedic tendencies. However, as the nineteenth-century wore on and under the influence of positivism, the growth of the natural sciences, disciplinary specialization, and the exigencies of industrialization and technology, *Wissenschaft* gradually lost its grand, idealist associations and took on a more limited definition with reference to particular academic fields, empirical rigour, and the putative ideological neutrality of the scholar.[107] This idea of neutrality—or *Voraussetzungslosigkeit* (literally 'presuppositionlessness')—as a characteristic of *Wissenschaft* became especially pronounced towards the end of the nineteenth century; it was often trumpeted by secular and progressive Protestant scholars to criticize those, notably Roman Catholics, believed to be incapable of producing true science because of their adherence to confessional oaths.[108] Quite often, this criterion of science was invoked to suggest that all theology, Protestant as well as Catholic, represented an 'alien substance' (*Fremdkörper*) within the modern scientific university.[109]

In a widely discussed address, 'Changes in the University over the Last 100 Years' (1913), Eduard Spranger summed up the transformations of science in

[105] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 34.

[106] Joseph Ben-David, *The Scientist's Role in Society: A Comparative Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 108–9.

[107] On this influence of positivism in Germany in the nineteenth century, see W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 238–63.

[108] Theodor Mommsen claimed that the 'Lebensnerv' of the modern university was 'die voraussetzungslose Forschung'. See Theodor Mommsen, 'Universitätsunterricht und Konfession', in *Reden und Aufsätze*, 2nd edn. (Berlin, 1905), 432 ff. See also Otto Baumgarten, *Die Voraussetzungslosigkeit der protestantischen Theologie* (Kiel, 1903) and Jürgen von Kempski,' "Voraussetzungslosigkeit," eine Studie zur Geschichte eines Wortes', *Archiv für Philosophie* 4 (1952): 157–74.

[109] Solte, *Theologie an der Universität*, 14 ff.

the nineteenth century, to which I have alluded. Striking a culturally pessimistic tone, Spranger argued that the idealist notion of 'the unity of science', dominant since the founding of the University of Berlin, had gradually given way to a situation of intellectual fragmentation precipitated by specialized research and the spread of positivist thought. In Spranger's formulation:

We have reached the point at which the current conception of science (*Wissenschaft*) fundamentally differs from that of German idealistic philosophy. Present-day science does not worry about the whole; it thus no longer strives after a worldview and the capacity for a worldview. Rather, it works on its individual problems and regards the highest acclaim in solving special problems through the most refined methods and the most careful individual research. In other words, present-day science stands under the decisive influence of positivism . . . an almost anarchic form of positivism, which knows only limitless scientific activity.[110]

A similar, if more sanguine, assessment of the transformed meaning of *Wissenschaft* appeared in a rectorial address by the acclaimed pathologist and Prussian statesman Rudolf Virchow. Writing near century's end, Virchow summed up the nineteenth century as a 'transition from the philosophic to the scientific age'. The former he associated with the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm III (1797–1840) and the speculative philosophies of Hegel and Schelling. The passing of these figures ended a 'magic spell', paving the way for a 'more . . . empirical observation of nature', one conducive to the development of verifiable science and science-promoting institutions within the university such as laboratories, seminars, clinics, and institutes.[111]

The *locus classicus* of post-idealist German scholarly self-understanding, however, remains Max Weber's famous address, 'Science as a Vocation'. Delivered first to an academic audience at the University of Munich in 1917, the address made the point that university science, undergoing 'a phase of specialization previously unknown', had developed in such a manner as to preclude from its purview not only the quest for an encompassing intellectual unity, but also all normative moral and religious concerns. Eschewing value judgements about the final purposes of knowledge as well as pronouncements about the meaning of human life, modern researchers, in Weber's interpretation, simply proliferate facts *ad infinitum* and attempt to relate them to one another. In Weber's own words:

Science today is . . . organized in special disciplines in the service of self-clarification and knowledge of interrelated facts. It is not the gift of grace of seers and prophets dispensing sacred values and revelations, nor does it partake of the contemplation of

[110] Eduard Spranger, *Wandlungen im Wesen der Universität seit 100 Jahren* (Leipzig, 1913), 23.

