Introduction to Modern Theology: Trajectories in the German Tradition, **by John E. Wilson**
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The history of Protestant theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is largely the history of German theology. This judgment is expressed in the subtitle of John E. Wilson's introduction to modern theology: "Trajectories in the German Tradition." Wilson's survey maps the German theological terrain beginning with Kant and concluding with a diverse group of theologians come of age in the generation after World War II.

In his preface, Wilson reveals three presuppositions that will guide his work: the close kinship of theology and philosophy in the German Protestant tradition, the inherently conceptual nature of theology, and the necessity of taking a broadly historicist approach to the history of theology (p. ix).

The kinship of theology and philosophy informs Wilson's approach in the second chapter, in which he establishes the foundation for the development of modern German theology in the philosophical revolutions of Kant's critical philosophy and Hegel's Idealism. Schelling's Romanticism and Marx's political philosophy are also established as important engines for theological development, particularly in the nineteenth century. With this important chapter, Wilson makes his argument that the history of modern German theology is to a great extent the history of theology's conversation with philosophy.

The inherently conceptual nature of theology is acknowledged throughout Wilson's survey, as he pays close attention to terms that have become synonymous with this period of German Protestant thought, terms such as *Wissenschaft* ("science"), *Geschichte* and *Historie* (the two words for history), and *Anschauung* ("intuition"). Wilson defines these terms by placing them in their historical and philosophical contexts, and then traces their evolution and use within theology itself. In this sense, then, the history of modern German theology is to a great extent a *Begriffsgeschichte* (a "history of concepts").

Finally, Wilson's method for writing the history of this period of theology is one that originated within this same period. Wilson takes a historicist approach to modern theology, taking care to place figures, movements, concepts, and developments within their broader historical context. This method is prominently introduced in the introductory chapter, in which Wilson sets the scene for the subject of his study, beginning with the profound upheaval in all areas of European life following the French Revolution, moving through the complex history of ecclesial and secular politics in the nineteenth century, the unification of Germany in 1871, Germany's catastrophic defeat in World War I, the Weimar era and its difficulties, and ending with the dark years of Nazism and World War II. The introduction serves the important purpose of placing German theology within the much broader context of German (and European) politics, economics, and social, cultural, ecclesial and intellectual history.

Wilson's is the latest of many histories of modern German theology, but his study achieves a clarity and scope that is rare in such histories. Wilson consciously hopes to avoid too much commentary or interpretation, preferring, as he puts it, "to allow the theologians to speak for themselves, in their own words and concepts" (p. vii). This goal is achieved by relying on primary texts to construct summaries of each figure, organized into chapters dedicated to general movements.

It should come as no surprise to students of this period of theology that Schleiermacher and Barth form the two most significant and detailed sections of Wilson's study. However, it is the breadth of perspectives addressed in this history that sets it apart from similar studies, as Wilson includes sections on such underrepresented or neglected figures as Franz Overbeck, Karl Hase and Dorothee Sölle and broadens the scope of "German theology" to include figures either influenced by or influential for the modern German Protestant tradition, including Søren Kierkegaard, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William James, Alfred North Whitehead, the Niebuhr brothers, and Martin Luther King, Jr. It is particularly this attention to the American theological scene as it was (and continues to be) influenced by German theology that will serve American students of theology well, as Wilson aptly demonstrates the fluid relationship of Protestant thought on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly in the late nineteenth and twentieth century.

Wilson's study is ambitious in its goals and impressive in its results. The great value of the work is the breadth of perspectives represented, the placement of theological developments within the context of German history, and the inclusion of underrepresented German and often neglected American theologians in a history of modern German theology.

It is disappointing that Wilson does not include a conclusion to his study, instead opting to end rather abruptly with a presentation of the work of Eberhard Jüngel, and it is also unfortunate that the rich collection of primary and secondary literature in German and in English translation included in copious footnotes is not made available in a separate bibliography.

In spite of these relatively insignificant oversights, Wilson's study is a welcome addition to the histories of theology in this period that deftly and sympathetically follows and broadens the trajectories of modern German theology. Scholars, students, and clergy interested in the philosophical and theological foundations of the German theological tradition, especially as it continues to influence theology in the American context, will enjoy and benefit from Wilson's survey.