TH606 Modern Theology
[Provisional version, some readings might be changed in the final version, to be made available first day of class.]

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Course description
This class has two aims: to give an overview of a broad theological response to modernity; and to engage more specifically with the work of three influential modern theologians: Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, Karl Barth, and Karl Rahner. These were selected both for their influence, but more specifically for their respective wrestling with modernity’s doubts about traditional doctrine. I will show that the modern critique of Christian faith has sedimented into the common consciousness of Western secular society. It is now impossible to insulate faith from doubt, as Charles Taylor shows: secularization affects everyone. By discussing these three responses to the challenge of secularization, I hope to derive resources for our own (or others’) struggle with doubt. To that end, the final paper of the class will be a ‘theological autobiography,’ where you will be invited to frankly explore these issues.

Course outcomes
The successful student will be able to:
• explain the modern challenge to traditional Christianity
• assess the contribution of Schleiermacher, Barth, and Rahner to Christianity’s self-understanding in a modern and contemporary context
• understand and respond to specific ‘modern’ challenges to Christian orthodoxy
• understand and respond to the challenge posed by modern science to the idea of divine action in the world
• formulate an understanding and defense of Christianity that is attuned to the specific modern and contemporary challenges

Course textbooks
• F.D.E. Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith (Continuum, 1999)
• Karl Barth, Evangelical Theology: An Introduction (Eerdmans, 1992: 0802818196)
• Christopher Ben Simpson, *Modern Christian Theology* (T&T Clark, 2016: 0567664775)

**Grading**

• **Midterm and Final:** (2 X 20%) Multiple-choice and short answer exams, covering selected material from Simpson and the lectures. A comprehensive study guide will be provided.

• **Two response papers** (2 X 20%) (choice of 2 out of 3: Schleiermacher, Barth, Rahner). You are to write two 4 page critical response papers to two of the three theologians we are discussing in the class. The papers should focus exclusively on a critique that also demonstrates familiarity with the primary texts.

• **Theological autobiography:** (20%) starting from Taylor’s assessment of secularization as a change in the mode of believing, reflect on your own ‘mode of believing’ What are the doubts about Christian faith you are struggling with? What particular challenges to Christian faith do you consider to have most force? How have you attempted to cope with these? How has your faith adapted to the reality of unbelief? How has your faith struggled with and overcome doubt?

**Course Outline**

1. Introduction to Modern Theology  
   a. Simpson 1-127

2. Schleiermacher I  
   a. Schleiermacher 1-194  
   b. Simpson 127-163

3. Schleiermacher II  
   b. Simpson 163-205

4. Schleiermacher III  
   a. Schleiermacher 355-532  
   b. Simpson 205-227

Reading Week I

5. Barth I  
   a. Simpson 227-247  
   b. Barth, *ET* 3-109  
   c. Barth, *CD* II/1, sect. 28 (God who loves in Freedom)

6. Barth II  
   a. Simpson 249-281  
   b. Barth, *ET*, 109-end  
   c. Barth, *CD* II/2, sect. 33

7. Barth III  
   a. Simpson 281-306
b. Barth CD IV/1. Sect. 59 (The Obedience of the Son of God)

Reading Week II

8. Rahner I
   a. Simpson 306-321
   b. Rahner 1-90

9. Rahner II
   a. Simpson 321-341
   b. Rahner 90-176

10. Rahner III
    a. Simpson 341-369
    b. Rahner 176-322

11. Constructive Conclusion
    a. No readings