Christine Helmer / Bo Kristian Holm (eds.)

Lutherrenaissance
Past and Present

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Edited by
Volker Henning Drecoll and Volker Leppin

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Part Two
Lutherrenaissance Present

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Acknowledgments

This volume approaches the current scholarly interest in Luther from the distinctive perspective of the *Lutherrenaissance*. Centered in Berlin at the turn of the twentieth century the *Lutherrenaissance* is significant for contemporary discussion because it shaped the reception of Luther and Lutheran theology for the rest of the century. Yet contemporary Luther scholarship, while inheriting the *Lutherrenaissance's* historical and conceptual categories, is also characterized by new approaches to Luther, specifically in recent years with a global orientation. While the subject of this volume is inspired by the original *Lutherrenaissance*, it surveys new ways in which Luther is studied in distinct and unprecedented contexts.

This project represents an international cooperation between Northwestern University and Aarhus University. We are grateful to both universities for their hospitality and generous funding of two conferences, the first in Aarhus in October 2011, the second in Evanston in April 2012. The Evanston conference featured Michael Massing's work on Luther. Massing, whose book on the rivalry between Luther and Erasmus is forthcoming with HarperCollins, graciously consented to a robust discussion of his portrayal of Luther.

We thank the authors who contributed their papers to this volume, Volker Henning Drecoll and Volker Leppin, editors of the series Forschungen für Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte at Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht for consenting to publish this volume in the series, and Jörg Persch and Christoph Spill, editors at Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, for facilitating the book's publication, the latter also for assistance in the troubleshooting inevitably connected to bilingual publication. We are grateful to Jan Dietrich for assisting with the German abstracts and to Lene Kristoffersen for help in formatting the manuscript. Richard Kieckhefer drew our attention to the fifteenth-century image of Christ's resurrection from the triptych at the Cathedral in Erfurt. Heinrich Assel and Arnold Wiebel tracked down the historic photo taken at the 1928 meeting of the Swedish-German Luther Convention in Uppsala.

We recognize and are deeply grateful for Ron Thiemann's inspiring scholarship on Luther's theology. Ron passed away in November 2012. We thank the editors of I. B. Taurus for the permission to publish this version of chapter one of *The Humble Sublime: Secularity and the Politics of Belief*. A fuller account of Thiemann's understanding of sacramental realism is provided in this book published by I. B. Tauris in 2013.

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Source Abbreviations

See S. M. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete* (Berlin: de Gruyter, [2]1992). The following additions apply:

AWA	M. Luther, *Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe der Werke Martin Luthers* (9 vols.; Cologne/Vienna: Böhlau, 1991–2009).
EvStLN	W. Heun/M. Honecker/M. Morlok/J. Wieland (eds.), *Evangelisches Staatslexikon: Neuausgabe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006).
GA	K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* (3 vols.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], [6]1928–1932).
KGA	E. Troeltsch, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. F. W. Graf et al. (20 vols.; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1998–).
LW	M. Luther, *Luther's Works: American Edition*, ed. J. Pelikan/H. T. Lehmann (55 vols.; St. Louis, Mo./Minneapolis, Minn.: Concordia/Fortress, 2002).
SBO	Bernhard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J. Leclercq/T. H. Talbot/H. Rochais (10 vols.; Rome: Editiones Cisterciencis, 1957–1998).
StA	M. Luther, *Studienausgabe*, ed. H.-U. Delius (6 vols.; Berlin/Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1987–1999).
WA	M. Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. J. K. F. Knaake et al. (67 vols.; Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1997).

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Chapter 1

Christine Helmer

Introduction

The centennial anniversary of Luther's reformation in 2017 is an occasion for celebration, but more importantly for reflection and analysis too. The original event to be commemorated was – famously – bold. When Luther made the *Ninety-Five Theses* public, probably by nailing them to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church on the eve of All Saints' Day, Oct. 31, 1517, he was inviting his colleagues to a public disputation. But what was intended as an academic debate was soon swept up into a process of theological, political, and social transformations, entering the popular imagination and engulfing Europe with its unforeseen consequences. Unforeseen, but perhaps not unpredictable: for Luther had not written his theses solely for the academy, but as provocations to Rome. His prose was taken as a protest against the fiscal policy of the papacy that entangled local loyalties and finances in the building of Saint Peter's in Rome. Economics and politics, the humanist turn to the biblical text, and the turn to the philosophy of the nominalists formed the matrix in which Luther's thought was read and interpreted. Whatever Luther's intentions on that day in Wittenberg, however far forward he anticipated, the inaugural event of what would become the reformation soon became as well a marker for world history.

