

Johann August Neander's Influence on American Church Historiography: Translation and Knowledge Transfer

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This article examines the English translations of works by Johann August Neander (the reputed father of modern church history) in order to consider his transatlantic influence. American editions of Neander's work supported the development of church historiography in nineteenth-century America, and influenced the direction of mediating theology at American academic and religious institutions. Besides identifying the agents who championed these translation efforts, the article explores how translations of church history texts supported knowledge transfer from Germany to America. Neander's books received positive attention in the translation culture of the 1830s, and he gained a reputation as a model scholar of church history.

The French classicist Anne Dacier (1651–1720) described the aim of book translation as influencing ‘the literature of its own time in its own culture’.¹ In his discussion of the role of translation in

BR = Biblical Repository; BRRCR = Biblical Repository and Classical Review; BRPR = Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review; BSac = Bibliotheca Sacra; CE = Christian Examiner; CH = Church History; NE = New Englander

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¹ Anne Dacier, introduction to André Alphons (ed.), *Translation/history/culture: a sourcebook*, London 1992, 6.

disseminating scientific knowledge, Scott Montgomery shows how knowledge transfer *via* translations has contributed to the construction of cultural and educational practices.² Translated books have helped establish learning patterns for many generations, with nineteenth-century translations of European texts specifically affecting American education in multiple academic fields. American scholars and academics were familiar with German historical models in the early 1800s,³ and any American professor interested in new German perspectives on church historiography relied on translated books for assistance. However, few efforts have been made to identify the ways in which translations influenced American historiographic studies. While the insertion of translation history into book history is a rather recent occurrence, examining transatlantic interdisciplinary knowledge transfers can help us discover how such translations affected ‘target cultures’ (*Zielkulturen*) by introducing new methods and resources to American academics in the field of church history.⁴

To illustrate the importance of translation in transatlantic knowledge transfers, this article looks at connections between American translation work and reception studies, book histories and academic networks while also analysing trends in the movement of ideas across national borders.⁵ It specifically examines the translations of Johann August Wilhelm Neander’s works and their reception among American professors interested in engaging with new scholarship emerging from Germany. It considers why specific German-language works on the discipline of church history were translated and circulated in the US, and why the mediating approach championed by German academics received a positive reception in North America. Rather than address the minutiae of translation theories, this article provides examples of how Neander’s authority was established *via* translations of his German-language texts and discusses agents such as translators and professors who assisted in this effort.

² Scott L. Montgomery, *Science in translation: movements of knowledge through cultures and time*, Chicago 2000, 2–3, 31.

³ Two of the most helpful works in this area are Zachary Purvis, ‘Transatlantic textbooks: Karl Hagenbach, shared interests, and German academic theology in nineteenth-century America’, *CH* lxxxiii/3 (2014), 650–83, and Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the fathers: early church history and Protestant professors in nineteenth-century America*, Philadelphia, PA 2011.

⁴ Norbert Bachleitner, ‘A proposal to include book history in translation studies illustrated with German translations of Scott and Flaubert’, *Arcadia* xlv/2 (2009), 420–40 at p. 423; Maria Hegner, *Die frühen Übersetzungen aus dem Englischen ins Französische: am Beispiel der Nordamerikaliteratur, 1572–1700*, Berlin 2013, 1; Alice Colombo, ‘Intersections between translation and book history: reflections and new directions’, *Comparative Critical Studies* xvi/2–3 (2019), 147–60.

⁵ Anne O’Connor, *Translation and language in nineteenth-century Ireland: a European perspective*, London 2017, 2, 15.

The American professors who translated Neander's texts were mostly associated with Union and Rochester Theological Seminaries, two academic institutions that had yet to achieve German *Wissenschaft* standards in historical scholarship and that serve as examples of how translation work could increase the influence of specific foreign scholars. Theologically speaking, both seminaries were oriented toward intermediate traditional-modern positions, as seen in some of the English translations of mediating theology-related publications translated and revised by American professors associated with these schools. Among key agents who translated Neander were the American scholars Edward Robinson (1794–1863), Joseph Torrey (1797–1867) and Henry Boynton Smith (1815–77). A fourth, Jonathan Edwards Ryland (1798–1866), specialised in German texts that promoted academic learning and Christian faith. Robinson, Torrey and Smith were associated with Andover Theological Seminary (Robinson as professor, Torrey and Smith as students), which partly explains their shared Calvinist roots. Their moderate form of Calvinism allowed for the incorporation of a mediating agenda that embraced new developments in the historical sciences. Ryland was a Baptist who was open to new ideas from Germany, including the work of mediating theologians.

Given their receptivity to new theological views and historical research, the four shared a commitment to staying abreast of the latest developments in scientific church history scholarship. They had additional motivation to translate Neander's work: some of them had been his students at the University of Berlin (the first modern research university), where they learned about mediating theology at the same time as they received training in historical science (*Geschichtswissenschaft*), historicism and the study of sources (*Quellenforschung*).

The term 'mediating theology' refers to the movement in Germany influenced by G. W. Hegel and Friedrich Schleiermacher that emerged in reaction to the interaction of tradition and modernity. In addition to its historical and theological significance, the concept of mediation is important for its use by certain Protestants who were active in German universities between 1820 and 1870, and who relied on new methods and systems when writing historical and theological works in the context of the intellectual revolution of that period. The concept of mediation, which is closely linked to nineteenth-century German theology and philosophy, emphasised a middle position between opposing views or intellectual trends. The original description of mediating theology appeared in the 1828 religious-academic journal *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, where it was promoted as a means of mediating between historical Christianity

and modern science.⁶ Responding to the innovative changes of the period, one of mediating theology's key tasks was to mediate between old and new faith by reconstructing theology with the *Geisteswissenschaften* (humanities and social sciences). Schleiermacher did not create the term 'mediating theology', but he was the first to begin a mediating programme to create a new theology that transcended rationalism and supernaturalism. The mediating theologians who followed were diverse in their approaches, which included ecclesiastical, revivalist and speculative, the last associated with Hegel.⁷ As an eclectic model, many Protestant thinkers adopted mediation, including Neander, who blended Schleiermacher's principles with ideas from the revivalist movement in a manner that avoided speculative systems.