[111] Rudolf Virchow, *Die Gründung der Berliner Universität und der Uebergang aus dem philosophischen in das naturwissenschaftliche Zeitalter* (Berlin, 1893).

sages and philosophers about the meaning of the universe. This, to be sure, is the inescapable condition of our historical situation.[112]

With minor variations, Spranger, Virchow, and Weber's accounts of and/or assumptions about the trajectory of nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft* have since been echoed and elaborated upon by numerous scholars.[113] Even if one were to doubt certain aspects of their formulations—such as the validity of Virchow's epic categories, the 'philosophic' and 'scientific' ages—one could hardly contend that the concept and practice of *Wissenschaft* remained static throughout the nineteenth century. Accordingly, I shall try to be sensitive to *Wissenschaft*'s evolving meanings, purposes, and institutional manifestations. Yet I shall concurrently argue that two important continuities in the early ('idealist') and later ('positivist') nineteenth-century understandings of *Wissenschaft* should be noted.

First, while idealist thought is known mainly for its preoccupation with formulating the organic unity of knowledge, it was also, in a lesser key, attuned to the progressive and dynamic character of professorial scholarship, the taproot of later innovative research and disciplinary specialization.[114] Already in the 1790s, for example, Fichte had defined the task of the scholar as follows: 'One should never rest, and never believe that one has done one's duty until one has succeeded in advancing one's discipline. As long as one lives one can always work toward the advancement of one's discipline.'[115] Similarly, Wilhelm von Humboldt famously argued the new university in Berlin was based on the principle that *Wissenschaft* implied 'a never completely solved problem' and therefore one was 'never done with investigation and research'.[116] While expressed at the height of German idealism's influence, Fichte and Humboldt's words reveal an impulse that would continue to be crucial for the endeavour of modern research. Once transposed from its idealist context, this impulse would transform the nature of professorial scholarship, changing its emphasis from an insistence on unity and encyclopedic comprehensiveness to a self-justifying, open-ended quest for intellectual discovery, radical innovation, and the perpetual expansion of

[112] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', Gerth and Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 134, 152.

[113] See e.g. the very rich collection of essays in Kathryn M. Oslesko (eds.), *Science in Germany: The Intersection of Institutional and Intellectual Issues. Osiris* 5 (1989).

[114] Theodore Ziolkowski has helpfully characterized this view of knowledge among idealist thinkers as 'a diachronic organic process'. See Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and its Institutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 251.

[115] J. G. Fichte, *The Purpose of Higher Education*, trans. Jorn K. Bramann (Mt. Savage, Md.: Nightsun, 1988), 56.

[116] Humboldt, 'Über die innere und äuβere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin,' in Anrich (ed.), *Die Idee der deutschen Universität*, 377.

knowledge—still the hallmarks of the contemporary research university. But again, this latter emphasis represents not so much a fundamental break from the idealist heritage, as it is sometimes portrayed, but rather the development of tendencies latent within idealist thought itself.[117]

A second element of continuity suggests itself by the fact that while the quest for organic unity was superseded by increasingly specialized scholarly endeavours, unity itself was by no means extinguished as a normative academic ideal. It just became harder to affirm in the light of proliferating fields and subfields. It receded into the background, but it did not vanish. One sees its continuing vitality, for example, in the numerous 'encyclopedias' produced in the mid- and late nineteenth century, which, still in the spirit of Hegel, purported offering a comprehensive orientation to the various domains of human knowledge. The genre of theological encyclopedia, which we shall examine, fits this category; it too illustrates, in an age of specialization, the powerful inertia of idealism's totalizing impulse.

In some instances, increasing specialization prompted sophisticated rearticulations of the unitary ideal. In 1874 the renowned historian Heinrich von Sybel (1817–95) likened the contemporary expansion of knowledge to trees joined at the root, whose rapidly multiplying branches by no means compromised an essential, organic unity.

> In the depths of ancient forests you frequently find groups of trees, four or five powerful stems close together, whose tops spread their branches far and wide in all directions, but when you come to examine them more closely you find that they all grow from one single root. Thus it is with the different branches of science; they stretch out in many different directions, but he who digs deep below the surface finds the common root.[118]

To be sure, such an overture to unity has a definite ring of nostalgia, articulated, as it was, in an academic milieu characterized by unprecedented

[117] In making this argument, I should be clear that I do not intend to overvalue the causal importance of German idealism. Past scholarship, notably the work of Paulsen, has often come close to this view. Under the influence of idealism, Paulsen wrote, 'the German universities... have developed into what they are today: the workshops and the forges of the intellectual life of our people'. But such a view overestimates purely intellectual causes, while neglecting developments in politics, academic organization, and the changing socioeconomic order. I make efforts to give non-intellectual factors their due, while still noting the importance of intellectual factors, which I too believe are crucial. The causal nexus of the 'modern university' is multifaceted. See Paulsen, *Die deutschen Universitäten und das Universitätsstudium* (Berlin, 1902), 205. For an interpretation of the growth of research in the university that privileges socioeconomic factors, see Helmuth Plessner, 'Zur Soziologie der modernen Forschung und ihrer Organisation in der deutschen Universität—Tradition und Ideologie', in Plessner, *Diesseits der Utopie: Ausgewählte Beiträge zur Kultursoziologie* (Hamburg: Diederichs, 1966), 121–43.

