

EXCERPT



Markus Barth *His Life and Legacy*

December 3, 2024 | \$38, 296 pages, hardcover | 978-1-5140-0162-2

"In this captivating and meticulous biography, Mark R. Lindsay offers a window into the life of a theologian who is often overlooked. As someone guilty of neglecting Markus Barth, despite hearing many wonderful things about him, I found this book eye-opening. It is also beautifully written and accessible, making it not simply an academic treatise but a read that will be enjoyable for a broad audience."

—**Andrew B. Torrance**, director of impact and senior lecturer in theology at the University of St Andrews

A Definitive Biography of a Twentieth-Century Thinker

There is little doubt that the broad field of "Barth studies" has flourished over the past three decades. Much of the energy has been generated by the "usual (institutional) suspects"—in particular, Princeton Theological Seminary, its Center for Barth Studies, and also some of the Scottish universities, in which there has been a recently renewed interest—as well as by the (somewhat unfortunately) hotheaded prosecution of various long-standing debates. Among the latter, one would immediately think of Karl Barth's doctrine of election, the implications of the same for his understanding of Christology and the triune being of God—the notorious McCormack-Hunsinger-Molnar debate—as well as the still-controversial matter of his theological understanding of the Jewish people. The entire field of inquiry is also now genuinely global and interdisciplinary, with postcolonial/anticolonial critiques (J. Cameron Karter, Rothney Tshaka), interfaith studies (Jennifer Rosner, Joshua Ralston), and gender theologies (Faye Bodley-D'Angelo, John Blevins, Hanna Reichel) bringing Barthian scholarship into active and fruitful dialogue with global South, non-Christian, and other previously marginalized voices. And if in the mid-2000s the task was to think "with Barth but beyond Barth," the 2023 Barth conference at Princeton—"Barth and the Political"—demonstrated the increasing move within at least some scholarly circles to think "with Barth but *against* Barth."

Nonetheless, and for entirely understandable reasons, "Barth studies" have hitherto been engaged solely with the life, legacy, and contribution—to theology, church, and civil society—of *Karl* Barth. With the notable exception of the 2018 Markus Barth Symposium at Princeton Theological Seminary, the work of the "other Barths"—one should think here not only of Markus but also at least of Christoph—has been sorely neglected.

One can hardly be surprised by this. Few theologians since the Reformation have had as voluminous a literary output as Karl, or as wide and enduring an influence as him—across Roman, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions, as well as in various national and international political debates. As someone who has been enmeshed within those studies for nearly thirty years, I can hardly complain about this emphasis! And indeed, I do not. It is a scholarly focus that has been both justified and extraordinarily fruitful, not least of all for the churches in whose service Karl Barth always knew himself to be.

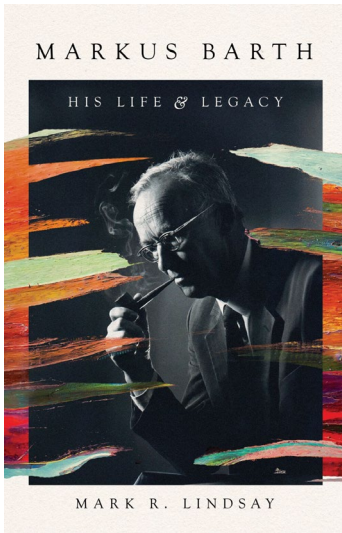
However, now that we are fifty-five years beyond his death, it seems timely to expand the scope of Barth scholarship so as to more intentionally consider the contributions of some of the lesser-known Barths. In this book, the aim has of course been to explore in some detail the life and legacy of Karl's eldest son—and probably the most recognizable of these other Barths—Markus. But as I have already suggested, there is work to do also on Christoph—both in terms of his Old Testament scholarship as well as his role as a theological teacher within majority-Muslim Indonesia—and perhaps also some updated scholarship on Karl's father, Fritz. Certainly, Markus's children would contend that Rose Marie similarly deserves greater recognition for her own ministry, as well as for the assistance she provided to Markus in his work. As someone who undertook her own theological studies, Rose Marie—not entirely unlike Charlotte von Kirschbaum—typed, checked, and corrected Markus's manuscripts, offering her own critical suggestions along the way, and participated fully in the regular "open evenings" that were such a feature of Markus's pedagogy from Dubuque onward. It was also Rose Marie who kept Markus abreast of the major developments in, and commentary upon, the civil rights struggle in the US and the debates about America's involvement in Vietnam.