This perception of mediating theology matters, as these translators of German scholarly texts expressed support for the branch of mediating theology with which Neander was associated, while revealing a bias against a speculative theological approach based on rationalism and Hegelian ideology.⁸ In the context of a post-Enlightenment culture, some mediating theologians like Neander, who was connected with the German Awakening movement, refuted speculative and rationalistic systems. In this context, Neander's mediating approach occupied a space between traditional and modern theology. An important characteristic of Neander's mediating theology was the scientific theological methodology of Schleiermacher, and its synthesis with modern beliefs and Protestant traditions inspired by Idealism, Romanticism and historicism. Neander's historicism was a vital aspect of mediating theology,⁹ one with links to the Prussian Awakening movement. The translators were motivated to translate and promote his work because of its commitment to historical science, mediation and religious piety.

Nineteenth-century translation projects represented an important channel for transmitting church history scholarship linked with the mediating school from German to American universities. Examining journal and book translations during that period helps to illustrate how scientific and scholarly approaches at American seminaries and universities were shaped by transatlantic academic networks, some of which supported

⁶ Martin Kähler (1835–1912) described the goal of mediating theology as joining the three concepts of 'historical Christianity', modern intellectual culture and philosophy, with an emphasis on 'blending Christianity and education': *Geschichte der protestantischen Dogmatik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1962 (based on lectures from 1898), 87.

⁷ Annette G. Aubert, *The German roots of nineteenth-century American theology*, New York 2013, 65–73.

⁸ Speculative scholars of this period combined Christian beliefs with philosophical analyses.

⁹ Joshua Bennett, 'August Neander and the religion of history in the nineteenth-century "Priesthood of letters"', *HJ* lxiii (2020), 633–59 at p. 638.

mentoring relationships. An analysis of translation work clarifies one important aspect of transatlantic knowledge transfer that shaped American education *via* intercontinental academic networks. Such translation and networking efforts deserve more attention, especially since American translators and scholars – including many former visiting students and scholars in Germany – were interested in locating German sources for supporting academic learning and scholarship in the US. Many of them focused on resources offered by faculty members of the newly-founded University of Berlin, among others. As early nineteenth-century American scholars and translators had often spent time as students in Germany, they were likely already accustomed to examining and reading German sources for works that might support their scholarly efforts in the US. The translators of church history texts frequently had prior connections with the German professors who wrote them. Those German authors tended to espouse mediating views rather than the speculative trends of the period. In many instances their historiographic work was accompanied by religious commitments that resisted speculative strands of historical scholarship that promoted methods void of religious presuppositions. Accordingly, translation projects completed by Neander's former students, as well as by other translators, supported the spread of historical scholarship linked with mediating ideas at American universities and seminaries.

In eighteenth-century Germany, it was common for scholars to work on translations at the same time as they produced original texts. Leading intellectuals, such as Schleiermacher and the Schlegel brothers, viewed translation as both a respectable undertaking and a challenging pursuit. Between 1805 and 1809 Schleiermacher translated five volumes written by Plato at the same time as he was engaged in some other pioneering works. At the time, it was important for German scholars to participate in literary exchanges that involved 'being translated' and 'translating'.¹⁰ As more established academics were increasingly asked to translate texts, many actually hired assistants to do the bulk of the translation work, among them civil servants, intellectuals and alumni. Those alumni who had difficulty finding a teaching position and had therefore resorted to translation work were called the 'intellectual proletariat'. However, as the nineteenth century progressed, translation work increasingly lost its status in Germany and became discredited 'as a mere auxiliary activity',¹¹ yet it maintained its significance in the US.

By the 1830s, translating textbooks from German to English was a common academic task for Anglophone professors, resulting in a vibrant translation culture in American academic institutions. Thus, any

¹⁰ Bachleitner, 'A proposal to include book history', 431.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 427–9, 430–1.

examination of nineteenth-century print culture must consider translation as a major part of it. The author of an American review article on German literature observed that ‘the study of the German language in this country is prevailing more and more among our ripest scholars ... translations from the German are continually issuing from the American press’.¹² There was progress in translation quality and scope as the number of projects focused on church history increased.¹³ Eventually, what Francis Leith Boyd observed of scholarship in England also became true of American academics: ‘What was called “doing original work” consisted mainly in translating German treatises into English.’¹⁴ American translators included professors working at Harvard Divinity School, Princeton, Andover and Union Seminaries, among other academic institutions.¹⁵ United States-based publishers such as Robert Carter, Sheldon, and Harper and Brothers produced a significant body of English translations of German textbooks on church history.

Neander’s historical work and influence

Neander’s translation projects made him an important model and mentor for a generation of nineteenth-century American scholars in the field of church history. Neander himself understood the importance of having his work translated into English.¹⁶ Philip Schaff, his former student, said that Neander spoke fluent English,¹⁷ and therefore it was no surprise that Neander himself was involved in some of the translation efforts.¹⁸ Translations of his work started to appear in American university and

¹² ‘German literature: its religious character and influence; from the American Christian Review’, *Baptist Record and Biblical Repository* ii (1845), 446–57 at p. 452.

¹³ Bayard Quincy Morgan, *A bibliography of German literature in English translation*, Madison, WI 1922, 18.

¹⁴ Francis Leith Boyd, ‘A last word for the Athanasian Creed’, *Nineteenth Century and After* lxxxv (1919), 1117–31 at p. 1124.

¹⁵ Henry August Pochmann, *German culture in America: philosophical and literary influences, 1600–1900*, Madison, WI 1961, 681.

¹⁶ Neander also expressed his interest in American religion and mentioned that he read American religious journals with great interest, in particular those edited in New England. He read with great attention Noah Porter’s ‘Coleridge and his American disciples’ published in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1847): Johann August Neander, *The life of Jesus Christ in its historical connexion and historical development*, trans. John M’Clintock and Charles E. Blumenthal, London 1857, pp. vii, ix.

¹⁷ Philip Schaff, *Germany: its universities, theology and religion; with sketches of Neander, Tholuck, Olshausen, Hengstenberg, Twisten, Nitzsch, Muller, Ullmann, Rothe, Dorner, Lange, Ebrard, Wichern, and other distinguished German divines of the age*, Philadelphia, PA 1857, 272.