[118] Heinrich von Sybel, *Die deutschen Universitäten, ihre Leistungen und Bedürfnisse* (Bonn, 1874), 19–20.

expansion and diversification. Thus, while unity was never fully eclipsed as a worthwhile ideal, as I maintain, it undeniably came to be overshadowed by the imperative for greater individual scholarly expertise and specialization. 'It is an essential point in German university education,' Sybel wrote, giving expression to this imperative in the same address as his nostalgic paean to unity,

> that the student gain a clear consciousness of the aim of science and the operations by which science reaches this aim. It is necessary for the student to go himself through these operations with regard to one subject . . . to follow up some problems to their last consequences—up to the point where he can say that there is nobody in this world who, on this point and on this subject, can teach him any more; a point where he can say here he stands safe and firm on his own feet, and decides entirely by his own judgment.[119]

It was, finally, this imperative—an institutionalized mandate to produce novel insights and develop individual expertise—that became the signature feature of the 'German university' by the late nineteenth century.

Its bearing on theological faculties was considerable.

Quite obviously, the relationship of *Wissenschaft* to theology in the nineteenth century is a fundamental concern of this study. It would be remiss, however, to assume this relationship to be one of absolute conflict, a struggle between the 'progressive' forces of science and the 'reactionary' forces of religion. Regrettably, this overwrought dualism, classically expressed in such Anglo-American, Victorian-era works as J. W. Draper's *History of the Conflict between Science and Religion* (1875) and Andrew Dickson White's *The Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1876), has had a long and lamentable influence on general conceptions of modern European intellectual history. Yet it is among the least insightful approaches to the dynamics of *Wissenschaft* and theology in the context of the nineteenth-century German university. In the first place, the dualism suggests an oversimplified, ahistorical understanding of the line dividing the protagonists of modern science and their detractors: booster on one side, naysayers on the other. In reality, this line was jagged, changing, and unclear; and it often cut through the minds of particular indivduals. Equally important, the dualism cannot account for the eagerness with which many theologians embraced *Wissenschaft*, seeing in its explanatory and systematizing power a means to rejuvenate Christianity under the cultural conditions of modernity. This is not to say that the 'scientization' of academic life in the nineteenth century was devoid of secularizing consequences. It is to say that many leading theological voices did not construe *Wissenschaft*—whether in its idealist or positivist guise—as a necessary threat

[119] Ibid. 18.

to theological verities. In fact, liberal Protestant theologians often interpreted the critical rigours of modern enquiry as the logical, historical fruit of the Reformation, which had challenged the dogmatic rigidities of Catholicism.[120] To reject *Wissenschaft* therefore was tantamount to vitiating the purest and most progressive form of human religious consciousness: modern Protestantism.[121] Turning away from the spirit of *Wissenschaft*, as one theologian put it, amounted to 'a defection from the essence of Protestantism'.[122]

Wissenschaft itself, moreover, came to be invested with certain religious qualities. Anyone reading the paeans to *Wissenschaft* penned by Fichte and Schelling, and numerous other nineteenth-century scholars, cannot help but be struck by the quasi-religious character of their words. In his rectorial address at the University of Berlin, for example, Fichte proclaimed that the new university qua citadel of *Wissenschaft* was 'the most holy thing which the human race possesses' and that the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation amounted to 'the visible representation of the immortality of our race'.[123] It is perhaps no wonder then that conservative clergymen and theologians sometime complained about the idolatrous character of modern critical science, believing that it had become for many people 'a surrogate for religion'.[124]

Ersatz-religion or no, the importance of *Wissenschaft* for understanding the theological enterprise in the nineteenth century is hardly a matter of dispute. Whether one rejected, applauded, questioned, or compromised with it, the exigencies of modern scholarly enquiry and their relationship to the age-old tasks of theology commanded the attention of practically all theologians, irrespective of confession, background, or intellectual skill.[125] 'The right of theology to exist alongside other *Wissenschaften*', as Claude Welch has noted, became one of the 'major preoccupations' of the century.[126] It was a preoccupation played out in lecture halls, journals, books, correspondences, and

[120] See e.g. Adolf von Harnack's 1917 address, *Martin Luther und die Grundlegung der Reformation* (Berlin, 1917).

