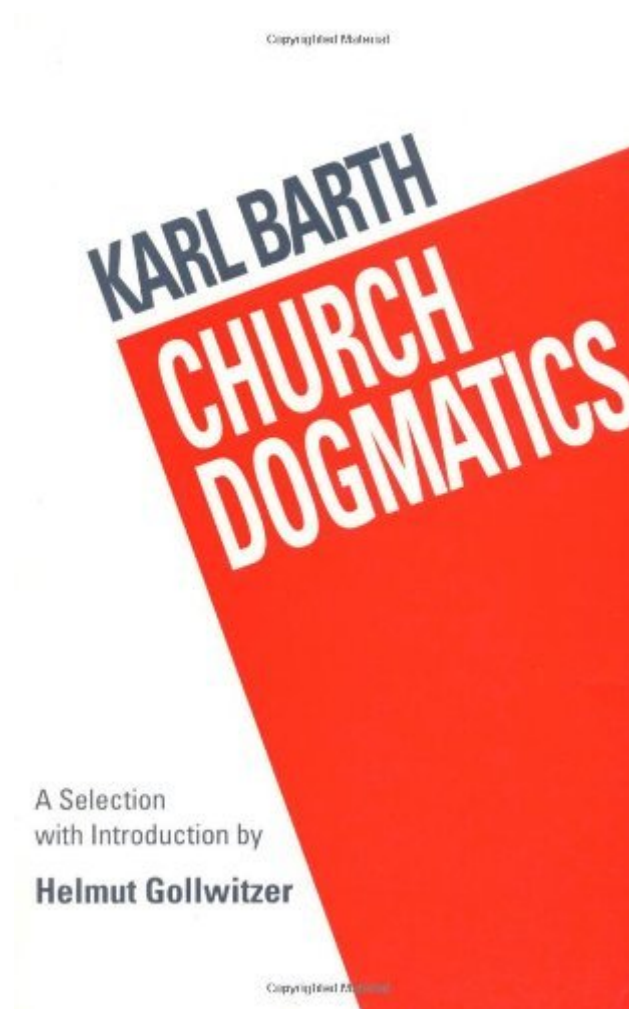


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# Church Dogmatics



## Synopsis

Karl Barth's monumental work, *Church Dogmatics*, is recognized as a landmark in Protestant theology--perhaps the most important work of this century. However, the size range of its fourteen volumes has meant that its content and significance may not be so widely known or appreciated as it deserves. In this concise introduction, Helmut Gollwitzer provides a selection of some of the most important passages from *Church Dogmatics* to help the busy student explore the heart of the great work; or perhaps to direct a student to parts of the *Dogmatics* of greatest interest.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Church Dogmatics: A Selection" is an excellent introduction to the theology of Karl Barth. Anyone even remotely acquainted with Christian theology cannot dispute the fact that Karl Barth is one of the most relevant and scholarly theological minds of our time. He articulated some of the most basic, yet profound truths of the Bible at a time when mainstream Christian theology had begun to place less and less emphasis on the Bible as God's inspired Word. He dialogues with the great theologians and philosophers from Luther to Calvin, to the scholastics, to his contemporaries. The

unifying thread through his writing is the person of Jesus Christ, as witnessed in scripture. Barth, in his *Church Dogmatics*, did what no other modern theologian has been able to do with such clarity- he synthesized a millenium of Christian thought and focused it through the lens of what scripture says about Christ. His *Doctrine of the Word of God* is an amazing and thorough exposition of the topic- to get the full thrust of what Barth was saying, though, I would recommend working through the multi-volume set of his *Church Dogmatics*. For introductory or casual reading (if such a thing is possible), I would highly recommend starting with this concise volume. Best wishes on your theological quest!

If you are interested in modern Christian theology, and have vast amounts of time and money, then by all means buy and carefully study all 31 volumes (8,676 pages) of Karl Barth's epochal *Church Dogmatics* (31 vols). However, if you find yourself lacking in one or the other area, you might consider this inexpensive yet sympathetically-selected book of excerpts from the first four volumes of Barth's magnum opus. (Be aware that this collection was published in 1961, at which time only up through volumes IV, 2 were available in English translation.) The Editor's Preface states, "It should be emphasized that, while the work may lead more general readers to a fruitful acquaintance with Barth, it cannot replace the *Dogmatics* for serious students ... the work primarily serves its intended purpose of introduction and orientation, as also, it is to be hoped, of stimulation." Helmut Gollwitzer (1908-1993), himself a noteworthy theologian, has written the very helpful 28-page introduction. Here are a few representative quotations: "Who and what is God Himself? ... God Himself is in fact simply the One of whom all prophets and apostles explained that they had heard His voice and had to obey Him..." (pg. 36) "But again, we do not really know Jesus (the Jesus of the New Testament) if we do not know Him as this poor man, as this (if we may risk the dangerous word) partisan of the poor, and finally as this revolutionary." (pg. 110) "Life does not fear death but knows it well." (pg. 160) "Jesus Christ is the one Word of God. There are other words which are good in their own way and measure. There are other prophets in this sense ... But there is only one Prophet who speaks the Word of God as He is Himself this Word, and this One is called and is Jesus." (Pg. 230)

I am almost finished with V I.1, the doctrine of the Word of God for the second time. I am not a theologian and do not read Greek, but this is the best and most complete view of Evangelical Protestant thinking I have ever read. It has answered questions I have had about Christianity since I was a small boy. I highly recommend it for all persons who want to study and think about their

religion. All the work I have put into understanding it has been more than paid back in blessings. I want to commend Hendrickson for the excellent quality of their hardback edition. My notes on the paperback I read first more or less tore it up, but as I am transferring those notes to the new hardback it remains in tip top shape.

I bought the 14 volume hard cover edition of Barth's Church Dogmatics for a song, though the Kindle version offered here is extremely reasonable. I suspect this edition of Barth's Dogmatics may become rare given that a new 31 volume study edition is being produced where all the Greek, Hebrew and Latin comments in the footnotes have been translated into English. But, if you don't mind slugging your way through some Greek and Latin, this is the preferable edition to have given the amount of space 14 volumes alone will take up on your book shelf. That said, one has only to peruse the Dogmatics to be impressed by the depth and range of Barth's learning. I would hardly call myself a Barthian, but he is indeed the most significant "church father" of the 20th century having rescued much of European Christianity from an excess of liberal and overly optimistic theology as well as impacting important Roman Catholic theologians such as Hans Urs von Balthasar. There really is no one comparable to Barth in the realm of dogmatics in the previous century. Barth can ramble at times, his thoughts sprawl across a number of pages such that he could have used an editor to condense some of his thought, but the learning that he brings to the table makes up for his prolixity and even if you do not agree with his conclusions you will understand how he got there. Few will have the time to read all 9,000 plus pages, but using this resource as a reference will be immensely rewarding to any serious student of theology.

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