RESEARCH PROJECT
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I would like to study German Protestant theology during the time of the Weimar Republic, 1918-1933. These years cover the rise of the most renowned Protestant theology of our time, that of Karl Barth. Barth's first important work, The Epistle to the Romans, was written in 1919; the first volume of his mature work, the Church Dogmatics, was produced in 1932.

Prior to 1918 the dominant theology in Germany was strongly influenced, in various ways, by the writings of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) and Friedrich Schleiermacher(1768-1834). The publication of the first volume of Barth's dogmatics in its final form signaled the crystalization of a new theological movement, sometimes called dialectical theology or neo-orthodox theology. Barth's program stands in sharp contrast to the work of Adolf von Harnack(e.g. Das Wesen des Christentums, 1902) and Ernst Troeltsch(e.g. Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte, 1902), two theologians who were influential in the years immediately prior to World War I.

We know retrospectively that the rise of Karl Barth's theology -- Barth has been likened not without justification to Thomas, Calvin, and Schleiermacher -- is one of the most significant theological events in the years 1918-1933. Interpretation of the theology of this period has therefore tended to view the rise of Barthianism as the key to understanding the theology of these years. But this is to overlook the significant differences which divided theologians outside of the Barthian school. Regardless of its later dominance, Barthian theology was only one

theology among many in the years 1918-1933, as names like K. Heim(Leitfaden der Dogmatik, 2nd ed., 1916), R. Seeberg (Christliche Dogmatik, 1924-25), P. Altheus(Grundriss der Dogmatik, 1929), and P. Tillich(Religiöse Verwirklichung, 1930) indicate. Preliminary study suggests that the key to understanding the theology of this period is not the developing disengagement of Barthian theology from the dominant theology of 1918, but the revolutionary social, scientific, and political developments which occurred in Germany after 1918. Preliminary study also suggests that many theologians, not Karl Barth alone, were groping in this period to respond to the revolutionary times with a new and relevant theology faithful to the fundamental message of the Scriptures.

The investigation in historical theology which I have just outlined might be viewed as a case study of Christian theology in a revolutionary period. It is sometimes said that Christian theology is so bound to the past, to the Scriptures and to the tradition of the Church, that it is congenitally incapable of responding to the needs of the present. Or, it is said, if Christian theology does attempt to respond to the present it must sacrifice much, if not all, of its historical substance. I will want to ask, therefore, about the way Protestant theology responded to the Weimar period and also whether, or to what degree, that response was successful.

I have limited the scope of this study to the period 1918-1933 not only because of the ascendancy of Barth after 1932, but also because of the stabilization of the political situation in Germany after the establishment of National Socialism. With

the success of the Hitler-revolution and its monolithic culture, the uncertainty about the nature of Protestant theology's response to the present was largely removed, even though a great struggle lay ahead.

I should perhaps add that I do not intend to deal directly with the problem of social ethics, important as that was during the Weimar period. The social ethic of Protestantism in Germany has received considerable attention in the secondary literature. My study will focus more on the broader theological problems, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man, and so on. This aspect of German theology in the Weimar period needs much closer scrutiny that it has hitherto received. H. R. Mackintosh's Types of Modern Theology(1937) treats this period only indirectly. F. Kattenbusch's Die deutsche evangelische Theologie seit Schleiermacher(1934) provides asuseful introduction to the period, but is necessarily limited in scope.

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