[121] The association of *Wissenschaft* and Protestantism could produce bitter anti-Catholic sentiments, evidenced by the number of leading liberal theologians who became members of the anti-Catholic 'Evangelischen Bund zur Wahrung der deutsch-protestantischen Interessen'. See Graf, 'Protestantische Theologie in der Gesellschaft des Kaiserreichs', in Graf (ed.), *Profile des neutzeitlichen Protestantismus*, ii. 17, 44 ff.

[122] Adolf Hilgenfeld, 'Die wissenschaftliche Theologie und ihre gegenwärtige Aufgabe', *ZWT* 1 (Jena 1858): 2.

[123] Fichte, *Ueber die einzig mögliche Störung der akademischen Freiheit* (Berlin, 1812), 5–6, NStUB 8 H lit. part. II 1350.

[124] These are the words of E. W. Hengstenberg in the *EKZ* 62 (27 August 1828): 545.

[125] This is true for even those theological faculties, such as Rostock, Erlangen, and Greifswald, that maintained stronger confessional identities. See Franz Schnabel, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert: Die religiöse Kräfte* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1951), iv. 527–9.

[126] Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, i. 4–5.

faculty meetings. The 'burning . . . question of the day,' as one theologian typically expressed the matter, '[is] whether an unscientific or scientific spirit (*Unwissenschaftlichkeit oder Wissenschaftlichkeit*) reigns in theology, whether the German people should have a clergy . . . hostile to intellectual life or a clergy friendly to science and thoroughly educated.'[127]

3. PLAN OF STUDY

My principal aim in this study is to interpret the evolution of the modern German university and Protestant academic theology as interrelated phenomena. As I have indicated, this also requires underscoring the influences of the political order and science, *Staat* and *Wissenschaft*, over both academic organization and theological enquiry. A number of subsidiary and supplementary lines of enquiry contribute to my general purpose.

In Chapter 2, I offer several background considerations to help the reader place the subsequent sections in a broader and deeper historical context. Since the nineteenth-century university broke from and/or developed out of practices and assumptions of the medieval and early modern university, I believe it necessary to consider, if briefly, exactly what these practices and assumptions were, especially as they pertain to theological education and the place of theology among other academic disciplines. All too often treatments of the modern university begin with the watershed of the Enlightenment and the early nineteenth century and move headlong towards the present. In beginning earlier, I implicitly question this approach, suggesting instead that premodern antecedents are vitally important for contextualizing and understanding the topics of this study.

Chapter 2 finds its centre of gravity, however, in a discussion of the eighteenth-century university and the forces of inertia and novelty, stagnation and innovation, that characterized it. For a variety of reasons, German universities were in major decline in the eighteenth century, intellectually ossifying and beset by myriad administrative and financial difficulties. At the same time, the century witnessed several important, new university foundings—particularly the University of Halle (1694) in Prussia and the University of Göttingen (1737) in Hanover—that introduced vigorous new impulses to higher education. These 'reform universities' are examined for their incipiently modernizing characteristics. I also underscore the statutory, curricular, and scholarly contributions made to them by theologians, foremost August

[127] Hilgenfeld, 'Die wissenschaftliche Theologie', *ZWT* 21.

Hermann Francke (1663–1727) at Halle and Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1694–1755) at Göttingen.

Finally, in Ch. 2 I examine what Immanuel Kant famously called 'the conflict of the faculties'. While I focus considerable attention on Kant's own work, *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), I indicate that its criticisms of the status quo in the universities were not isolated phenomena, but reflected a developed body of criticism among eighteenth-century progressive thinkers. Like Kant, others too wanted to effect a spirit of change in the ordering of the faculties. Principally, this meant diminishing the authority of the theological faculty in favour of the philosophical faculty, which Kant, in a letter to his friend Carl Friedrich Stäudlin of Göttingen, revealingly called 'the opposition bench against the theological faculty'.[128] Examining Kant's work and the late eighteenth-century ideas informing it, in turn, helps set the scene for the founding of the University of Berlin—an event profoundly shadowed by the legacy of the Königsberg philosopher himself.