¹⁸ Joseph Torrey, ‘Translator’s preface’, in August Neander, *General history of the Christian religion and Church: from the German of Dr Augustus Neander*, trans. Joseph Torrey, Boston 1848–82, i, p. iii.

seminary libraries in the early 1830s. He eventually became such a popular figure in the US that some Americans described him as 'Luther-like' and 'a second reformer'.¹⁹

Although Neander has been called 'the father of modern church history', he never established a separate school in the manner of Leopold von Ranke. He nevertheless exerted a global impact – according to Otto Krabbe, he influenced an entire generation of modern church historians.²⁰ Neander also encouraged research and writing on new branches of church history.²¹ He is especially well known as the inventor of the church history monograph. Neander's innovative monographs proposed 'detailed, contextualised, primary source-based investigation'.²² The monographs he produced served as stepping-stones for extended texts on general church history.

Neander was also known for his stamina in giving lectures, often giving three consecutive hour-long lectures every day during the school year. His lecture hall, the largest at the University of Berlin, had a capacity of four hundred seats.²³ One of his students, Justus Ludwig Jacobi, argued that 'there was no religious teacher in all of Germany, [or on] other faculties' who achieved the same level of respect that Neander received from his students.²⁴ His classes were also attended by a number of American students, some of whom would later translate his writings. Many of those young American scholars favoured his mediating approach over F. C. Baur's Hegel-inspired scepticism.²⁵

Neander's historical method perceived church history 'as a development proceeding from within [providing] an image of internal history'.²⁶ He combined concepts from Schleiermacher, Romanticism and F. W. J. Schelling in his attempts to explain church history in terms of organic

¹⁹ Frederick Saunders, *Evenings with the sacred poets*, New York 1869, 115.

²⁰ Otto Carsten Krabbe, *August Neander: ein Beitrag zu seiner Charakteristik*, Hamburg 1852, 161.

²¹ Karl R. Hagenbach, 'Neander's service as a church historian: translated by Prof. H. B. Smith', *BSac* viii/32 (1851), 822–57 at p. 855.

²² Zachary Purvis, 'Where is August Neander in modern history? On Berlin's first church historian', in Kevin M. Vander Schel and Michael P. DeJonge (eds), *Theology, history, and the modern German university*, Tübingen 2021, 135–64 at p. 154.

²³ 'August Neander: zum Gedächtnis August Neanders', *Prospective Review: A Quarterly Journal of Theology and Literature* vi (1850), 459–72 at p. 465.

²⁴ Justus Ludwig Jacobi, *Erinnerungen an D. August Neander*, Halle 1882, 47.

²⁵ Many Americans favoured mediating figures of a 'more positive faith' such as Neander: J. S. Banks, 'Our debt to German theology', *Expository Times* iv (1892/3), 26–8, 72–4, 121–3, 172–4 at pp. 122–3.

²⁶ August Neander, *General history of the Christian religion and Church: from the German of Dr. Augustus Neander*, i, trans. Joseph Torrey, Boston 1851, p. v.

development.²⁷ He maintained a mediating position between tradition and innovation when integrating aspects of Pietism, Romanticism and historicism into church history, describing Christianity as ‘a school of Christian experience’.²⁸ In 1825, he published the first volume of his famous *General history of the Christian religion and Church*, which in a short time span grew to become six volumes.²⁹ Each volume was eventually translated from German into English and published between the 1840s and 1850s, first in Edinburgh and later in Boston with Crocker and Brewster. These translations found their way into American university, seminary and private libraries. The series was so respected that fourteen English editions were published, which partly explains why Neander is considered one of the most influential nineteenth-century figures in the field of church history in the United States.

The German form of historiography, which integrated aspects of Pietism, Romanticism and historicism, was most influential among American professors seeking a middle position between rationalism and scepticism in their German sources.³⁰ Americans were especially attracted to Neander’s commitment to both historic Christianity and modern humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) when applying new historical-scientific ideas to the study of church history, as well as his combined pietistic-Romantic approach and emphasis on source study (*Quellenstudium*).³¹ His method, which promoted a sense of learning and piety associated with the motto ‘Pectus est quod theologum facit’ (‘the heart makes the theologian’) was one which many American Protestant professors found particularly appealing.

Initial translations and publications

Neander’s ideas were initially introduced to New England colleges and American seminaries in 1833 when one of his articles was translated by Edward Robinson, Neander’s former student who became one of America’s foremost biblical scholars.³² As a moderate Calvinist open to

²⁷ Annette G. Aubert, ‘Mediating theology’, in Grant Kaplan and Kevin M. Vander Schel (eds), *The Oxford history of German theology*, Oxford 2023, 578–94 at p. 587.

²⁸ Johann August Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche*, Hamburg 1825, i, p. vii.

²⁹ August Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche*, Hamburg 1825–52.

³⁰ Americans welcomed Neander’s efforts to present historical theories in contrast to Hegelian and secular arguments, especially his attempt to combine the organic development of history with biblical revelation: Bennett, ‘August Neander’, 3–4.

³¹ Adolf von Harnack, *Reden und Aufsätze*, 2nd edn, Giessen 1906, i, 209.

³² Robinson briefly mentioned Neander in the first two volumes of the *Biblical Repository* (1831–2): ‘Theological education in Germany’, *BR* ii (1831), 201–26 at pp. 217, 221; ‘Foreign correspondence’, *BR* ii (1832), 585–9 at pp. 586, 588.

the principles of mediation, Robinson was an uncontroversial figure. He never participated in church-centred conflicts, preferring to maintain his distance from religious disputes while displaying 'a truly catholic and magnanimous spirit'.³³ Robinson, who was teaching at Union Seminary at the time, had attended Neander's lectures on church history and the New Testament in Berlin during his stay in Europe. One of several visiting students who came under Neander's influence, Robinson regarded his teacher as the 'the first ecclesiastical historian of the age'.³⁴ In a personal journal entry in 1828, Robinson described his preference for Neander over the conservative Ernst W. Hengstenberg, writing, 'The man who interests me most, ... as a literary man and as a Christian, is Neander.'³⁵ Robinson was especially impressed by Neander's rigorous scholarship, describing him as someone who 'lives only in his study, the walls of which are filled with books; – at a little table in one corner you find him sitting with a book open before him and half a dozen more lying by his side on the floor'.³⁶ For Robinson, Neander was a great scholarly model and the most thought-provoking of the 'ethnic-religious hybrids' he had met.³⁷