The consensus in Luther scholarship is that the reformation and its break from Rome did not occur all at once, as if immediately heralded by the sound of Luther's hammer. Yet even the most revisionist scholars must acknowledge the significance of the hammer in the popular imagination, in his time and since. Luther has come to signify much more than an angry and presumptuous monk in late medieval Wittenberg! Why is it that Luther continues to inspire people's imaginations? How might Luther become an interlocutor again for contemporary academic concerns rather than a figure frozen in time, whether this time is called late medieval, early modern, or something in between?

This book marks the fifth centennial of Luther's action in Wittenberg by investigating it in relation to the previous centennial, one hundred years ago. This latter commemoration was itself a significant moment in modern intellectual history. Historian and theologian Karl Holl (1866–1926) introduced a new approach to Luther; an approach that would later be known by the term coined by Erich Seeberg as the *Lutherrenaissance*. The new interest was directed at the turn of the twentieth century towards the historical study of Luther the man and of the "reformation breakthrough" (in the era's term of art), conceptualized at the time

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and long after as the epochal transition from the medieval to the early modern. Holl's historical approach to Luther was situated amid the vigorous interdisciplinary conversations taking place at the University of Berlin between the humanities and social sciences. In the view of *Lutherrenaissance* scholars, Luther was to be studied as a religious figure, rather than as a systematic theologian. And more: Luther would become one of the original subjects for the empirical-historical study of religion emerging at this time, as the title of one of Holl's books makes clear, *What Did Luther Understand by Religion?* (1921).[1] The reconceptualization of Luther and his times had a sinister side as well, which any study of the intellectual contribution of the fourth centenary must not only acknowledge, but examine in its grim implications. The "German Luther" now discovered would soon enough be touted as national hero for the intensifying patriotic sensibilities of Germany before and after the Great War. Later, the anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany would explicitly cite Luther as key political ally. We will return to this subject again below.

In addition to examining the contributions of the *Lutherrenaissance* to the historiography of the sixteenth century and to the making of the modern study of religion, the contributors to this volume also address themselves to the present. Let it be acknowledged at the start here that the Luther who was an important subject of historical and sociological study at the turn of the twentieth century has lost his broad relevance in the contemporary academy. Different reasons can be cited for this: the decrease in the significance of theology in the academy; the parochial capture and sequestering of Luther by Lutherans; and the contemporary interest in the secularization of the modern West. Fully aware of Luther's fate in the secular academy, contributors to this volume aim to revive the question of how he may be appropriated as an interlocutor in important contemporary intellectual conversations. This means that we take at least as an opening premise the notion that bringing Luther back into the university from his lonely exile in hagiography and church basements has the promise of making a distinctive contribution to certain urgent academic questions today. To this end, a critical retrospective of the original *Lutherrenaissance* of the early twentieth century offers clues as to how Luther was taken up in academic discussions in the past as well as how these debates have affected the way Lutheran theology and the broader academy view Luther today.

[1] K. Holl, *What did Luther Understand by Religion?*, ed. J. L. Adams/W. F. Bense (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965 [German original: "Was verstand Luther unter Religion?," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 1: *Luther* (Tübingen: J. C.B Mohr [Paul Siebeck], [1]1921; [2–3]1923; [4–5]1927; [6]1932 [= GA I]) 1–110]).

