

**Course Syllabus**  
**Fall 2014**  
**THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH**  
**THEO 0670**

WEDNESDAYS 6:45 p.m. – 9:35 p.m.

INSTRUCTOR: THE REVEREND DR V. SHEPHERD

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Office Hours: As posted

**Description:** The course endeavours to acquaint students with the major topics of the most significant theologian since the Sixteenth Century Reformation. It presupposes theological zeal and a willingness to read closely and consistently material that is admittedly dense yet equally rich.

**Prerequisite:** THEO 0531 and THEO 0532

**Outcomes:** Students will be equipped to

- [1] understand the “Copernican Revolution” in Barth’s theology with respect to his understanding of revelation: God alone is both the subject and object of revelation even as he remains Lord of it;
- [2] appreciate Barth’s theological background: the anthropocentric liberalism articulated most eloquently by Friedrich Schleiermacher;
- [3] see how Barth stands in the tradition of the Reformation yet also moves beyond it at key points (e.g., the doctrine of election);
- [4] probe specific items in Barth that have rendered him notorious; e.g., revelation as the “abolition of religion”;
- [5] understand how Barth combines simultaneously faithfulness to the logic of Scripture and self-exposure to contemporaneity;
- [6] appreciate how Barth has informed recent theologians of the Reformed tradition in both the English-speaking and German-speaking theatres; e.g., Thomas Torrance and Eberhard Juengel;
- [7] assess Barth’s fruitfulness for subsequent theological work;
- [8] apprehend the force of Barth’s theology for preaching, pastoral conversation, and formal counselling.

**Texts:**

Required

R. Michael Allen, *Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics: An Introduction and Reader* (London: T&T Clark, 2012.) ISBN: 97805670 (paperback)

This book is the major resource for the course, and will be read and expounded in each class.

### Recommended

Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) ISBN: 9780802866547 (paperback)  
This book is a fine exposition of the major themes in Barth's thought.

Geoffrey Bromiley, *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) ISBN: 080281804

This book provides a trustworthy, chapter-by-chapter exposition of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*.

### **Evaluation:**

[1] The ten (10) best of eleven (11) 400-word papers reflecting the student's theological engagement with the reading of the day, beginning with the reading for September 17.

Note 1: The paper may articulate the student's critical appreciation of a theological point in Barth or in Barth's reading of the history of doctrine, or disagreement with same.

It may also articulate a comparison between Barth and another single major thinker with whom the student is familiar; e.g., Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, Calvin, Bullinger, Melancthon, Menno Simons, Schleiermacher, Tillich, Moltmann, etc.

Note 2: Since one purpose of the paper is to ensure that the student has read the material assigned for class, **this paper must be submitted at the commencement of the class; it may not be submitted any time thereafter.**

Note 3: Students should come to class prepared to discuss with the class the substance of their written paper.

[2] A final "take-home" paper that expounds at greater length (2500-3000 words)

(a) any topic discussed in class,

*or*

(b) any topic in Barth's theology NOT discussed in class; e.g., Barth's understanding of the Holy Spirit, or his exposition of baptism. [Please see the instructor concerning the latter.]

For this assignment (regardless of whether (a) or (b) is selected) a bibliography should be attached, indicating that the student has consulted at least five substantive resources on the topic under discussion. In other words, this assignment requires a research paper, not merely a recapitulation of the class handout.

This paper must be submitted by 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> December.

Penalty for late submission: 5% per day.

*Note: All written work may be submitted in French.*

### **Bibliography:**

A thorough, up-to-date bibliography is available at *Tyndale Online*:

<http://www.tyndale.ca/seminary/mtsm modular/reading-rooms/theology/barth>

A briefer bibliography pertaining to overviews of Barth's s theology is attached below.