Eager to introduce his academic mentor to other Americans, Robinson dedicated a great deal of time to showing 'Neander's great work in an English dress'. Robinson openly admitted the difficulty of the task, commenting that although his German professor's approach was eloquent, it was also 'exceedingly idiomatic, and full of condensed thought; and is, therefore, one of the most difficult to transfuse into good English'.³⁸ Robinson believed that anyone who wanted to translate Neander's works had to consider 'not the shell, but the kernel; not the form, but the essence'.³⁹ He complained that an earlier Neander translator failed in this regard, resulting in English texts that he believed were not understandable.⁴⁰ Thus, for his first venture in translating his professor's work, Robinson hired Leonard Woods Jr, a linguist who was familiar with German theology, and who had translated Georg Christian Knapp's two-volume *Christian theology* (1831, 1833), which became a standard American textbook.

³³ Roswell D. Hitchcock and Henry B. Smith, *The life, writings, and character of Edward Robinson*, New York 1863, 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 50.

³⁵ Edward Robinson, *Robinson's Letter-journal, 1826–1829: written from Europe by Edward Robinson to his sister, Elisabeth*, ed. Hermine W. Williams, New York 2009, entry for Monday evening, 28 January 1828.

³⁶ *Ibid.* entry for Tuesday, 29 January 1828.

³⁷ Shalom Goldman, *God's sacred tongue: Hebrew and the American imagination*, Chapel Hill, NC 2004, 144.

³⁸ Edward Robinson, 'Augustine and Pelagius: comparative view of the lives and systems; from Neander's *Allgemeine Geschichte der Religion und Kirche*', *BRCR* iii (1833), 66–74 at p. 71.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 72.

The first English translation of a Neander essay in the US, entitled 'Augustine and Pelagius', appeared in the Robinson-edited *Biblical Repository and Classical Review* in 1833. American journal editors regularly provided translations of books, essays and monographs written by German and other European authors, either translating the texts themselves or hiring translators for assistance. As editor, Robinson used his position to promote Neander's translations and publications that matched his personal historical religious views. Robinson openly expressed his motivation for publishing translations of Neander's essays as '[making] the American public acquainted with one of [Germany's] most distinguished writers', while at the same time addressing the idea of Arminianism, a widely debated topic at the time.⁴¹ Robinson felt it was necessary to portray Neander 'as an impartial historian' addressing this topic for this particular publication.⁴²

Robinson had considered translating Neander's work before 1833, but hesitated because his former professor addressed aspects of church history that were unfamiliar to readers in English-speaking countries.⁴³ Although many aspects of Neander's ideas were considered fundamental by German scholars, Robinson felt that Americans lacked the historical knowledge required to understand them. He therefore saw a need to write a special introduction to the translation, in the form of a brief Neander biography, a list of his works and a description of his historical method. In these, he explained that rather than simply organising 'facts' in the manner of Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, Neander followed the practices of German scientific inquiry, historicism, and explored original sources to study historical issues. Robinson also emphasised that Neander adhered to 'the spirit of Christianity from the original sources', and that 'none of these sources have been overlooked by Neander'.⁴⁴ Given that Neander's approach was shaped by the Romantic view that the universe exists as a blanket of 'appearances that conceals a deeper, underlying reality',⁴⁵ Robinson also needed to describe to his American audience Neander's psychological Romantic approach, especially the way that

⁴¹ Ibid. 73.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. 71.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 68–9. Robinson wrote that it was with 'iron diligence, [that Neander] has studied, to a greater extent and with larger results than any man now living, all the works of the fathers and other ancient writers, as also all the writings of the middle ages, which have any bearing upon either the external or internal history of the Christian religion': *ibid.* 69.

⁴⁵ Neander echoed Schleiermacher's approach: Frank C. Richardson, 'Philosophical hermeneutics', in Jack Martin, Jeff Sugarman and Kathleen L. Slaney (eds), *The Wiley handbook of theoretical and philosophical psychology: methods, approaches, and new directions for social sciences*, Malden 2015, 54. For a helpful discussion on Schleiermacher and Neander see Joshua Bennett, *God and progress: religion and history in British intellectual culture, 1845–1914*, Oxford 2019, 29.

Neander, by reconstructing church history, attempted to enter into the writers' 'very spirit, and made himself master of all their stores'.⁴⁶

Having whetted American appetites with this first journal article, the following year Robinson started working on a translation of the first volume of Neander's *History of the planting and progress of the Christian Church*, and concluded that it could serve as a clear example of Neander's work for American professors. Robinson published a short section of his translation in the *Biblical Repository*, and promised his readers that he would print a longer extract on 'the constitution and worship of the primitive Churches'.⁴⁷ That same year he published a second translated excerpt entitled 'The Christian Church and Christian life in connexion with the Church'. This translation perfectly displays Robinson's translation method, which he described as 'giv[ing] each thought the exact shape of the original'.⁴⁸

New translations and reception

Over the next ten years, it was not Robinson but Jonathan Edwards Ryland, a translator and biographer, who translated the whole volume of Neander's *History of the planting and training of the Christian Church* into English. Ryland started the translation at the end of 1840 and was in contact with Neander, requesting from him any 'corrections or additions'.⁴⁹ Neander provided the proof sheets for the third edition and later expressed his gratitude for this translation. The third edition was published with James M. Campbell, a publisher in Philadelphia, in 1844,⁵⁰ and while it was not without flaws, it boosted Neander's influence and reputation at American seminaries considerably.⁵¹ In the preface to this American edition, Ezekiel Robinson – a professor at Rochester Theological Seminary and later president of Brown University – offered the following

⁴⁶ Robinson, 'Augustine', 69.

⁴⁷ Idem, 'Paul as the Apostle of the heathen: his education and call: from Neander's "History of the planting of the Church and progress of the Christian Church under the Apostles, vol. 1: translated from the German by the Editor"', *BR* iv/8–9 (1834), 138–53 at p. 138.

