

chologisch musikalischer Kulturhermeneutik, die sich für die schöpferischen Ausdrucks- und Aneignungsprozesse der Religionsgeschichte und das in ihnen lebendige Erleben und Deuten interessiert. Dass diese religionshermeneutische Pointe der sieben religionsgeschichtlichen Entdeckungsgeschichten in Grögers Buch am Ende nur indirekt mitschwingt, ist nur insofern schade, als die gegenwärtigen Debatten zur Krise und Neuausrichtung des theologischen Studiums davon vielleicht durchaus etwas lernen könnten: Von der bloßen historischen Methode und Kritik allein werden Religionsunterricht und Predigt, Studium und theologische Problemsensibilität eben auch nicht immer besser; vielmehr ist der spezialwissenschaftliche Wissenschaftsbetrieb – wenn man so will das Erbe Wellhausens – so komplex und vielschichtig erfolgreich, dass er im Blick auf die enzyklopädische Interaktion der theologischen Fächer kaum noch zu überblicken ist. Grögers Hinweis auf die hermeneutische Fremdsetzungs- und Aneignungsdimension in der Erkundung der Religionsgeschichte erinnert vor diesem Hintergrund letztlich an die eingangs angedeutete Epoche des modernen Protestantismus, die das Problembewusstsein für die Geschichte der Religion noch sehr vital mit jenem der Religionshermeneutik und Frömmigkeitstheorie zu verbinden verstand. Den alten Meistern jener bibelhermeneutischen Idee nachzuspüren und sich bei aller Überholtheit ihrer fachlichen Detailergebnisse von ihrer historiographisch-hermeneutischen Vision aneignenden Verstehens für die Gegenwart inspirieren zu lassen, ist jedenfalls eine bemerkenswerte Anregung, zu der Krögers Wegbereiterbuch einen schönen Beitrag leistet.

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**Klaus-Michael Kodalle**, 1933 – *Die Versuchung der Theologie*, Zeitgeschichtliche Forschungen, Band 62. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2022, 150 S., Broschur, € 69,90, ISBN 978-3-428-18370-8.

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With his monograph on select Protestant theologians in the time immediately before, and in the early period of National Socialist Germany, Klaus-Michael Kodalle has provided a very helpful contribution to the development of our knowledge of the religious thought about, engagement with and response to the cultural, social and political dynamics of the “Third Reich”. In person-specific chapters, addressing both well-known names in theology and some

equally important (although less popular) figures, Kodalle draws our attention to Paul Tillich, Emmanuel Hirsch, Karl Heim, Hans Michael Müller, Gerhardt Kuhlmann and Erik Peterson. He lays his emphasis clearly on the religious-philosophical analysis of their thought rather than on the historical-critical contextualization. One of the central questions he addresses, and returns to regularly, is the reception of Kierkegaard in these years among the Protestant theologians. He concludes that many of the theologians who were influenced by him, or seeking to promote his thought at this time, left the door open to the ideological and political appropriation of his ideas, or actively used them to legitimize the ideological transition. Of course, Hirsch is the best example of this, who both edited Kierkegaard's works and promoted the ideology of National Socialism. Yet were these figures true "Kierkegaardians"? This is the underlying question that Kodalle struggles with. He shows how they were actually quite selective and interpretively creative with Kierkegaard, departing from him at critical points. This basic thesis is convincing, especially when considering Kierkegaard's radical call to a morality and faith of the New Testament against the established traditions of nineteenth century Danish Christendom.

The beginning of the book addresses the complicated and sometimes contradictory history of National Socialism. Kodalle focuses on the tensions and contradictions of the theological history, and begins with Tillich, a figure "on the fence". Although he was released from duties in 1933, he wanted to stay in Germany and hoped for a reversal of the initial decision. Indeed, some National Socialists wanted him to say. Hirsch saw him as a potential great leader in the new political order. Kodalle draws upon Friedrich Wilhelm Graf's groundbreaking research on Tillich and provides a philosophical analysis of his work, highlighting especially the influence of Kierkegaard, the existential philosophy and the strong presence of the power-theme in his early thought. The first essay on Tillich is essentially religious-philosophical exegesis of Tillich's work, but Kodalle also explicates the deeper structure of the political and ethical dimensions of the material. He lays out the problematic aspects of Tillich's thought in the 1920s and 1930s, issues that have been entirely ignored in the contemporary reception in English. In his essay on Hirsch, the most prominent German Kierkegaard translator and advocate of the twentieth century, he shows how Hirsch did not adopt the whole Kierkegaard, but on occasion distanced himself from him or sought to reinterpret him to soften his criticisms. This follows Kodalle's basic thesis that Kierkegaard actually worked like an immunity to the collectivist thinking at this time. In light of his thesis, a figure like Hirsch should not have adopted the ideology. Why didn't Hirsch, who so admired Kierkegaard, adopt his strong non-conformist approach? And what does this fact tell us about the phenomenon of theological reception, and really, more to the point, the

very limited influence of philosophical thought on omnivorous theologians like Hirsch? More could have been said about this paradox of theology. Kodalle rightly sees him cherry-picking Kierkegaard and reinterpreting him for his context. He took and left what he wanted, and exercised his intellectual autonomy toward Kierkegaard, and towards Luther. This is seen most strongly in his collectivization of the category of existence in the turn to “blood and race” (57). Does this broader argument show that philosophical and religious ideas may not be as effective in “immunizing” as we may wish they were?

