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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Email: vshepherd@tyndale.ca
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
This book is the major resource for the course, and will be read and expounded in each class.
Recommended
This book is a fine exposition of the major themes in Barth’s thought.

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, Melanchthon, 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, 10th 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/mtsmodule/reading-rooms/theology/barth
A briefer bibliography pertaining to overviews of Barth’s theology is attached below.

**Schedule:**

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<td>Introduction Outline of Barth’s Life and Work</td>
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<td>Sep 17</td>
<td>“The Word of God in its Threefold Form”</td>
<td>Allen, chapt. 2</td>
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<td>Sep 24</td>
<td>“The Trinity”</td>
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<td>Oct 1</td>
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**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 *locri* in Barth’s thought.

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

This book unfolds the manner in which Barth put 20th 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 ‘development’ 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.