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—**Andrew B. Torrance**, director of impact and senior lecturer in theology at the University of St Andrews

If this book has done just one thing, I would hope that it has demonstrated that "Barth studies" ought no longer simply be restricted to Karl, no matter how imposing a figure he is and surely deserves to remain. If I can venture an analogy, no one would decry Basil of Caesarea's towering influence or his recognition as a doctor of the church. And yet his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, is now also widely acknowledged as a highly significant theologian in his own right, despite the fact that he received precious little scholarly attention until the middle of the twentieth century. Studies of the Cappadocian Fathers may well continue to be dominated by engagement with Basil (and also, of course, Gregory of Nazianzus), but "the other Gregory"—while neither "Great," nor a doctor of the church—has become an indispensable part of that story. In the same way, Markus deserves to be an indispensable part of the Barth story; he is, if you will, "little Gregory" to Karl's "Basil."

Perhaps the analogy is poor, but the point, I hope, is well taken. While Karl Barth's own theological work will and should rightly continue to be an area of intense debate and scrutiny within both academy and church, one need not engage primarily with him in order to be fruitful within "Barth studies" more broadly. Quite aside from whatever gems might be discoverable in the legacies of Fritz, Christoph, and even Rose Marie, there is a significant amount of further research into Markus Barth's life and theology still to do. As I said at the start of this book, others may—and should—narrate Markus's life, and even exegete his theology, differently, by dressing him in (as Mark Twain would have it) different "clothes and buttons." To do so—to interpret him other than as I have done—is the stuff of scholarship, and greatly to be desired. It is my hope that this book stimulates such interest and scholarly engagement, and in so doing helps widen the vision of "Barth studies" beyond its traditional limit.

—Adapted from the epilogue



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BIO



Markus Barth *His Life and Legacy*

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Though he has remained in the shadow of his famous father, Markus Barth was a groundbreaking thinker in his own right. Drawing from an extensive collection of Markus Barth's letters and papers, Mark Lindsay puts Barth's story and thought into historical context, exploring his early life, pastoral work, scholarship, and enduring legacy.

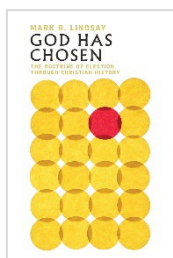
Expanding the Scope of Barth Scholarship

"Mark Lindsay has finally given us his much-awaited biography of Markus Barth. Markus Barth—though often overshadowed by his father, the great theologian Karl Barth—was an amazing theologian in his own right. Barth the younger was way ahead of the curve on so many topics of New Testament scholarship that are only now becoming mainstream. Lindsay's biography of Markus Barth shows the life, story, and scholarship of a truly amazing figure in Christian scholarship of the twentieth century. A must-read book!"

—**Michael F. Bird**, deputy principal at Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia, and author of *A Bird's-Eye View of Luke and Acts*

Mark R. Lindsay is Joan F. W. Munro Professor of Historical Theology at Trinity College Theological School, the University of Divinity. He is the author of *Reading Auschwitz with Barth*; *Barth, Israel and Jesus*; and *Covenanted Solidarity*.

Also by Mark R. Lindsay:



God Has Chosen: The Doctrine of Election Through Christian History
August 11, 2020 | \$30.99, 248 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5322-9

Throughout the church's history, Christians have sought to understand the doctrine of election. On this journey through the Bible and church history, theologian Mark Lindsay turns to the various articulations of the early church fathers, John Calvin's view, the subsequent debate between Calvinists and Arminians, and Karl Barth's modern reconception of the doctrine.



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