

# The Reception in Transylvania of Karl Barth's Theology of the Word of God

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## **Abstract**

The influence of Karl Barth's theology on the Reformed Church of Romania was the major theological development of the twentieth century history of doctrines in the Protestant churches of Transylvania. The Hungarian speaking Reformed Church in Romania, after World War I, due to border changes, became isolated from her sister church in Hungary and came to play an important role in preserving Hungarian culture and national existence.

After the failure of liberal theology a number of ways were attempted to bring renewal to church life. This thesis focuses on the process of reception of Karl Barth's theology, which was read against the background of a confessional Calvinism, the Transylvanian form of the Calvin-renaissances in Europe.

Since the process of the reception of Karl Barth's theology in Transylvania was halted with the emergence of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe at the mid 1940s, this thesis concentrates mainly on the 1920s and 1930s. A special attention is given to the theology of Sándor Tavaszy, professor at the Protestant Theological Institute in Kolozsvár (Cluj) who had a pioneering role in popularising Karl Barth's theology among the Hungarians.

The contextual study of the reception of Karl Barth's theology of the Word of God refers to the general situation of the Hungarians in Romania after World War I, that of the relationship between church and society and the analysis of the philosophical and theological context. To make the understanding of Barth's reception easier three models of initial responses are presented. The emerging theology resulting from the impact of Barthian thought on indigenous thinking is analysed and compared with Barth's own thinking. The research draws the attention of the reader that for benefiting from the full potential impact of Barth's theology, a consistently following of Karl Barth's theological development is needed.

The conclusion of the thesis points towards the possibility of constructing a theology of culture along the lines of Barthian thinking, a theology which is, as always was, a serious task for the Reformed community of Transylvania.