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I. *Lutherrenaissance* Past

A pivotal moment in the trajectory of Luther scholarship was Karl Holl's discovery of what he considered the crucial evidence for Luther's "reformation breakthrough." Luther's early lectures on Romans, which the Augustinian friar had delivered originally in Wittenberg from 1515 to 1516, were first (re)discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1910 Holl moved the lectures to the center of Luther's reformation theology. Here they have remained ever since. Holl generated new excitement in Luther studies by his use of historical and text-critical methods; rather than compressing Luther's disparate ideas into a formal systematic theology, Holl argued that Luther's religion, by which Holl understood Luther to have understood as his relationship with God, underwent a dramatic change that is documented in the *Lectures on Romans*. The new emphasis on the shift in Luther's religious experience was from a consciousness that was rebellious and hostile towards God to a conscience ready for sacrifice and to being a mere tool of the divine will. Holl's view thus differs from the usual way of looking at the reformation breakthrough as the shift from a terrified conscience to a conscience appeased by faith in a righteous God. It was radical, at odds with the typical view of Luther in everything from systematic theologies, to Protestant piety and self-understanding, to psychological models, to children's books. For Holl, the certainty of salvation was not really a matter of comfort for the anxious soul, but the certainty of community with the divine will. The inherent problems and critical potential of Holl's legacy is what is discussed in this volume. Despite his radical view, Holl's legacy consists of orienting subsequent generations of Luther scholars to the historical-genetic study of Luther.

Text and historical context would be read together, with the question, moreover, of Luther's relevance for the contemporary world in full view, specifically for the evolution of Western liberal political systems and for the inner dynamics of modern subjectivity. The influence of Holl's conceptualizations on the following century's Luther scholarship simply cannot be over-stated. The question of the "reformation breakthrough" would preoccupy scholars through the 1970s. Luther's writings (those in any case that confirmed this view) from 1509 to 1521 were marshaled in support of a developing consensus that God's word of forgiveness was the central reformation idea, with Luther's answer to the question that has been called by historians *the* question of the sixteenth century – how do I know I am saved? – as the key breakthrough.

Holl's query went beyond the confines of this one life, moreover, extending to questions about the sources of the modern world. The key terms in this historiography were continuity or rupture: Was the young Luther's appeal to mysticism or the terrifying *deus absconditus* attributable to his formation as a Catholic monk or did it represent the origins of modern Christian theology? Debates among Holl, Ernst Troeltsch, and Adolf von Harnack on the subject echo down to the present day, because at stake in what appears to be a matter of religious historiography are

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fundamental questions about the making of modernity, from the origins and development of Western liberal political systems, to psychological models of the self, to the inner dynamics of modern subjectivity. There are powerful investments on all sides of the issue. Disjuncture favors the novelty of modern rationality and freedom, supporting a Protestant identity that defines itself in distinction from medieval Catholic "servitude" to the temporal and spiritual swords that is located in a newly organized "past." How the history of the modern West, of modern Christianity, and of Christianity's relationship to the rest of the world, are conceptualized have much to do with the question of Luther.

Holl's methodological innovations in Luther studies occurred in conjunction with the emergence of interdisciplinary discussions at the University of Berlin at the turn of the twentieth century. Holl was in close conversation with sociologist Max Weber, as was Troeltsch. Weber's impact on Lutheran theologians would be epitomized in Troeltsch's *Social Teaching of the Christian Church*. These engagements in Berlin among sociologists, ethicists, philosophers of religion, and psychologists were key to the *Lutherrenaissance*. They made for an intellectual and social environment of interlocking personal and intellectual relationships that had a profound impact on the development both of theology and of the emerging modern study of religion. One of the motivations of this volume of essays on the *Lutherrenaissance* is to pay homage to this ideal of academic culture while at the same time issuing an explicit invitation to contemporary theologians and scholars of religion to engage in the kind of interdisciplinary work evident a century ago, not least in relation to each other.

A rich academic culture is not, unfortunately, the entirety of the story. Forged in the political context of late Wilhelmine Germany, the *Lutherrenaissance* acquired a distinctive political cast that would have lasting deleterious consequences for Luther scholarship, for Germany, and for the world. Theologians in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century were regarded as public intellectuals. Their political pronouncements were crucial in shaping national sentiments. The intense debate between Karl Holl and Ernst Troeltsch on the nature of political rule is one example of the public consequences of academic arguments. Troeltsch supported the emerging democratic position later institutionalized by the Weimar Republic, whereas Holl sided with the monarch, eventually joining 3000 other German professors in signing an epistolary declaration to the king in support of World War I.[2] Shortly before that another leading figure of the *Lutherrenaissance*, Reinhold Seeberg, signed the infamous manifesto of 93 German intellectuals.[3] It was this mani-

[2] *Erklärung der Hochschullehrer des Deutschen Reiches* (Berlin, October 23, 1914).