Chapter 3 then focuses attention on the establishment of the University of Berlin (1810), its early years of operation, and this institution's implications for the future of theological instruction and scholarship. One feature that distinguishes Berlin's founding from those of older universities was the energetic outpouring of theoretical treatises on higher education that preceded the actual event. Together, these writings provide a remarkable window onto a variety of intellectual trends and cultural realities of the time; they also bear witness to an acute sense of modernity, an idealist and post-revolutionary sense that 'the human spirit' possessed an entirely new range of individual and institutional possibilities. My analysis of these documents concentrates on the question of what role the theological faculty was to play in the new university. Should it be drastically reduced or even eliminated, as some suggested, or should it be given a new academic lease so long as it could demonstrate an ability to adapt to the post-1789 world order and the new scholarly demands of *Wissenschaft*?

Ultimately, the strategy of adaptation proved to be the case—a position successfully advocated by Friedrich Schleiermacher. Not surprisingly, this historically pivotal theologian and polymath, the founder and first dean of Berlin's theological faculty and later the rector of the University, occupies a prominent role in chapter 3. Focusing particular attention on his *Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn* (1808), his *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* (1811), and several noteworthy memoranda from his pen, I argue that Schleiermacher deserves much more

[128] Letter of 4 December 1794; Immanuel Kant, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Otto Schöndörffer (Leipzig, 1924), ii. 688.

credit than is normally given as the founder of the University of Berlin—a tag regularly applied to his contemporary, Wilhelm von Humboldt.[129]

But Schleiermacher was by no means the only bright light on Berlin's initial theological faculty. The colleagues he helped assemble assisted in rapidly transforming Berlin into arguably Europe's foremost centre of Protestant theology. A pioneer of historical-critical biblical exegesis, Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1848) came to the Prussian capital in 1810 from Heidelberg to teach the Old Testament among other fields. His colleague at Heidelberg, Philipp Konrad Marheineke (1780–1846) also heeded a call to Berlin, where he became a leading theological interpreter of Hegelian thought. In 1814 August Neander (1789–1850) joined the faculty, soon winning international acclaim as Germany's foremost church historian. When Hegel joined the philosophical faculty in 1818, filling a chair vacated by Fichte, Berlin's theological faculty took on yet new significance as a seat to reckon (not always favourably) with the far-reaching theological implications of Hegel's thought.[130] In the Vormärz period between 1815 and 1848, moreover, the faculty became host to numerous, diversely talented minds, such as E. W. Hengstenberg, August Twesten, Friedrich Lücke, Karl Immanuel Nitzsch, F. A. G. Tholuck, Wilhelm Vatke, David Friedrich Strauss, and Bruno Bauer, among others.[131] Not without reason, Hans Frei has called 'the case of the University of Berlin [to be] . . . the most interesting in the history of modern academic theology'.[132]

But theology, like intellectual life in general, does not take place in an academic ether removed from historical forces. For this reason, in ch. 4, I shift my focus from theology and its immediate institutional setting, the university, and place it instead on reconfigurations in Prussian politics, bureaucracy, educational policy, and church–state relations underway in the early nineteenth century. Besides further exploring the rhetoric and realities of Prussia qua *Kulturstaat*, I examine in more detail the establishment of the Ministry of Culture (*Kultusministerium*) during the Prussian Reform Era and the far-reaching, Erastian authority this ministry exercised over church affairs, academic life, and theology throughout the nineteenth century. It was largely through the agency of this Ministry, the nationalist historian Heinrich von

[129] Adolf von Harnack, 'Über die Bedeutung der theologischen Fakultäten', *PJ* 175 (March 1919): 362–74.

[130] On Hegel and Berlin's theological faculty, see Richard Crouter, 'Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin: A Many-Sided Debate', *JAAR* 48 (1980): 19–43.

[131] Short biographies of the theological faculty's members may be found in Walter Elliger, *150 Jahre Theologische Fakultät Berlin* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1960), 11 ff.

[132] Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 102.

Treitschke once wrote, that the church in Prussia was kept 'under the benevolent tutelage of the state'.[133]

In the last part of the book, I widen my purview to encompass aspects of the entire nineteenth century, ranging from the Napoleonic era to the turmoil of the early Weimar Republic. While keeping a focus largely on Prussia and the University of Berlin—albeit with lingering side glances at other key universities such as Bonn, Halle, Tübingen, Göttingen, Breslau, and Königsberg—I puzzle specifically over the conflicted renown of German academic theology in the nineteenth century. Why did some champion the dominant liberalizing, scientizing directions of theology as a bold example of intellectual and religious progress, while others questioned them, either as misguided thinking or as the unwitting vitiation of timeless Christian verities?

