

2. DIALECTICAL THEOLOGY

This movement in liberal theology has been known by various names, each of which represents some aspect or emphasis of the viewpoint. It has been called Realistic Theology, Neo-Supernaturalism, the New Biblical Theology, Theological Positivism, the Dialectical Theology, the Theology of Crisis, Neo-Orthodoxy, the New Modernism, Barthianism, Neo-Reformation Theology, Kerygmatic Theology, and the Theology of the Word. Not all of these names are commendatory!

The two major voices of this movement are Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. Both Barth (1886-1968) and Brunner (1889-1966) were born in Switzerland.

KARL BARTH

On May 10, 1886, the first son of a minister of the Swiss Reformed Church in Basel, Switzerland, was born. The minister's name was Fritz Barth, and this first-born son was named Karl. Two other sons were subsequently born to Fritz Barth, named Peter and Heinrich. Peter became a Calvin scholar, and Heinrich became a professor of philosophy at the University of Basel. Both of Karl's grandfathers were also ministers.

When Karl was three years old, his father was made *privat dozent* (lecturer) at the University of Berne, and thus the family moved to Switzerland's capital city. Soon afterward (in 1891), Fritz Barth was appointed Professor of New Testament and Early Church History at Berne.

In his *gymnasium* (prep school) training in Berne, young Karl found himself attracted, not to mathematics and the sciences, but to history and drama. As boys, he and his brothers had enjoyed playing with toy soldiers, and he had insisted upon playing the role of Napoleon, the tactician par excellence. He became fascinated with the history of military tactics, an interest which he maintained for the rest of his life, even to the extent of becoming an American Civil War buff. As a Swiss youth, he also underwent a kind of paramilitary training.

In his sixteenth year he received instruction for confirmation in the Swiss Reformed Church. It was during this period, he states, that his interest in systematic theology was kindled.

In 1904, at the age of eighteen, he began theological studies at the University of Berne under the direction of his father. He studied systematic theology under Hermann Ludemann, but was not attracted to him. Instead, he became vitally interested in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher. After four semesters at Berne, Karl wished to take further studies at Marburg, but was opposed by his father, who wanted him to be exposed to a more conservative influence.

As a compromise, Karl entered the University of Berlin in the fall of 1906. Here he came into contact with Reinhold Seeberg (historical theology), but was not attracted to him. However, he avidly sat at the feet of the liberal church