

Theology, history, and the modern German university. Edited by Kevin M. Schel and Michael P. DeJonge. (Christentum in der modernen Welt, 1.) Pp. vi + 359. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021. €74. 978 3 16 161054 7
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This volume, consisting of fifteen essays, examines the way in which a variety of theologians from the late eighteenth century to the first third or so of the twentieth century negotiated the relationship between what might be termed the rise of the historical consciousness, reflecting a particular development within German universities in the so-called long nineteenth century but with effects well beyond the borders of Germany, and the subject they studied, which more often than not was directly related to the faith they professed. As the editors comment in their brief introduction, 'this emerging historical mindset signalled both crisis and opportunity, giving rise to new modes of historical and critical study of biblical texts, bold revisions of central Christian doctrines, and a progressive refashioning of the methods of theological enquiry around the determinative and foundational role of historical understanding'. Theology, now removed from its place as the queen of sciences, could no longer busy itself with the task of clarifying and explaining the timeless truths of Christianity but had now to see its primary task as 'the rigorous study of the historical development of Christian life and thought'.

The essays are arranged in chronological order and parade a variety of responses to the question of theology's relationship to historical study, or more broadly conceived 'Wissenschaft', roughly translated as science but approximating more to scholarship as this was conceived in the reformed or newly-founded German universities. Michael C. Legaspi reminds the reader that important historical scholarship had already developed in the later eighteenth century, seen in the works of Thomasius and Semler, both bound together in different ways by what Legaspi terms a civil philosophy, and he notes especially how Semler's approach to doctrine as a subject essentially taken up with inaccessible truths allowed him to adopt a more liberal approach to doctrinal difference. Jacqueline Mariña looks at the contrasting positions of Kant and Schleiermacher on the understanding of religion, which produced two different views of the place of religion in the university. Kevin Vander Schel takes aspects of Mariña's essay further by examining Schleiermacher's model of *wissenschaftliche Theologie* in his so-called *Brief outline*. While Schleiermacher's vision could be held to be a rigorously historical one, which was taken by some to relativise the normative content of Christianity, it remained 'in service to the recognition that Jesus Christ presents the complete and unsurpassable revelation of God in history, and that his redemptive work inaugurates a new and decisive transformation of the historical world'. The next two essays, by Peter Hodgson and Johannes Zachhuber, concern F. C. Baur. Hodgson, making particular use of Baur's *Church and theology in the nineteenth century*, discusses Baur's particular view of how historical theology can mediate between belief and *Wissenschaft* ('Baur conceived of history as a theological discipline grounded in the idea of God's self-mediation, which constitutes history as such, and of theology as a historical discipline committed to them unbiased research of historical science'), even if Baur was only too aware of the tensions between them. Zachhuber focuses on the exchange between E. Zeller and A. Ritschl over the legacy of Baur, indicating that Ritschl was right to criticise