⁴⁸ Idem, 'The Christian Church and Christian life in connexion with the Church, as developed among heathen Christians: from Neander's "History of the planting of the Church and progress of the Christian Church under the Apostles: translated from the German by the Editor"', *BR* iv/8–9 (1834), 241–53 at p. 241.

⁴⁹ James Ryland, 'Translator's preface', to Johann August Wilhelm Neander, *History of the planting and training of the Christian Church by the Apostles*, trans. from the third edition by James E. Ryland, Philadelphia, PA 1844, p. v.

⁵⁰ Neander, *History of the planting and training of the Christian Church by the Apostles*.

⁵¹ His translation is often characterised by a too free translation of the German text and errors of the original meaning: 'Notices of new books', *NE* xxiv (1865), 389–412 at p. 395.

assessment of Neander's scholarship: 'No one has surpassed or even equaled [him] in skill and success.'⁵² The *Methodist Review*, published in New York, endorsed this 1844 translation and applauded its theological stance, writing positively that Neander 'is of a school of divines who have for several years made most commendable efforts for the restoration of an orthodox theology, and an evangelical spirit in the German Churches'. In investigating church history, it offers a 'profound investigation'.⁵³ The reviewer of the *Southern Quarterly Review* similarly praised the American publication, writing that 'there is no work better adapted to the present state of the religious world', and concluded that 'it is a valuable addition to our theological libraries' in the United States.⁵⁴

The translation and success of Neander's *History* made the North American audience receptive to Neander, and the number of articles on Neander's ideas and translations of his works increased in North America throughout the 1840s.⁵⁵ In several academic journals, writers and editors introduced details of Neander's life and work while describing what they believed were positive features of German historical scholarship. For example, readers of the second volume of the *New Englander*, published in 1844, would have noted affirmative reactions to Neander's ideas and a positive recommendation for the new Ryland translation of Neander's church history.⁵⁶ Providing detailed information, the *New Englander* presented a welcoming image of Neander over against rationalist German historians, portraying him as a scholar who would fit the American ideal of an academic, and perhaps in so doing swaying those who were sceptical of German scholars. The anonymous author of the *New Englander* article, who had met Neander in Berlin, described his lack of sympathy with rationalism while at the same time holding a 'deep faith ... [that] seems always to have been a controlling principle [in] his mind'.⁵⁷ Schaff told his audience that 'the most enduring merit of Neander's church history consists in the *vital union of the two elements of science and Christian piety*', and that his historical presentation is not of 'mechanical accumulation of material, but of *life*

⁵² Ezekiel Robinson, 'Preface to the American edition', in August Neander, *History of the planting and training of the Christian Church by the Apostles*, trans. J. E. Ryland, rev. trans. E. G. Robinson, New York 1865, p. iv.

⁵³ 'Critical notices', *Methodist Review* xxvi (1844), 317.

⁵⁴ 'History of the planting and training of the Christian Church', *Southern Quarterly Review* ix (1846), 541–3.

⁵⁵ [Edward Robinson], 'Recent literary intelligence: Germany', *BR* v (1841), 251–2 at p. 251; 'Neander's history', *BRPR* xv/4 (1843), 604–5; 'Augustus Neander', *NE* ii (1844), 267–72; B. B. Edwards and E. A. Park, 'Theological encyclopaedia and methodology', *BSac* i (1844), 178–217, 332–67, 552–78, 726–35 at p. 575; B. Sears, 'Neander's Church history', *BSac* iv (1847), 386–402.

⁵⁶ 'Augustus Neander', 272.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 268, 271.

and genetic development'.⁵⁸ In addition to Protestant journals, Neander's work also received acknowledgement in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review*.⁵⁹

Translations of other books, essays and monographs written by Neander exerted an impact on history scholarship and education in the US, where he became a symbol of mediation between tradition and modernism, as well as a model for historical research and religious piety.⁶⁰ In 1850 a writer for the *International Miscellany of Literature, Art, and Science* journal described him as 'free from the reproach which attaches to so many of his [German] fellow laborers, of covertly undermining the foundation of Christianity, under the pretense of placing it on a philosophical basis'.⁶¹ His were described as 'strictly evangelical' views that exemplified a 'modified form'.⁶²

As increasing numbers of American professors learned about Neander via translations, they began to view him as a guide and model for their own church history research, though reactions from old school Reformed academics and others were mixed.⁶³ Neander's work received special attention at Princeton Theological Seminary, where it was critically reviewed by the recently installed church history professor James Waddell Alexander (1804–59), one of several academics who clung to the idea of church history being the 'handmaid of dogmatic theology'.⁶⁴ Alexander's assessment was largely based on the translation of Neander's *History of the planting and training of the Christian Church*, while the other work was still in the process of being translated. According to Alexander,

⁵⁸ Philp Schaff, *History of the apostolic Church with a general introduction to church history*, New York 1854, 100–1.

⁵⁹ 'Book notices', *American Catholic Quarterly Review* iii (1878), 747–67 at p. 759.

⁶⁰ 'Notices of new books: new American edition of Neander's Church history', *NE* xxxi (1872), 365–400 at p. 393.

⁶¹ 'Recent deaths: Augustus William Neander', *International Miscellany of Literature, Art, and Science* i (1850), 237–9 at p. 237.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Neander's work was widely reviewed and received different responses. For instance, the *Baptist Advocate* wrote that 'some of the author's views do not accord with our own, but in the main, we are much pleased with the work, and cheerfully recommend it': cited in John Foxe, *History of the lives, sufferings, and triumphant deaths, of the primitive as well as the Protestant martyrs, from the commencement of Christianity to the latest periods of pagan and popish persecution*, New York 1845, 713.

⁶⁴ Robert E. Thompson, *A history of the Presbyterian Churches in the United States*, New York 1895, 217; James W. Alexander, 'The value of church history to the theologians of our day: an inaugural discourse', in William S. Plumer, W. Phillips and James W. Alexander, *Discourses at the inauguration of the Rev. James W. Alexander as professor of ecclesiastical history and church government in the theological seminary at Princeton, delivered at Princeton, November 20, 1849, before the directors of the seminary*, New York 1850, 71–2, 80.