[3] J. v. Ungern-Sternberg/W. v. Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf 'An die Kulturwelt!' Das Manifest der 93 und die Anfänge der Kriegspropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Historische Mitteilungen, Beiheft 18; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 1996), 144–7.

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festo that Karl Barth later alluded to as the point at which he turned away from liberal theology to socialism.[4]

Luther would henceforth be exploited as a political ally for German national interests by theologians. The worst of Luther's theology, the violent anti-Semitism of his later years, was explicitly cited in Nazi Germany's hateful laws against Jews, beginning with *Reichskristallnacht* on the night of Nov. 9, 1938, the anniversary of Luther's birthday. Luther was used by theologians at the University of Jena to create a Bible for German Christians that had excised the Old Testament along with a hymnbook that lifted up the violent and bellicose language of some of Luther's hymns (such as "A Mighty Fortress") and liturgies.[5] In Erlangen where Germany's Luther scholars were concentrated in the 1930s, Paul Althaus and Werner Elert issued explicit support for the Nazi *Deutsche Christen*.[6] Luther was actively implicated in the Holocaust by his contemporary theological advocates, and the question of Luther and anti-Semitism would rightly from this point on weigh heavily on German Luther scholars and theologians.

The *Lutherrenaissance* had, however, a double impact. On the one hand, some theologians belonging to the *Lutherrenaissance* promoted a German nationalistic agenda. On the other hand, other theologians contributing to the *Lutherrenaissance* formed the *Bekennende Kirche*. Both Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hans Joachim Iwand were students of Holl. The subject of Bonhoeffer's dissertation *Sanctorum Communio* was to a large extent informed by central themes in Holl's theology.[7] Both Bonhoeffer and Iwand played a crucial role in the democratic revision of Lutheranism from the inside after 1945.

Alongside the rise of this ever more strident German Luther were stirrings of a more global promise to the revival of Luther scholarship. Between the world wars, the *Lutherrenaissance* had become an international European enterprise, connecting Germany with the northern European countries associated with Lutheranism. Luther scholars in the Baltic and Nordic nations, inspired by the new interest in Luther in Germany, sought to contextualize this research in their respective political and cultural circumstances and inheritances. Early international cooperation was exemplified by the 1928 conference in Uppsala that attracted more than one hundred Luther scholars from Germany and northern Europe. In Sweden, the

[4] The actual story is more complicated. See an article by Wilfrid Härle that discusses Barth's own recollection: "Der Aufruf der 93 Intellektuellen und Karl Barths Bruch mit der liberalen Theologie," *ZThK* 72 (1975) 207–24.

[5] S. Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[6] For Elert and Althaus, among others, see J. Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Saviour: German Evangelical Theological Factions and the Interpretation of Luther, 1917–1933* (McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion; Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

[7] See H. Assel, *Der andere Aufbruch: Die Lutherrenaissance – Ursprünge, Aporien und Wege: Karl Holl, Emanuel Hirsch, Rudolf Hermann (1910–1935)* (FSÖTh 72; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994).

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The German Luther-Academy visiting Swedish Colleagues
at a Convention in Uppsala from August 21–31, 1928.
Carl Stange, Rudolf and Milli Hermann, and Arvid Runestam are standing in
the first row. Hans Joachim Iwand and his wife Dr. jur. Ilse Ehrhardt are standing in
the fourth row to the left. © With kind permission of Arnold Wiebel.

reception of the *Lutherrenaissance* led to a distinct research identity associated with Lund University, of which Gustav Aulén, Gustav Wingren, and Anders Nygren are regarded as its main proponents. Regin Prenter is the most important Danish representative of the *Lutherrenaissance's* internationalism. The personal and intellectual ties forged across European nations by the *Lutherrenaissance* were severed by war, to be revived only recently in new cooperative endeavors among German, Baltic, and Nordic scholars.[8] The vision of a "global Luther" as an international community of Luther scholars is work that still needs to be done, which is to say that there is an important dimension of Luther scholarship yet to be recovered from the ashes.

[8] H. Assel/J. A. Steiger (eds.), *Reformatio Baltica: Kulturwirkungen der Reformation in den Metropolen des Ostseeraums* (forthcoming in 2016).