Kodalle turns to Heim in the next chapter, the Protestant theologian in Tübingen. He too was fascinated with Kierkegaard. In his work from the 1930s, one can see his “open-mindedness for the spirit of the times of the revolutionary turn of 1933” (62). His idea of “Führerschaft” (leadership) is grounded Christologically, and in command and obedience themes and militant language. Kodalle addresses his ideology and, citing the theologian’s work from the 1930s, his propagation of the “Volkskörper” (people’s body), his “ja zum Volkskörper” (Heim, Jesus, 1937, 201, “yes to the people’s body”; Kodalle, 73) and his opposition to a “Schwächung, Entartung und Bastardisierung” (Heim, Jesus, 1937, 201; Kodalle, 73, “Weakening, degeneration and bastardization”). As Kodalle summarizes, “Heim warned against a leveling of the racial differences.” (73) Surprisingly, there is a “Karl Heim Haus” in Tübingen today, a student residence of the Protestant Church in Württemberg. On the webpage of the student house, there is not one mention of his racist ideas from the 1930s. The German “Karl-Heim-Gesellschaft” (Karl-Heim-Society) has also failed to address any of these issues. No mention is made of Heim’s history in the Third Reich on the society’s webpage. Heim’s theological thinking in 1935 about “Führung” (leadership) led him to claim that here we can gain a “right understanding of our folkish / ethnic destiny, of the meaning of the battle of the races / racial struggle in which we are engaged, and of the ultimate meaning of the opposition between the Jewish and Germanic folkdom.” (“das richtige Verständnis gewinnen für unser völkisches Schicksal, für die Bedeutung des Rassenkampfes, in dem wir stehen, und für den letzten Sinn des Gegensatzes zwischen jüdischem und germanischem Volkstum”) (Heim, Jesus, 1935, 75; Kodalle, 81). Perhaps it is time for the Karl Heim Society to address these issues, and for the Protestant Church in Wuerttemberg to consider the name of the student residence. Do people who wrote things like this in National Socialist Germany deserve to be honored with a student house or a research society?

Kodalle’s next chapter focuses on Hans Michael Müller, the assistant of the National Socialist *Reichsbischof* (“Bishop of the Reich”) of the German Evangelical Church (*Deutsche Evangelische Kirche*), Ludwig Müller (with whom he was not related). Kodalle sees analogies with Barth’s theology in H. M. Müller’s work:

“on many decisive points” there are “clear parallels to the systematic theology of Karl Barth” (83). Both of them were also interested in Kierkegaard. A distinction between them can be seen in Müller’s religious conception of National Socialism and religious view of Adolf Hitler (for example, the idea of his “Befehlsgewalt” or “power of command” as a “Gnadenerweis”, a “bestowal of grace”, 118). In the details of the other issues (blood-solidarity language, folkdom ideology, participation in the phasing-in of the universities, view of the divine ordination of the National Socialist state, view of the Jews, authoritarianism, decisionism, anti-liberalism, anti-Americanism, view of the “Neger”, view of Hitler’s rise to power and 1933, etc.), the material is far more complicated than most wish to believe (as I have demonstrated in *The Early Karl Barth*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018). Contrary to the mostly anachronistic post-war historiography, the early Barth in Germany rode the wave with the other Germans, even if the (self-described) “right-of-the-Rhine” professor later wanted to see himself as a “Swiss voice” (a presumption that is, in retrospect, far more ambivalent than he originally thought).

The essay on Kuhlmann is a very interesting contribution in this collection, and it offers a different interpretive model regarding the reception of Kierkegaard. For Kuhlmann, Kierkegaard was not radical enough (129). Kodalle draws attention to a figure that went through the academic stages of the German system before 1933, with periods of study in Breslau, Erlangen, Rostock, Berlin and Jena. Kuhlmann had close contact with Friedrich Gogarten, and obtained doctorates in both theology and philosophy, as well as a habilitation in Jena. Kodalle relays reports that he was pushed out of the academic track in 1932. Further research is needed on Kuhlmann that sheds light onto his social and political analysis and his links to ecumenical thought at this time, as well as his thinking about the nature of theology and philosophy. The essay on Kuhlmann is very informative, but it does not show us how he addressed the situation in the 1930s.

The final essay on Erik Peterson is similar. Peterson was one of the many Protestant theologians at this time inspired by Kierkegaard. In 1930 he converted to Catholicism and adopted a very authoritarian thinking pattern, and in part influenced the emergence and development of Neo-Orthodoxy at this time. Kodalle’s focuses on his view of the Jews in the 1930s but has unfortunately limited knowledge of the literature on Peterson, or Peterson’s own works from this time. Peterson saw the Jews as an “enemy of God” (144). In 1934, Peterson was arguing and publishing work in National Socialist Germany that supported the racism of the time, even toward the Jews who converted to Christianity (see my essay, “A third time, Erich Przywara, the Jews and *Stimmen der Zeit*.” *JHMTh/ZNThG* 24 [2017]: 202–239).