Neander's reputation 'must be founded' on this translation.⁶⁵ In an 1844 review of the *History of the planting and training of the Christian Church*, Alexander expressed concern about what he believed were speculative and idealistic ideas emerging from Germany, and he consequently argued that Neander's historical analyses were not objective. Rather bluntly, Alexander stated that, 'A fact – as a fact – is nothing to him.'⁶⁶ He declared that Neander's slogan was 'free development', with 'all the objects of his mind in flux. He regards every fact as a transition-point from one state of things to another. Thus even errors and abuses are processes through which the cyclical motion must revolve'.⁶⁷ Alexander was willing to recognise Neander as a 'noble scholar, who is perhaps the most celebrated professor of Germany, and whose works [he] never open[s] without instruction and delight'.⁶⁸ In the end, Alexander's ambivalence toward Neander's work was likely one reason why it had a mixed reception at Princeton. Apparently Neander was too 'liberated' for the establishment Presbyterians at Princeton, who were inclined to reject ideas linked to historicism.⁶⁹

Neander's influence expanded when Joseph Torrey, a professor of moral and intellectual philosophy and President of the University of Vermont, accepted Edward Robinson's encouragement to translate all volumes for a revised American edition of *General history of the Christian religion and Church*.⁷⁰ Torrey had long been involved in the translation project, but it was Henry John Rose of Cambridge who had earlier completed the English translation published in London and Philadelphia. Its shortcomings led Torrey to work on a separate translation whose first volume covered the same content as Rose's. Eventually other translations emerged that resulted in other volumes in the series.⁷¹

Torrey most likely met Neander at the University of Berlin during his visit to and study time in Germany, which may explain his enthusiasm for this translation work. Neander was reportedly delighted about the translation project, and gave it his full support.⁷² As the second edition included

⁶⁵ James W. Alexander, 'History of the planting and training of the Christian Church by the Apostles by August Neander, trans. J. E. Ryland', *BRPR* xvi/2 (1844), 156–83 at p. 156.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 157.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 158.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 183.

⁶⁹ The Princeton professors welcomed the work of Ernst Hengstenberg: 'Gallerie der bedeutendsten jetzt lebenden Universitäts-theologen Deutschlands', *Deutsche Kirchenfreund* v/4 (Apr. 1852), 129–39 at p. 135.

⁷⁰ Torrey, 'Translator's preface', in Neander, *General history*, ii, p. iii. Torrey himself travelled to Europe to study and was skilled in translating German texts: 'Torrey, Joseph', in Rossiter Johnson and John Howard Brown (eds), *The twentieth century biographical dictionary of notable Americans*, x, Boston 1904.

⁷¹ G. F. S., 'Torrey's translation of Neander', *CE* xliii (1847), 427–35 at p. 427. For an analysis of the English translation see G. F. S., 'Rose's translation of Neander', *CE* xxxix (1845), 180–91.

⁷² 'Prof. Torrey's translation of Neander', *Literary World* vi/162 (1850), 251.

completely new pages and paragraphs, Torrey felt a need to 'translate nearly the whole of the first volume anew'.⁷³ Torrey said that he cheerfully worked on the new translation because it allowed him 'to present the work to the English reader in the form in which Dr. Neander has been pleased to express his wish that it should appear'.⁷⁴ Throughout the translation process, Torrey was committed to providing an accurate 'version of the original'.⁷⁵ A reviewer for the *Biblical Repository and Classical Review* journal wrote that Torrey performed his translation work 'in a most scholarly and able manner'.⁷⁶ Torrey's 1867 obituary in the *Burlington Times* quoted a contemporary as saying that the translation required 'as much learning and ability in the translator as in the author'.⁷⁷

In an 1842 letter to Torrey, Robinson expressed both his concern about finding a publisher 'for [so] heavy a work' and confidence that 'the time will doubtless come before long, when the way will be opened'.⁷⁸ The translated volumes were eventually printed by the prominent publisher Crocker and Brewster, and soon afterwards Schaff wrote that 'Torrey's excellent translation published in Boston ... has given Neander's immortal work even much larger circulation in England and America than it has in Germany itself'.⁷⁹ The project received praise from numerous sources. Calvin Stowe (1802–86), a professor of biblical studies and librarian at Lane Seminary, wrote: 'I have used Neander constantly ever since the first part of his history was published ... Prof. Torrey has executed admirably his part of the task.'⁸⁰ James Manning Sherwood, editor of the *Biblical Repository*, called it 'the best ecclesiastical history ever written'; he predicted that it would be a 'standard work on this subject for ages to come'.⁸¹

The new translation of *General history of the Christian religion and Church* provided American professors with a textbook that went well beyond Mosheim's research. An enthusiastic writer in the *North American Review* (1855) described what he felt was the clear supremacy of Neander's work over that of Mosheim's, arguing that 'Mosheim only collected existing

⁷³ Joseph Torrey, 'Translator's preface', in Augustus Neander, *General history of the Christian religion and Church: from the German of Dr Augustus Neander*, trans. Joseph Torrey, 2nd American edn, i, Boston 1851, p. iii. ⁷⁴ *Ibid.* ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ James Manning Sherwood, 'Literary and critical notices of books', *BRCR* vi (1850), 179–92 at p. 179.

⁷⁷ 'Death of Professor Torrey', *Burlington Times*, 27 Nov. 1867, Silver Special Collections Library, University of Vermont.

⁷⁸ 'Letter from Robinson to Torrey, 1842', office of the President (Joseph Torrey) records, *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, New York 1889, i. 41. The *Christian Examiner* praised the work: 'Neander's History is generally regarded as one of the most important products of the theological literature': G. F. S., 'Torrey's translation of Neander', 435.

⁸⁰ 'Prof. Torrey's translation of Neander', 251.