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II. Lutherrenaissance Present

This book approaches the five-hundredth-centennial of Luther's reformation in reciprocal and critical conversation with the original *Lutherrenaissance* of a century ago. The retrospective that looks back to the most proximate centennial is intended to better understand the trajectory and influence of Luther scholarship in the long twentieth century. The *Lutherrenaissance* was effective in forging the consensus of an historical approach to Luther. Its influence was also ambivalent, as noted. In the volume at hand, the past is viewed with the explicit purpose of understanding how Luther was engaged by particular theologians in the academic and political context of the early twentieth century; and the present is analyzed with the distinct aim of contextualizing Luther in relation to contemporary realities. Our work is shaped by the firm acknowledgement that the present is chastened by the past as much as it is inspired by it. This critical edge necessarily accompanies the look back at Luther in Germany in the process of looking forward to a more global Luther.

If an interest in Luther is to be revived today, if Luther is to be a dynamic dialogue partner for theologians addressing new challenges in today's global contexts, as we think he ought to be, then he must be fitted to the new discussions and contexts in which Luther scholars are working today. The contemporary situation has its particular challenges. The question concerning Luther's impact on the history of the West – the old issue of the continuity or disjunction between Luther and the past, the medieval Luther and the early Luther – is implicated in the polarization that characterizes theology in the twentieth century, in particular the rift between dialectical and liberal theologies. The days when Luther scholars creatively and courageously engaged the full array of intellectual resources available in the academy seem to be, at least in many instances, over. The loss of a public Lutheran voice in North America, as Richard Cimino maintains in a recent edited volume, has impoverished important discussions in the public forum today.[9] The question of Luther's possible fit to new contexts is a challenge to theologians taking seriously the globalization of the Lutheran perspective.

III. Organization

The book is divided into two sections. The first, "*Lutherrenaissance* Past," considers Karl Holl's ambitions for the original *Lutherrenaissance* at the turn of the twentieth century. The focus is on Holl, but in his relationships with other thinkers of his time. In the first chapter of this section, "Die *Lutherrenaissance* als bleibende Herausforderung und Inspiration," Heinrich Assel builds on his pivotal book from

[9] See R. Cimino (ed.), *Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003).

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1994[10] by approaching Holl's study of Luther in its broader political configuration. Assel uses Holl's search for the "German Luther" to trace the political dimensions of the *Lutherrenaissance* through to the 1930s and 1940s, particularly in relation to the work of theologians Emanuel Hirsch and Hans-Joachim Iwand. While Hirsch was closely allied with National Socialism in Nazi Germany, Iwand was rector of the theological seminary of the *Confessing Church* in Böslau (East Prussia) and in Jordan (Brandenburg) and was prohibited after 1938 to speak in public. The remaining chapters in part one focus on features of Holl's intellectual biography that have significant implications for the shaping of Luther studies in the twentieth century. These chapters are organized by intellectual relationships, rather than by chronology, in order to work out the web of reciprocal influences that shaped the *Lutherrenaissance*. The discussion between Holl and Rudolf Hermann is one instance of such exchanges, centering on an interpretation of the text that Holl deemed essential to understanding Luther's religious experience, the *Lectures on Romans*. As we have seen, in modern Luther studies, the popular image of Luther's nailing of the *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church is juxtaposed with Luther's shift in experience from God's wrath to mercy when he arrived at a new understanding of the term *iustitia dei* (righteousness of God) in Rom 1:17. The juxtaposition has a historically complex origin, as Christine Svinth-Værge Põder shows in her chapter. Another key figure shaping the trajectory of both Luther scholarship and German theology in the twentieth century was Albrecht Ritschl (who is the subject of the chapter by Peter Widmann). Although Ritschl is not usually counted among participants in the *Lutherrenaissance*, he was in fact its forerunner, particularly in his influence on the rejection of mysticism (as discussed in the chapter by Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen) and on the subsequent "liberal-theological" direction that some theologians would follow.

Part one of this book ends with a consideration of the origins of a question that Luther scholars would ask as a constitutive component of their scholarship throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries: Does Luther belong in the middle ages or the modern West? The either/or formulation appears crude, but in the end, it always comes back to this, and its very starkness reveals the implied stakes. This question places Luther at the center of the controversy concerning the periodization of Western history and the precise location of the divide between medieval and modern periods. A chapter on Holl's discussion with another Berlin colleague, Adolf von Harnack (by Peter Grove) examines important factors in the matter of Luther's relevance to modernity.