In broaching such a question, one is necessarily led to many others. How did various distinctive nineteenth-century forces—whether political, intellectual, or economic in nature—impinge on university development and the role of theology therein? What was actually taught in theological faculties, particularly as revealed by the ubiquitous theological encyclopedias, the introductory textbooks of their day? How did university histories and various commemorative occasions portray the position (and plight) of theology in the modernizing university system? How did foreign visitors and educators, often awestruck by the 'German university', size up the direction and meaning of German academic theology in the mid- and late nineteenth century? Why did many German professors feel toward century's end that a 'crisis of the theological faculty' was taking place, and how did theologians respond to and/or perhaps contribute to this crisis? Finally, how did the theological faculty actually persist in the university system in the early twentieth-century despite strong pleas to abolish it on account of its alleged scientific illegitimacy and its violation of the modern doctrine of church–state separation?

Additional questions present themselves, but this should give one some sense of the road ahead.

4. BROADER CONSIDERATIONS, OR 'THE PATHOS OF MODERN THEOLOGY'

'[W]e can never rid ourselves entirely of the views of our own time and personality,' wrote the great Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, 'and here

[133] Heinrich von Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: AMS, 1968), ii. 509–10.

perhaps is the worst enemy of knowledge. The clearest proof of it is this: as soon as history approaches our century and our worthy selves we find everything more "interesting"; in actual fact it is we who are more "interested". '[134]

In conceiving and carrying out a study like the present one, Burckhardt's words generally ring true: my own interests and commitments as well as the social and cultural worlds in which I find myself have necessarily shaped the present work. However, at the risk of quibbling with a first-order historical mind, I am less inclined to see these things as the worst enemy of knowledge than as the thorny ground from which knowledge, historical or otherwise, must necessarily arise. I would even suggest that posing questions and following intuitions that correlate strongly with one's intellectual commitments and interests is a vital precondition for the production of meaningful, provocative, and, alas, accurate knowledge.[135] It is only fair then to lay out to the reader here a few final, more general considerations of my own that have informed this study since its inception. Readers may then decide, by their own lights, whether these have borne fruit in historical insight sufficiently compelling to warrant assent by those who might not share my commitments. (Readers uninterested in such considerations may profitably skip ahead to ch. 2.)

As someone who takes seriously the ongoing relevance of Christian intellectual traditions, I have quite simply an abiding interest in Christian theological reflection, its history, and its place in the academic landscape and in the broader social and cultural fields. Thus, while this work is at one level an exercise in intellectual history, framed by a particular nation-state, it is, at another, an interpretative foray into the history of Christian thought, an attempt to shed light on and raise questions about a set of institutional and intellectual developments of abiding significance for understanding the place, predicament, and promise of Christian theology today in the vast and churning ocean of contemporary culture. As an American scholar, I am not immune to the charge of being an innocent abroad. This is fair enough, but I have also tried to make a virtue of a natural liability: distance from the other shore, which certainly occasions naivety and ignorance, but may also lend perspective.

[134] Jacob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*, trans. M. D. Hottinger (Indianapolis: Liberty, 1979), 41.

[135] In more theoretical language, I would call this approach 'dialectical objectivity', meaning that the interests and insights of the investigating subject, not his or her avowed 'neutrality', are necessary and even constitutive for an understanding of the object at hand. Here I borrow from Allan Megill, 'Four Senses of Objectivity', in Megill (ed.), *Rethinking Objectivity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 7–10. Cf. Thomas L. Haskell, *Objectivity is not Neutrality: Explanatory Schemes in History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 145–73.

An interest in theology inclines my scholarship to what some sociologists have called 'plausibility structures'—the complex tapestry of ideas and institutions operative in a given society that shape worldviews and give credence to particular definitions of reality.[136] At the risk of overgeneralization, I think it fair to say that the contribution of universities, especially German-influenced research universities, to modern plausibility structures has been incalculable, and deeply ambivalent with respect to traditional Christian assumptions about the world, knowledge, and human nature. This has been true in German universities and equally so in American higher education, which, we must remember, has absorbed the impact of nineteenth-century German university development to an extent that rivals or exceeds the German universities themselves.[137] At the same time, the modern university, founded on the dynamic premise of *Wissenschaft*, has placed in theology's hands tools of criticism and methodological rigour unprecedented in the history of Christian thought; theological faculties and individual theologians who mastered these tools thereby gained a new academic lease. But again, the university since the nineteenth century has cultivated, intentionally or not, an institutional atmosphere of scepticism to forms of theology operating in accordance to more traditionalist, credal, or sapiential understandings of theology's task. Thus, theology, if it sought continuance as an academic enterprise, was compelled to come up with strategies to validate the plausibility structures of the modern university. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as Hans Frei has written, 'Christian theology was . . . [put] in the position of having to demonstrate that it was truly wissenschaftlich and had a right to citizenship in [the] university.'[138] Many debates among theologians of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, as I have already hinted, were accordingly animated by the question of whether or not such accommodation to modernity was in fact desirable or even possible.