⁸¹ Sherwood, 'Literary and critical notices of books', 179.

records' but failed to provide 'circumstances and influences'.⁸² When observing how Neander moved beyond documentary evidence, the reviewer declared that the German scholar showed Americans how church history 'must be written, and if he has established a standard which few can hope to attain, he has at least furnished a model which cannot lack zealous and emulous imitators'.⁸³

While the reaction to Torrey's newly translated American edition was primarily positive, and while through it Neander emerged as a model for performing church history, the work also spotlighted differences between new ideas from Germany and the Scottish Common Sense tradition that many American seminarians were following. In 1848, a professor of church history at Auburn Seminary named Samuel Hopkins was still writing in defence of Mosheim. While acknowledging Neander's 'great merits [as a] historian', Hopkins himself was one of a significant number of American professors who preferred Mosheim's approach of stating facts and 'leav[ing] the reader to philosophize on them at his leisure'.⁸⁴ He concluded that 'the prominent attribute of Mosheim as an historian, was good sense'.⁸⁵

Union Theological and Rochester Seminaries

Three professors at Union Theological Seminary, who were all former students of Neander, helped introduce him and German scientific historical methods to Americans through their translations of his work and through the transfer of ideas: Edward Robinson, Philip Schaff and Henry Boynton Smith.⁸⁶ Smith first met Neander in Germany in 1837.⁸⁷ In a letter written two years later, he described Neander as 'the father of a new era in church history' and someone 'deeply learned in the whole history and the doctrines of the Christian church'.⁸⁸ A Neander course titled 'History of Christian doctrines' introduced Smith to a discipline

⁸² 'Neander's Church history', *North American Review* lxxx (Jan. 1855), 199–208 at p. 207.

⁸³ Ibid. 208.
⁸⁴ Samuel Hopkins, 'Torrey's Neander', *BRCR* iii/8 (Jan. 1848), 126–45 at pp. 126–8.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 128.
⁸⁶ Annette G. Aubert, 'Henry Boynton Smith and church history in nineteenth-century America', *CH* lxxxv/2 (2016), 302–27.

⁸⁷ Smith not only attended his lectures but also conversed with him outside the lecture hall. Neander specifically encouraged Smith to stay on in Berlin for further studies. Smith followed his advice: Elizabeth Lee Smith (ed.), *Henry Boynton Smith: his life and work*, New York 1880, 69, 74–5. Smith's lecture notes from his studies in Europe are at the Burke Library of Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University: Johann August Neander's 'Dogmengeschichte' [1839] series 3, box 3:3, Henry Boynton Smith papers, 1834–90, Burke Library of Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University.

⁸⁸ Smith, *Henry Boynton Smith*, 67.

that was still in its infancy in America, and upon his return to the US he focused a great deal of energy on disseminating Neander's ideas to his peers. As part of his effort, Smith translated texts related to church history.

At Union Theological Seminary in New York, where Smith was installed as chair of church history, he was tremendously eager to disseminate the new learning he had received from Neander. While Smith did not write a textbook on church history in the manner of Neander, he was actively engaged in translation and became a notable translator of historical-theological works. The content of Smith's translations and lectures while at Union clearly point to Neander's influence on him and his concern to convey his mentor's ideas to America. In his 1851 inaugural address at Union, Smith delivered a momentous lecture about the 'Nature and worth of the science of church history', which scholars in America noted, and it unmistakably showed his dependence on Neander.⁸⁹ While Smith in his lecture remembered Neander, he also expressed his dismay over the neglect of this discipline in the nineteenth-century American seminary curriculum. Smith, in the absence of the 'historic spirit in America',⁹⁰ became engaged in sparking interest in church history and, alongside other historical translation projects, created an important translation of Karl Rudolf Hagenbach's essay on 'Neander's service as a church historian', which was circulated in the same year as he delivered his inaugural address.⁹¹

Smith's translation of 'Neander's service as a church historian' enhanced his former professor's influence in historical theology and church history studies in the US.⁹² On 4 November 1850, the text on which the translation is based was presented for the first time as an academic lecture at the University of Basel by Neander's former student Hagenbach, whose historical work Smith had also translated into English. The original essay was published in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*,⁹³ a German mediating theology journal with an international readership and influence. A translation of this essay, reprinted in a 1851 edition of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, highlighted the Christian scientific spirit of Neander's work, and explained his understanding of the concept of gradual historical development in church history. Hagenbach presented Neander as 'the renewer and restorer of th[e] science' of church history,⁹⁴ and suggested that speculative philosophers were hesitant to grant him 'the title of a

⁸⁹ Henry B. Smith, 'The nature and worth of the science of church history', *BSac* viii (1851), 412–41.

⁹⁰ Marvin R. Vincent, 'Professor Henry Boynton Smith', *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review* vi (1877), 273–90 at pp. 276–7.

⁹¹ Hagenbach, 'Neander's service', 822–57. ⁹² *Ibid.* 855.

⁹³ Karl R. Hagenbach, 'Neanders Verdienste um die Kirchengeschichte', *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* xxiv/3 (1851), 543–94.

⁹⁴ Hagenbach, 'Neander's service', 851.

scientific man, because he would not ascend with them to the heights of a philosophy, which constructs history by means of *à priori* ideas'.⁹⁵ Hagenbach viewed this criticism as a virtue, and described Neander as equal if not superior to Mosheim and Gottlieb Jakob Planck in many respects. This translation helped to portray Neander as a German historian who could serve as model for American students and scholars, especially in the way he studied and used original sources.⁹⁶

Philip Schaff was one of several Europeans and Americans who were part of a network of German-educated theologians with connections to Union Theological Seminary. As an immigrant who earned a teaching position at the German Reformed Seminary in Mercersburg before moving to Union Seminary, Schaff was one of the most knowledgeable professors on Neander's work,⁹⁷ and was active in disseminating Neander's ideas to Americans. Although he never translated any of Neander's texts, he wrote biographical sketches and personal reminiscences under titles such as *Saint Augustin, Melancthon, Neander: three biographies*, in which he 'entertain[ed] the most profound veneration for his master'.⁹⁸

Another academic institution with a strong Neander connection was Rochester Theological Seminary, a prosperous Baptist seminary that was home to two professors who respected his work. In 1854, four years after its founding, the seminary established a German department, and Augustus Rauschenbusch, a German native and a former student of Neander, was chosen to lead it.⁹⁹ Neander was Rauschenbusch's favourite professor in Berlin, and he likely assisted with the transfer of Neander's collection of 4,600 books to Rochester. In addition to emphasising original sources, the library included many of Neander's handwritten supplementary notes. The purchase of the collection was reported in at least twenty American magazines and newspapers, some of which described the competition for the collection between Rochester Seminary, Lane Seminary and the Prussian government.¹⁰⁰ The decision to sell the library to Rochester was made by August Twisten, a professor at the University of Berlin.