The second part of the book, "*Lutherrenaissance* Present," considers Luther studies today. If Luther scholars can learn one important lesson from the original *Lutherrenaissance*, it is that Luther and theology have the capacity to engage crucial scholarly discussions in creative and forward-looking ways. This part of the book then brings Luther into the present. The constructive aim here is to place

[10] See note 7.

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Luther squarely in academic conversations that are either in some way already influenced by his thought or that we think would be illumined in unexpected perhaps but useful ways by an explicit Lutheran perspective.

This section begins with a review of Holl's work with a particular focus on its interdisciplinarity (in Bo Kristian Holm's discussion). Yet Holl's legacy is also ambivalent. His anti-eudaemonistic ethics promoted the law/gospel dialectic that became central to Luther studies, while his rejection of the Christian mystical tradition – a position derived from Ritschl – contributed to the alienation of Lutheran theology from experience. The original *Lutherrenaissance* influenced both dialectical and liberal theologies of the twentieth century,[11] bequeathing a legacy of reflection on and appropriation of both. The question as to whether Luther is an "apostle of freedom" and thereby a forerunner of liberal theology is best addressed in view of liberal-theological contributions to the *Lutherrenaissance* (as Jörg Lauster approaches it in his contribution to the volume).

Section two continues with the topic of "Luther's missing voice" in contemporary conversations, specifically in the secularization debate initiated by Canadian Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor (as addressed in the chapter by Ronald F. Thiemann), the anxious relation between theology and the modern study of religion (taken up by Christine Helmer), and in the emerging contours of political theology (the subject of the chapter by Heinrich Assel). In each chapter, a diagnosis of the current situation and a constructive proposal for a fruitful discussion is proposed. Underlying all these chapters is the view that an explicit engagement with Luther holds the promise of sharpening the historical, theological, and political arguments of these conversations and beneficially expanding their scope.

The section ends with considerations of Luther's thought in relation to matters of serious significance to our contemporary global world. Pressing concerns for contemporary scholars working in the Lutheran tradition are feminist theology (Marit Trelstad) and the contextualization of Western theology in relation to indigenous populations, specifically First Nations in Canada and Native Americans in the United States (Allen G. Jorgenson). Participation in these conversations requires scholarly responsibility in acknowledging the historical, theological, and ethical issues that have rendered Luther and Western theology too often sources of abuse rather than liberation. The dialogue thus established in this text between the *Lutherrenaissance* of the early twentieth century and the contexts within which Luther scholars work today (which include all the inheritances of that earlier moment) opens a path of critique and reengagement as our world moves in crisis and hope towards the half-millennium commemoration of 2017.

[11] This is the central point of Assel's book, *Der andere Aufbruch*.

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Part One
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Chapter 2

Heinrich Assel

Die *Lutherrenaissance* in Deutschland von 1900 bis 1960

Herausforderung und Inspiration*

Für Christine Helmer

„die Gottheit ist zerbrochen
wie das Brot beim Abendmahl;
wir sind die Stücke"

Herman Melville

Die *Lutherrenaissance* in Deutschland ist, neben der Dialektischen Theologie, die andere große theologie-, kirchen- und kulturreformerische Bewegung. Sie formiert sich um 1910 und bildet bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg eine internationale, deutsch-skandinavische Formation. Zur *Lutherrenaissance* in Deutschland gehörten Karl Holl, Carl Stange, Emanuel Hirsch, Paul Althaus, Rudolf Hermann, auch Werner Elert, Heinrich Bornkamm, Hanns Rückert oder Erich Vogelsang, nicht zu vergessen auch Schriftsteller wie Jochen Klepper. Zu skandinavischen Theologen der *Lutherrenaissance*, also zu Anders Nygren, Gustav Aulén, Ragnar Bring, Torsten Bohlin, Eduard Geismar, Axel Gyllenkrok oder Arvid Runestam bestanden bis 1933 und bisweilen noch bis 1942 intensive wissenschaftliche Kontakte, die individuell und national unterschiedlich motiviert waren. Diese noch nicht ausreichend erforschte und gewürdigte Internationalität und Ökumenizität der *Lutherrenaissance* und die Gründe und Umstände ihres Abbruchs zwischen 1933 und 1942 ist heute von neuem Interesse. Zu wenig bekannt ist auch, dass nach 1945 herausragend wirksame Figuren wie Dietrich Bonhoeffer und Hans Joachim Iwand durch die *Lutherrenaissance* in Deutschland mitgeprägt wurden. Ihr Erbe und ihre Wirkung ist für die tiefgreifende Revision lutherischer Theologie in Deutschland der Nachkriegsepoche 1945 bis 1960, ja bis heute, kaum zu überschätzen.