While this debate still simmers today, what is of particular interest to many contemporary thinkers, whether avowedly religious or not, is no longer the question of accommodation to modernity, but whether modernity itself—and its supporting plausibility structures, the university foremost—has swooned under the weight of its own ambitions and given rise to an anti- or postmodern period, or at least one that evinces a deeply chastened attitude

[136] See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969).

[137] Rüdiger vom Bruch has argued that many of the ideals of the modern German university 'may be today better preserved in the North American than the German system of higher education'. See Rüdiger vom Bruch, 'A Slow Farewell to Humboldt? Stages in the History of German Universities, 1810–1945,' in Ash (ed.), *German Universities: Past and Future*, 27.

[138] Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, 98–9.

toward the universalist ideals of the Enlightenment, the cradle of modernity. A sign of the unravelling of modernity, it is often claimed, is found in the moral and epistemological incoherence of contemporary universities, especially in what we today call 'the humanities', or *Geisteswissenschaften*, the very domain of education that the founders of the University of Berlin, following Kant, sought to establish as the rejuvenating centre of the modern university. Predicated on Kantian notions of autonomous reason and an idealist belief in the unity of science, this centre today, critics argue, displays methodological confusion, epistemological disarray, and a susceptibility to political whim that vitiates its own modern *raison d'être*. Theology too, in so far as it has exchanged its traditional attire for the mantle of *Wissenschaftlichkeit*, has replicated the disarray present in the academy at large, or so its critics charge. Thus the Anglican theologian John Milbank speaks of 'the pathos of modern theology' resulting from theology having long been ' "positioned" by secular reason.'[139]

In recent years, the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has emerged as one of the most influential critics of the faltering modern university ideal. In his interpretation, the promise of the modern university was never realized due to a theoretical inadequacy of one of its central pillars: namely the belief that 'an autonomous rationality', unmoored from the sustenance provided by moral traditions, specifically religious ones, was a sufficient ground to legitimize the post-Enlightenment academic enterprise. As Kant put it, genuine enquiry in the university (particularly in the philosophical faculty) was to stand 'only under the authority of reason' (*nur unter der Gesetzgebung der Vernunft*).[140] If the university remained true to this vision, the implication ran, its members, labouring in their respective fields, would converge on a universally accepted body of knowledge and a common moral and epistemological vocabulary. In MacIntyre's formulation: '[F]reed from constraints and most notably the constraints imposed by religious and moral tests, it [the university] ... [was to] produce not only progress in enquiry but also agreement among all rational persons as to what the rationally justified conclusions of such enquiry are.'[141] Such was the inspiration behind the great number of 'encyclopedias' produced in nineteenth-century Germany, some of which I

[139] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 1–6. Cf. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) and David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 19, 49 ff.

[140] Kant, *Streit der Fakultäten*, 42–3.

[141] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Forms of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 225. Admittedly, in this work MacIntyre is concerned more with British universities; still, his observations are quite relevant to German and American university development as well.

shall discuss. It was also the dominant impulse, according to MacIntyre's analysis, behind the famous ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*—of and to which Berlin's Adolf von Harnack, incidentally, was an avid supporter and contributor.[142]

However, by many present-day accounts—by no means MacIntyre's alone—the cunning of history has produced something quite like the opposite of the modern university's original, unitary aspirations. Instead of unity and a rational, encyclopedic 'metalanguage', confusion and fragmentation reign, along with a general sense of crisis, frustration, and a seemingly Sisyphean search for new purpose and revised legitimation.[143] Jean-François Lyotard perhaps most influentially set the parameters for current conversations about the troubles of higher education in his widely discussed *Postmodern Condition* (1979), the subtitle of which, 'A Report on Knowledge,' merits keeping in mind. Attributing massive significance to the nineteenth-century German university system, and to the University of Berlin in particular, as a blueprint for and an inspiration behind systems of higher education throughout the developed world, Lyotard concluded that the centre had not held: contemporary knowledge appeared in a state of 'crisis', showing signs of 'internal erosion' and 'splintering': 'There is erosion at work . . . and by loosening the encyclopedic net in which each science was to find its place, it eventually sets them free.'[144] While Lyotard ultimately affirmed the 'postmodern' possibilities that the crisis in higher education allowed, his assessment of the fate of the modern university's original unitary goals suggests something far short of a success story.