In addition to translations of his own work, Neander posthumously influenced American church history research when his personal library was transferred to Rochester Theological Seminary. According to the

⁹⁵ Ibid. 854–5.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 850.

⁹⁷ Pochmann, *German culture in America*, 307; Philip Schaff, *Saint Augustin, Melancthon, Neander: three biographies*, New York 1886, 165.

⁹⁸ 'Books and their authors', *Library Magazine* 1 (1886), 89–92 at p. 90; 'An interesting new work: by Philip Schaff', *Homiletic Review* xi (1886), 287.

⁹⁹ William Cathcart (ed.), 'Rochester Theological Seminary', in *The Baptist encyclopedia*, Philadelphia, PA 1881, iii. 999–1007 at pp. 999–1000.

¹⁰⁰ Scrapbook 4, and 'Local intelligence', scrapbook 4, William Nathan Sage papers, A.S12, Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester.

seminary, '[the] collection was made under the most favorable circumstances, by one of the first scholars of the age; and contains many important works, of which few if any other copies are to be found elsewhere in this country'.¹⁰¹ Since it contained many rare resources, the library was used by scholars at universities and seminaries across the US. They were drawn to its 'complete ... Patristic literature; all the Fathers, in the best, oldest, and rarest editions are to be found in it'.¹⁰² Thus, the library furthered Neander's reputation; according to a special report published by the US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, 'the fame of the original professor of such collections gives them a value even apart from the intrinsic worth of the books themselves'.¹⁰³

Ezekiel Robinson, another professor at Rochester Seminary, deserves special mention for his involvement in establishing the library, and for his assistance in improving the Ryland translation of Neander. It is perhaps unsurprising that he was chosen to rework this translation since Robinson was a theologian well-versed in German scholarship and who had studied in Germany, where he preferred the lectures of Isaak Dorner (a famous mediating theologian) over those of Hengstenberg.¹⁰⁴ In 1859 the New York-based Sheldon publishing firm approached Robinson about revising Ryland's English translation of the last German edition of *The planting and training of the Christian Church*. Robinson noted 'that this last German edition had been exhausted, and no copy of it could be obtained' in the US.¹⁰⁵ A copy was eventually acquired from the Roswell D. Hitchcock library at Union Theological Seminary, but the translation project was delayed for several years. When it was finally completed, Robinson described the volume as 'intelligible to all readers who are interested in the subjects of which it treats. Its quotations from other languages have all been rendered into English, both in the text and in the notes, so that no reader need longer be disturbed by them'.¹⁰⁶ This carefully revised translation allowed more Americans to access and benefit from Neander's ideas.

Inspired by the recent work on translation and book history, this article contributes to current efforts to identify how translations supported the

¹⁰¹ *Catalogue of the Rochester Theological Seminary, founded November 4, 1850, by the New-York Baptist Union for Ministerial Education*, Rochester 1852, 15.

¹⁰² Scrapbook 4, William Nathan Sage papers, A.S12.

¹⁰³ *Public libraries in the United States of America: their history, condition, and management: special report: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education*, part I, Washington, DC 1876, 132.

¹⁰⁴ Robinson Ezekiel Gilman and others, *Ezekiel Gilman Robinson; an autobiography with a supplement*, New York 1896, 97.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 64.

¹⁰⁶ August Neander, *History of the planting and training of the Christian Church by the Apostles*, New York 1865, pp. iii–iv.

transatlantic movement of ideas from Germany to nineteenth-century American seminaries. In nineteenth-century America, the academic task for American professors involved the translation of German textbooks that assisted in the transfer of new historical ideas. Such ‘translations allowed for cross-fertilization’ between American and German professors, supporting scholarly inspiration and empowering broader European connections.¹⁰⁷ Prominent German professors understood the importance of having their work translated into English as a means of supporting research in historical studies; translations offered an alternative to more speculative commitments in historical works being published at that time. Translations helped Johann August Neander become a respected figure in American academia, with his influence tied to his former US students in Germany, who were regarded as ‘little Neanders in their field’¹⁰⁸ upon their return home. Several became professors at American seminaries, where they worked on translations of Neander’s texts. Thus, Neander serves as a prime example of how German scholars benefited from translations of their own works.

The promotion of Neander views in the US *via* translations of his texts is an example of how translation shaped historical studies in America, and why German mediating scholars gained prominence in the 1830s. This article offers new ways of understanding the influences of translation on the theological direction of American professors and institutions that were involved in promoting the translation of historical works associated with the mediating theology presented by Neander – a topic that has so far received scant attention from scholars who examine nineteenth-century theological trends in the US. Translations of historical texts represented an important means of transmitting the writings of mediating theologians, with Neander’s works playing a particularly important role in building a transatlantic bridge between English- and German-speaking scholars.

Given that professors at American universities and seminaries were selective in the books and articles they translated and published, nineteenth-century translation work served an important gatekeeping function in the transfer of ‘non-threatening foreign knowledge’, with speculative ideas less likely to be translated, and more likely to be critically examined.¹⁰⁹ Neander’s positive reception confirms that his mediating views deserved attention, as opposed to the speculative perspectives being discussed by certain groups of scholars at German universities. As American

¹⁰⁷ O’Connor, *Translation*, 205, 223–4.

¹⁰⁸ Hartmut Lehmann, *Martin Luther in the American imagination*, Munich 1988, 123.

¹⁰⁹ Denise Merkle, ‘History of reception: censorship’, in Lieven D’Hulst and Yves Gambier (eds), *A history of modern translation knowledge: sources, concepts, effects*, Amsterdam 2018, 225.

professors became more aware of a need to examine German historical paradigms, they eagerly translated books by German church historians that they perceived as committed to the principles of faith and science. The intersection of translations, historiographic research, transatlantic academic networks and Neander's mediating approach supported the development of scientific theological-historical studies in America. Neander eventually became more prominent compared to his German peers in terms of influencing church history studies in American post-secondary institutions.