Ich werde im folgenden ein Panorama der *Lutherrenaissance* in Deutschland von 1910 bis 1960 entwerfen. In meiner Darstellung der *Lutherrenaissance* standen die theologischen, religionsphilosophischen, kirchen- und kulturreformerischen Innovationen im Zentrum, beschränkt auf das erste Drittel des 20. Jahrhunderts. Sie berechtigen es, die *Lutherrenaissance* in Deutschland den anderen Aufbruch in die Moderne des 20. Jahrhunderts neben der Dialektischen Theolo-

* Die Ursprungsfassung des Vortrags wurde im Rahmen des Forschungsprojekts *Lutherrenaissance – Past and Present* an der Universität Aarhus im Oktober 2011 gehalten, eine überarbeitete Fassung an der Theologischen Fakultät Kopenhagen im November 2011.

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gie zu nennen.[1] In diesem Beitrag möchte ich zum ersten Mal und anhand noch unbekannter Quellen zeigen, wie die *Lutherrenaissance* von ihrem Ursprung bei Karl Holl her in intensivster Wechselwirkung mit den Modernitätstheorien von Max Weber und Ernst Troeltsch stand. Die Reflexion auf verschiedene Wege zur Modernität, auf multiple Modernitäten, und die höchst umstrittene Frage, wie in diesem Rahmen Luther und seine Wirkungen zu bewerten sind, stehen am Beginn. Dies ist die *These*. Zentrale theologische Lehren Luthers – exemplarisch steht hierfür die *theologia crucis* – hatten so von Beginn an in der *Lutherrenaissance* modernitätssoziologische Relevanz und, wie sich zeigen wird, politisch-theologische Resonanzräume. Dies konnte zwischen 1933 und 1945 zu desaströsen politisch-ideologischen Konsequenzen führen. Welche Herausforderungen darin für lutherische Theologie bis heute enthalten sind, ist die *eine* Frage dieses Aufsatzes. Die *andere* Frage ist, wo und worin das Ausgangsprogramm einer methodischen Kombination von *theologia crucis*, Modernitätstheorie und politischer Theologie entscheidende Inspirationen für die tiefgreifende Revision des deutschen Luthertums nach 1945 enthielt, ohne dass diese Revision einfach ein „langer Weg nach Westen" ist.[2]

I. Karl Holl – Max Weber – Ernst Troeltsch (1900–1926)

Luther im Rahmen multipler Modernitäten

Am 27. Juni 1920 schreibt Karl Holl (1866–1926), der Initiator der deutschsprachigen *Lutherrenaissance*, an Adolf Jülicher, den Marburger Neutestamentler und Exegeten der Gleichnisse Jesu. Anlass ist der frühe Tod des 56-jährigen Max Weber (1864–1920) am 14. Juni 1920:

> Max Webers Tod ist mir sehr nahe gegangen. Aus seinen letzten Abhandlungen über die Wirtschaftspolitik des Judentums[3] hatte ich den Eindruck bekommen, ob er nicht heimlich doch ein anderer sei, als ich gemeint hatte: ein Mensch, der im Grunde tief ernst

[1] H. Assel, *Der andere Aufbruch. Die Lutherrenaissance – Ursprünge, Aporien und Wege: Karl Holl, Emanuel Hirsch, Rudolf Hermann (1910–1935)* (FSÖTh 72; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994).

[2] H. A. Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen, Bd. 1. Deutsche Geschichte vom Ende des Alten Reiches bis zum Untergang der Weimarer Republik, Bd. 2. Deutsche Geschichte vom „Dritten Reich" bis zur Wiedervereinigung* (München: C. H. Beck, 2000 [Engl.: *Germany: The Long Road West, vol. 1: 1789–1933*; *vol. 2: 1933–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006–2007]).