**Schedule:**

Sep 10	Introduction Outline of Barth's Life and Work	
Sep 17	"The Word of God in its Threefold Form"	Allen, chapt. 2
Sep 24	"The Trinity"	chapt. 3
Oct 1	"The Word Heard and Testified"	chapt. 4
Oct 8	"The Perfect God"	chapt. 5
Oct 15	"The Election of Jesus Christ"	chapt. 6
Oct 22	<i>Reading Day: No Class</i>	
Oct 29	"Theological Ethics"	chapt. 7
Nov 5	"Creation and Covenant"	chapt. 8
Nov 12	"Nothingness: Sin as the Impossible Possibility"	chapt. 10
Nov 19	"Reconciliation in Christ"	chapt. 11
Nov 26	"Justification and Sanctification"	chapt. 12
Dec 3	"Vocation and Witness"	chapt. 14
Dec 10	Final Assignment To Be Submitted by 9:35 p.m.	

**Bibliography of Karl Barth**

The secondary literature on Barth is vast. The following titles are intended to help students who are beginning their study of Barth's theology.

**BIOGRAPHIES**

Busch, E.; *Karl Barth*

This huge work is considered the definitive biography of Barth. It is highly recommended and can be used as a reference tool for all areas of Barth's thought and the development thereof.

Parker, T.H.L.; *Karl Barth*

This is a much smaller, more manageable work for neophytes. It acquaints the reader with an overview of Barth's life and work. Its brevity does not sacrifice accuracy. (Parker is also a superb Calvin scholar.)

## DISCUSSIONS OF BARTH'S THEOLOGY

Berkouwer, G.; *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*

The book delivers what it promises: a critical exposition of Barth in the light of Barth's conviction concerning the triumph of God's grace.

Bromiley, G.; *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* \*\*\*\*

Bromiley's work is everywhere lucid and accurate. His book is the best guide to reading Barth in the order of the succeeding volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*. This book is highly recommended for those who are approaching CD for the first time.

Busch, Eberhard; *Barth*

This small book is a useful overview of Barth's thought, but of course cannot substitute for the much more detailed exposition of *The Great Passion*.

Busch, Eberhard; *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology* \*\*\*\*

This book is much more than an introduction; it is nothing less than a penetrating exploration and exposition of all the major *loci* in Barth's thought.

Dorrien, G.; *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology*

This book unfolds the manner in which Barth put 20<sup>th</sup> Century theology on a new course.

Hart, T.; *Regarding Karl Barth: Toward a Reading of His Theology*

The fact that this book is published by IVP indicates the recognition of IVP, together with that of its supporters, Barth's thought.

Hartwell, H.; *The Theology of Karl Barth*

Hartwell's book is one of the older discussions of Barth's theology. It treats Barth topically rather than in the order of CD. It can always be relied on to provide a clear, succinct statement of major aspects of Barth's thought.

Hunsinger, G.; *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*

This book comments on Barth's relationship to political, doctrinal and ecumenical theology.

Hunsinger, G.; *How to Read Karl Barth*

This work acquaints readers with the logic of Barth's thought in the course of expounding Barth's approach to major doctrines.

McCormack, B.; *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*

This book explores both the immediate antecedents to Barth's theology and unfolding of Barth's "Copernican Revolution" in theology.

Torrance, T.; *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian.*

Torrance discusses several features of Barth's thought from the perspective of Barth's faithfulness to the logic of the gospel.

Torrance, T.; *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Thought: 1910-1931*

This is a fine exploration of the theo-logic of Barth's move to a genuinely "scientific" (*wissenschaftlich*) theology. (See McCormack above for disagreement as to 'developmen' in Barth's theology.)

von Balthasar, H.; *The Theology of Karl Barth*

Von Balthasar is a major Roman Catholic reader of Karl Barth. Bruce McCormack's book, however, is a sustained argument against von Balthasar.

Webster, J.; *Barth \*\*\*\*\**

Webster is undoubtedly one of the finest Barth scholars in the English-speaking world. His work provides a very readable introduction to Barth's thought.

Webster, J. (ed.); *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*

A compilation of essays on assorted topics by assorted scholars, this book examines in greater depth areas of Barth where his theology has proved unusually fruitful.