



BOOK REVIEW

Chitrada, Daniel. *How to Read Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics in One Book: A Sequential Guide to His Magnum Opus*. Wipf and Stock, 2025; xiv + 133

Daniel Chitrada is a lecturer of systematic theology at the Centre for Global Leadership Development in Bengaluru, India. His new book aims to give readers a comprehensive overview of *Church Dogmatics* (hereafter CD), Karl Barth's *magnum opus*. Attempting to read CD for the first time can be quite daunting, not only because of its length, but also due to the depth and the breadth of themes covered in it. This book aims to be helpful by giving a comprehensive overview of the subject matter covered (p. ix).

The book chapters itself is aligning sequentially with Barth's CD. Chitrada starts by explaining the centrality of dogmatics for the church according to Barth. Chitrada views that dogmatics is important for the church because, with it, the church continually does its theological work in understanding God's revelation. However, he also points out that, for Barth, it can only be visible if conducted as an act of faith within the church of Jesus Christ (p. 2). Even from the beginning, it can be seen that, for Barth, Christology bears an important position in his theology. Thus, the book continues by explaining Jesus Christ as the Word of God (chapter 1). Chitrada outlines Barth's threefold form of the Word of God: The Word itself (Jesus Christ), the Written Word (the Scriptures), and Proclamation (the church). Chitrada highlights one of Barth's significant contributions here through reading this form as a dialectical movement: forward and backward. The forward reads the Scriptures as testifying Jesus Christ as the embodiment of truth, while the backward movement occurs when the Scriptures is interpreted in the light of Christ" (p. 9).

The next chapter deals with the theme of God's revelation. Here, Barth's trinitarian theology is explained, especially in the roles of the Father, Son, and the Spirit, and on Barth's choosing of the term modes of being. Here, the trinitarian framework of the incarnation of the Son and the

outpouring of the Spirit is central for Barth's theological framework of God's revelation. Because of this, Chitrada notes, Barth's emphasis on revelation cannot be different than the divine modes of being antecedently in themselves; something Chitrada views as safeguarding the risk of human presuppositions that may conflict with the revelation of God (p. 8). Chitrada views this emphasis as important to reiterate the significance of revelation in Barth's theology.

The following several chapters dealt more with God's revelation in the world. In chapters 3 and 4, Chitrada maintains the recurring pattern emphasized by Barth that both the Scripture and the church only gains its functions and authority through the contents of its testimony and proclamation, which is the revealed Word of God in Jesus Christ. But how is it that God is known? In chapter 5, Chitrada answers this by showing that, contra natural theology, for Barth, God's knowability is impossible from any revelation apart from God's own revelation, mediated through grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. At the same time, this also resulted in God's hiddenness, meaning that God's revelation is solely resting within the power of God (p. 41). The book then continues by explaining the reality of God's freedom to love in Barth's theology. Here, Chitrada shows that God's choosing of humans is also Christological. Not only did God choose to reveal himself to humans, in Jesus Christ, God also chose himself to reveal himself to humans. This is explained further in the next chapter, where Chitrada uncovers this theme more deeply through the topic of the election of Jesus Christ.

Continuing his work, Chitrada then moves into Barth's theology of creation. Here, Chitrada highlights Barth's positioning on the creation's relationship to God as reflecting the inner trinitarian relationship. At the same time, Chitrada also showcases the centrality of Jesus Christ in Barth's theology of creation, wherein, through Christ, creation acquires its significance as the theatre of God's grace and covenantal purpose (p. xiv). This elaboration is continued by a discussion on Barth's nothingness (*das nichtige*) (chapter 11), before finally diving into Barth's theology of reconciliation as a divine act for creation.

As Chitrada already mentions in the beginning of his book, the main objective of *How to Read Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics in One Book* is to help readers navigate the outline of Barth's CD. Viewed in this light, Chitrada did a good job here. After reading this book, readers can see theological themes that are important to Barth being highlighted with tremendous clarity by him, to a point where, I would argue, with the aid of this book, one can be quite knowledgeable about Barthian topics

without having to be that well-versed in the subject. A slight note, however, one that I believe will not take away the aforementioned points, is that this work will benefit more greatly had it dedicated a chapter on the context of Barth's own journey. Giving a brief context to understand the reasons for important themes in CD, such as natural theology, dialectical theology (which appeared in many chapters in this book), and God's revelation, will help the readers to view CD not just as one-dimensional dogmatic works, but also as something that is rooted in Barth's own concrete theological, ecclesial, and political struggle. Regardless, this is a recommended book for those who want a comprehensive but accessible introduction to Barth's CD.

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