TROELTSCH, Ernst (February 17, 1865, Haunstetten – February 1, 1923, Berlin)

Ernst Troeltsch was a liberal German Protestant theologian and philosopher of religion whose work spans the last decades of the German Empire and the early Weimar Republic. He studied theology at the Universities of Erlangen, Berlin and Göttingen before becoming a professor of theology at Heidelberg (1894) followed by an appointment in the philosophy department at the University of Berlin (1915-1923). His most famous work is *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (*Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, 1912), which outlines a methodological approach to understanding the basic social and ethical teachings of European Christianity from the first to the eighteenth century. Troeltsch divided the social teachings of the Churches into five periods of development: the Early Church, the Mediaeval Synthesis, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and sectarianism. Inspired by the work of Max Weber, Troeltsch sought to explains these five groups and their relationship to culture through a tripartite heuristic device: church, sect, and mysticism. The “church” adapts or reconciles itself to worldly institutions. The “sect” makes a strict bifurcation between Christian community and the world. “Mysticism” entails the individualization or privatization of Christian spirituality. These typologies have become classical concepts in the sociological study of religion.

Bibliography: Hans-Georg Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch: His Life and Work* (London: SCM Press, 1992).

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