Zeller for representing Baur as simply interested in ‘purely historical research’ (a point amply shown by Hodgson) and showing how their views of history and the role of theology differed fundamentally but how both in different ways were reacting to a post-1848 context as they sought to pursue academic careers in adverse circumstances. Zachary Purvis provides an essay on the now strangely neglected August Neander (in his day he was one of the most feted of scholars) and his own so-called mediating theology in which rigorous historical scholarship was allied to an organic and purposeful view of the development of the Church. Grant Kaplan shows how such mediating theology was translated into a Roman Catholic situation, in this context examining two well-known members of the Catholic theological faculty in Tübingen, Johann Sebastian von Drey and Johannes Kuhn. The latter’s *Life of Jesus*, which constituted a refutation of Strauss and was praised by Albert Schweitzer in his *Quest*, nearly ended up on the *Index*, however, presaging the inherent difficulties for Catholic theologians who attempted to negotiate between the assumptions of the historical approach and the ecclesial authorities. Three essays then look at diverse ways in which the research model of German scholarship was transmitted within the Anglophone world. Matthew Muller and Kenneth Parker examine Newman’s developing views on this subject, especially as they are conveyed in his *The idea of a university*. Newman emerges as a sharp enemy of the potentially reductive consequences of a historicist approach in which God is excluded from the flow of history but as someone, partially through the reading of the Catholic historian Döllinger, who came to see ways in which the curriculum could welcome scholarly study. Mark Chapman, after a helpfully pellucid account of the very different context in which theological research was conducted in England, highlights the positive reception of German scholarship by Julius Hare and Connop Thirlwall and how both in their different ways, and against a background of a generally negative reception of German ‘neologism’, played a significant role in mediating German theology to a broadly sceptical Anglican audience. Annette Aubert follows with an informative essay on the work of Henry Boynton Smith in the United States, whose mediation of German theology through his own publications and translations of German books helped to bring about a more rigorous approach to church history in that country. In the longest essay in the volume, Asher Bierman looks at the aims of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany, its mixed reception in the Jewish community and the ways in which three important thinkers, Buber, Rosenzweig and Cohen, drew from its assumptions in different ways. A final section examines what the editors term the early twentieth-century crisis surrounding historicised ‘wissenschaftliche Theologie’, and the debates concerning historicism and revelation. Jonathan Teubner produces a helpful essay in which he shows how Adolf von Harnack, often considered the doyen of scholarly theologians, sought to incorporate his rigorous scholarly thought into an appropriation of Jesus, which took seriously the effects of Jesus through history. For Teubner, then, Harnack emerges as a historian with sophisticated thoughts about theology and history, who owed more than one might imagine to Dilthey. Christian Polke produces an appropriately nuanced view of Troeltsch’s complex and perhaps even agonised attempts to negotiate between historical relativism and theological truth, settling in the end upon the metaphor of compromise as

a way of characterising Troeltsch's approach. Christoph Chalamet discusses the development of Barth's thoughts on the relationship of revelation to history, highlighting, *inter alia*, Barth's famous exchange with Harnack in the pages of *Die Christliche Welt* of 1923. Barth's view of theology's *Wissenschaftlichkeit* as conditioned by its adherence 'to the recollection that its object was first subject and must become that again and again' seemed to Harnack to be a return to the stone age in which theology could only be excluded from the university, but to other contemporaries like a liberation. Chalamet, however, thinks that any view of Barth's theology as ahistorical, in spite of its understanding of history as a *Hilfswissenschaft*, is a strange misrepresentation. An essay on Bonhoeffer by Michael P. DeJonge, showing how a *mélange* of Kierkegaardian, Barthian and Heideggerian thought almost dissolves the question of theology and historical criticism brings the volume to an arresting conclusion.

This review has only hinted at the riches of these scholarly essays and the essays themselves only hint at the richness of the broader topic. The collection fulfils, in broad terms at least, the aims of the editors – in rough an account of the disputed relationship of *Wissenschaftlichkeit* and Christian thought and the attempts of theologians to justify the ongoing presence of theology in the newly research universities of Germany; the appropriation of 'scientific' methods by Protestants and Catholics and an investigation of the tension-filled contexts in which this occurred; the ongoing debate about this matter in the early twentieth century; and the roots of the subsequent division between *Religionswissenschaft* and academic theology. Each study focuses to a greater or lesser extent on these themes. Some have more to say about context than others; and some are keener to present the different approaches taken to the broad question of scholarship and theology. What becomes clear is that theologians faced difficulties both of an institutional kind – what future was there for theology in the reconstituted research university? And of an intellectual kind – how could one speak reasonably of the transmission of eternal truths while taking seriously the implications of historicism? – which impinged upon a range of other contexts. Could the inevitable reductionism of historicism be overcome? These tensions reached an intriguing head in the exchange between Barth and Harnack in 1923 where two worlds appeared to clash. For Barth the modern university could only tip its hat to theology but for Harnack, not least with reference to his own remarkably successful career within Wilhelmine Germany, that was an unjustified claim, which would only become a reality if Barth had his way. Reading the complex, variegated and often convoluted attempts of those from Schleiermacher to Bonhoeffer to square the intellectual circle of history and theology, so helpfully presented in this volume, the allure of Barth remains, even if one can continue to admire the sincerity and intellectual efforts of those he criticised.

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