Kodalle’s book shows how Protestant theologians in the early 1930s were

able to integrate the basic impulses of the time into their theologies. His approach is focused primarily on the religious-philosophical dimensions, and it contains only limited reference to the historical backgrounds, events, figures, publications, movements and legal developments. Yet the book is highly instructive in its own way, as it seeks to think with the figures in their modes of reflection. There are moments of repetition, and he occasionally lacks distance and objectivity in the argumentation. On the whole, however, the essays are very informative, for they show how the cultural, social and political dynamics could be interwoven into a complex fabric of religious thought that was flexible enough to embrace even the most toxic forms of racism in the “Führer” state.

There is something in Kierkegaard that they all adored (including Barth and many others from this time); it was the post-rational, decisionistic moment, which virtually absolutizes and entirely dramatizes the momentary and experiential, existential consciousness as concentrated in a decision. Kierkegaard promoted this idea in an individual sense on the horizon of the radical faith and morality of the New Testament. He did this in an entirely different context, however, and with view to a different counterprogram. In his critique, the Protestant Church in Denmark was watering down the faith, and had eliminated the possibility of free choice and decision on the part of the members to belong, and thus, as Kierkegaard thought, ultimately weakened the faith’s true expression at the time. With the German theologians addressed above, the context is similar but also very different in other ways. In the later German case, the decisionistic subject has been collectivized in many regards, and the counterprogram has been modified. The subject is not necessarily an individual but the church as a whole, or the nation as a whole, and the opposition was directed not toward Danish Christendom (or German Christendom) but toward liberalism, the Weimar Republic, historicism, the modern period as a whole, the Enlightenment or rationalism. Kodalle presents this collectivist reinterpretation very convincingly, yet he holds that Kierkegaard did not deserve the reappropriation (148). Is this the case? Can a figure like Kierkegaard be so cleanly extracted from his reception in this way? Does something need to be added to the reflection at this juncture? There was a clear connection, it seems, one that the theologians at that time saw very well; and this was not a fictional construction, a “fake” Kierkegaard that they drew upon, but rather an aspect or specific dimension of his thought. Kierkegaard cannot be clinically sanitized from the reception in a total disconnection. He was one of the figures of the nineteenth century who bestowed upon the later period of the early twentieth century a good dose of irrationality and decisionism, a troubling and easily misused habit of the mind, one highly problematic, for example, if embraced by the intellectual elite. Of course, Nietzsche (especially his will-to-power concepts, deeply troubling moral

theories and elements of his life-philosophy) is a far more problematic figure on this measure. Kodalle's collection of essays on the reception of Kierkegaard in the early 1930s in Germany is an important contribution to an analysis of the religious situation of the era. On the whole, it shows how even the reception of a figure like Kierkegaard did little to influence the larger and more powerful dynamics in German Protestantism at this time which ultimately led to its full collapse in the 1930s.

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**Friedrich Wilhelm Graf**, *Helmut Thielicke und die „Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik“*. Zur Ideengeschichte der protestantischen Bundesrepublik, Religionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band 10. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021, XI, 611 S., Hardcover, € 114,00, ISBN 978-3-16-154178-0.

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Helmut Thielicke (1908–1986) kann zweifellos als eine der prägenden Gestalten des bundesdeutschen Nachkriegsprotestantismus bezeichnet werden. Seine Predigten in der Hamburger Hauptkirche St. Michaelis und sein publizistisches Werk erreichten ein breites Publikum und als öffentlicher Intellektueller war er Teil wichtiger Gelehrtennetzwerke seiner Zeit. So mag es verwundern, dass Thielicke heute vielleicht nicht gänzlich in Vergessenheit geraten ist, sein Leben und Werk aber in der gegenwärtigen Theologie und zeitgeschichtlichen Forschung kaum rezipiert wird.

Erfreulicherweise hat sich nun Friedrich Wilhelm Graf diesem „Startheologen“ (Hans Wollschläger) der Bonner Republik angenommen und seinem Wirken und seinen intellektuellen Kontakten eine umfangreiche historiographische Arbeit gewidmet. Angesichts der beeindruckenden Produktivität, mit der Graf in den letzten Jahren die Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke Ernst Troeltschs vorangetrieben hat und die sich zuletzt in einer viel beachteten Troeltsch-Biographie (München: C. H. Beck, 2022) niederschlug, ist es auch mehr als verzeihlich, dass sich die Drucklegung des nach Angaben des Autors bereits im November 2017 abgeschlossenen Manuskripts noch um gut drei Jahre verzögern sollte (VII).

Das Warten hat sich jedenfalls gelohnt. Auf rund 600 Seiten verbindet Graf in seiner Monographie *Helmut Thielicke und die „Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik“* neue biographische Erkenntnisse über den einflussreichen Nachkriegstheologen