[3] Es handelt sich hier um die in den Jahren 1917–1920 im „Archiv für Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik" in sechs Folgen erschienenen Aufsätze zur Wirtschaftsethik des antiken Judentums, die 1921 zusammengefasst veröffentlicht wurden: M. Weber, *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen – Das antike Judentum* (Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie 3; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1921[= *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* I/21,1+2, hg. v. E. Otto (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005]).

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> sei. Und ich freute mich auf seine Behandlung des Christentums,[4] weil ich hoffte, daß er da gründlich mit Troeltschs Soziallehren aufräumen würde. Daß er bei der Darstellung der Propheten Troeltsch nur in einer lässigen Anmerkung erwähnte und im übrigen ihn bei Seite schob, ließ mich bestimmt erwarten, daß er auch beim Christentum ebenso verfahren würde. Nun ist er tot und der Soziologe Troeltsch wird als der Lebende Recht behalten.[5]

Ein zwei Monate zuvor verfasster Brief Holls an Jülicher, mitten aus der Arbeit am berühmten Buch über Luther geschrieben, zeigt noch drastischer, wie die Wertschätzung Max Webers mit grundsätzlicher Kritik an Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) einhergeht.

> Sonst bin ich immer noch mit meinen Lutheraufsätzen beschäftigt. Vielleicht sind sie daran schuld, daß auch meine wissenschaftliche Stimmung manchmal gedrückt ist. Nicht daß Luther mir über wäre, aber ich bin überall genötigt, gegen Troeltsch Stellung zu nehmen. Was der auf Grund ärmlicher Quellenkenntnis zusammengedichtet hat, ist wirklich aufregend. Aber Aussicht gegen ihn aufzukommen, ist nicht da. Er gilt nun einmal bei Profanhistorikern, Philosophen und Theologen als der gründlich unterrichtete und allein unbefangene Mann.[6]

In der Tat, die zentralen Abhandlungen des Luther-Buchs von Holl[7] münden in Kritiken an Troeltschs Luther-Interpretation, die dieser seit „Luther und die moderne Welt" (1908)[8] im Rahmen seiner historischen Gesamtsicht der „Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt" (1906/11)[9] sowie im Kontext seiner „Soziallehren" (1912)[10] ausgearbeitet hatte.[11]

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[4] Gemeint ist der damals geplante Bd. 4 von Max Webers *Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen*.

[5] Karl Holl an Adolf Jülicher, 27.6.1920 (unpubliziert). Die Publikation der Briefe Holls an Jülicher ist in Vorbereitung.

[6] Karl Holl an Adolf Jülicher, 1.4.1920 (unpubliziert).

[7] K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte, Bd. I. Luther* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1921, erweitert und überarbeitet $^{2+3}$1923, $^{4+5}$1927, ^{6}1932 [= GA I]).

[8] In E. Troeltsch, *Schriften zur Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die moderne Welt (1906–1913)*, in KGA 8, 59–97, S. 53–8.

[9] Ebd., 199–316, S. 183–98.

[10] E. Troeltsch, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (UTB 1811/1812; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); geplant als KGA 9/1–2. Zur kritischen Würdigung von Troeltsch: C. Strohm, „Nach hundert Jahren. Ernst Troeltsch, der Protestantismus und die Entstehung der modernen Welt", *ARG* 99 (2008) 6–35.

[11] Nahezu alle der 27 Referenzen Holls auf Troeltsch sind mehr oder minder kritisch. Troeltschs Modernetheorie verkenne den „revolutionären" Bruch, den Luthers Gewissensreligion als Vollzugsform genuiner Autonomie darstelle (GA I, 109 f., Anm. 1). Ihm unterlaufe im Begriff von *lex naturae* beständig ein naturalistischer Fehlschluss, so dass er die gewissensethische Bestimmtheit dieses Begriffs bei Luther konstitutiv verkenne. Er sei völlig ignorant gegenüber Luthers frühem Kirchenbegriff, weil er die Weber'sche Typik von Kirche und Sekte unbesehen vom Luthertum her auf Luther übertrage (GA I, 243–5, Anm. 2). Er sei quellenphilologisch veraltet, z. B. in seiner Beurteilung von Luthers Predigten über die Bergpredigt (GA I, 248 f., Anm. 4). Das ideenpolitische Entweder-Oder, das zwi-

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