Among the more provocative historians of American higher education and religion, George Marsden has recently presented an equally pessimistic account of the university in the United States, asserting that the contemporary university is awash in contradictions and displays a worrisome inability to foster meaningful conversation across ideological and disciplinary lines.[145] While I need not rehearse the details of Marsden's argument, his general

[142] MacIntyre, *Three Rival Forms of Moral Enquiry*, 44.

[143] Among numerous thoughtful critiques and efforts to re-envision universities and the university ideal, see Andrea Sterk (ed.), *Religion, Scholarship, and Higher Education: Perspectives, Models, and Future Prospects* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); Mark Schwehn, *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Michael Daxner, *Ist die Uni noch zu retten? Zehn Vorschläge und eine Vision* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1996); and Peter Glotz, *Im Kern verrottet? Fünf vor Zwölf an Deutschlands Universitäten* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1996).

[144] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 39.

[145] See esp. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 429 ff.

assessment bears considering, as it, like Lyotard's, suggests the quandary of the modern university ideal.

> Contemporary university culture is hollow at its core. . . . Knowledge today is oriented increasingly toward the practical; at the same time, in most fields the vast increases in information render our expertise more fragmentary and detached from the larger issues of life. Although the university research ideal [read: *Wissenschaft* in the more positivist mode] apparently works well enough in the sciences and technology, it is not at all clear why the same principles should be normative for the study of human society and behavior. Even the liberal arts are havens for fads that often obscure what was originally attractive about their subjects. 'Wisdom' is hardly a term one thinks of in connection with such studies, nor with our system of higher education as a whole.[146]

Harvard's former president, Derek Bok, shares similar ground with Marsden in challenging the American elite professoriate, long socialized to transmit expertise, facts, and method, to reconsider what it means 'to provide a sound moral education'.[147]

Questions of wisdom and moral education return us to MacIntyre, who insists that a strong relationship exists, or should exist, between one's assumptions about knowledge and one's ability to carry forward sound moral reasoning. Unfortunately, in his view, the contemporary university provides neither a compelling basis for epistemology nor a coherent way for its members to discuss and resolve moral dilemmas. The university has become a place, writes MacIntyre, where 'all debate is inconclusive', for there exists no commonly shared body of first principles that would allow discussants to resolve disagreements. Oddly then, like the confessional theologians of the seventeenth century, scholars in the humanities and social sciences today, when enquiry transcends questions of technical expertise, retrench into often predictable ideological and epistemological orthodoxies and shrilly question the legitimacy of their opponents' views. 'It is ironic', concludes MacIntyre, 'that the wholly secular humanistic disciplines of the late twentieth century should thus reproduce that very same condition [interminable polemics] which led their nineteenth-century secularizing predecessors to dismiss the claim of theology to be worthy of the status of an academic discipline.'[148]

However, if that which once sought to dismiss theology (critical science, autonomous reason, and the belief in 'presuppositionless' enquiry) are now found wanting, what is the status of theological reflection after the

[146] George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

[147] Derek Bok, *Universities and the Future of America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 62.

[148] MacIntyre, *Three Rival Forms of Moral Enquiry*, 7.

much-discussed 'failure of the Enlightenment project'? Further, what is the status of those modern theologies that wholeheartedly embraced the Kantian-idealist hopes of universality and rationality and/or the positivist hopes for neutrality? What is the relationship of any contemporary academic theology to the credal, ecclesial theologies of the era prior to the advent of the modern university? What should one make of recent post-critical and post-liberal theologies, which, as the common prefix suggests, bear stronger witness to an exhausted project rather than herald a new one?[149] In short, what might the ancient enterprise of *fides quaerens intellectum* mean today for a university that often appears, in the lines of Matthew Arnold, 'wandering between two worlds | one dead, the other powerless to be born'?

Recognizably, these are broad questions, ones that a historian probably has no business trying to pose, much less answer. Most are best left to theologians themselves. In what follows, I'll try to practise more modesty then, attempting the 'handmaid's' work of providing needful historical background, to help frame these questions and perhaps provoke other ones as well.

[149] See John Webster and George P. Schner (eds.), *Theology after Liberalism: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).