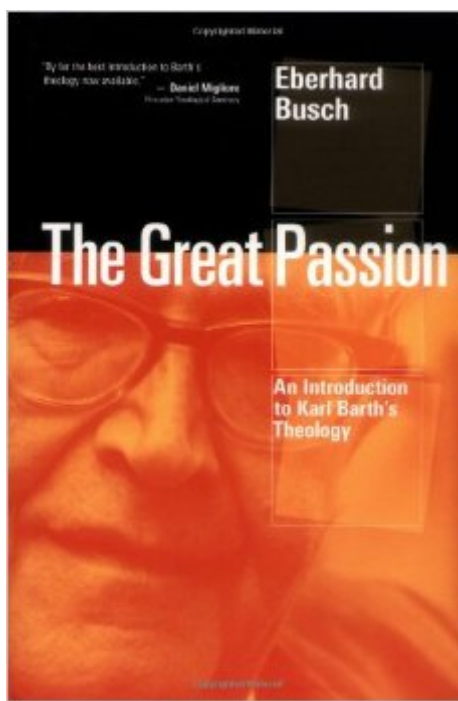


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# The Great Passion



## Synopsis

Book by Busch, Geoffrey W. Bromiley

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book would have gotten 5 stars if Eberhard Busch had not compressed it so much, and if the last chapter on Time and Eschatology had been a bit cleaner. Even a summary of Barth like this requires careful, slow reading. Busch tries not only to summarize Barth's themes in the Church Dogmatics (which are given a great logical structure, as you can see in the Table of Contents), but does so while taking on (mostly German) contemporary critics. Busch is good at seeing points of dispute, and often raises good questions. I wish Busch had put more effort into the voices of Barth's critics. However, an introduction to Barth can only do so much of that. In doing so, Busch succeeds in answering many North American evangelical caricatures of Barth as the Father of Neo-Orthodoxy (a rather ignorant slap in the face to the greatest 20th century theologian). Whether Busch succeeds in helping Barth defeat the arguments of his German critics is really not the point of the book. These critics serve more as segues than serious voices. One would have to do have more equal dialogue. The beginning is about Barth as a man, as a theologian. I particularly find inspiration in Busch's use of Grunewald's "Crucifixion" painting, where John the Baptist is pointing at Christ on the cross. Barth could see this portrait as the "one task of theology:" that we as the Church must say together that "He must increase, but I must decrease." Barth is never far from this picture when he tackles theological issues. Perhaps most relevant for me was Barth's ideas of Truth in a pluralistic

world. I won't spoil the fun on that one, but read CD 1/2 for a full account of what "religion" is to Barth. Since it is Barth condensed, read slowly and enjoy it just as you would the Church Dogmatics. Busch succeeds in pointing beyond himself to Barth, who points beyond himself to Christ. Just don't let it spoil you from reading CD and doing the dirty work and rewarding work!

Eberhard Busch is the definitive author on anything to do with Karl Barth. As Barth's personal assistant, Busch has insights that few can match and a style of writing - even when translated - that is accessible and engaging. *The Great Passion* teases out for the reader the main facets of the enormous influence of Barth's writing, a theologian who has been referred to as the greatest theological thinker since Thomas Aquinas. Some may find the prospect of reading Barth's enormous corpus daunting, but Busch is able to, in only a few hundred pages, paint a picture that is fascinating and informative at the same time. I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in learning Karl Barth in detail - both the uninformed and experts alike. Read and enjoy!

Eberhard Busch honors and does justice to the voluminous thought of the 20th century's greatest theologian Karl Barth by loading every paragraph with quotations from *Church Dogmatics*. He gives both a grand sweep of Barth's writing and frequent close looks at Barth's thought on critical points. Evangelism, for example, Barth taught as a theological act that does not separate knowledge of God from the method of communicating that knowledge. As simultaneously saint and sinner the evangelist/theologian will "find unbelief first and foremost in himself" and therefore not have to go far to "connect" with the sinner. I find that an important warning when there is more effort in many churches to "connect with the culture" than to hear the Word. And the one we address is already to be viewed as an "insider" by virtue of the Word of God already addressing him or her. We evangelize after God. Eberhard presents Barth as a critic of the church for the love of the church, calling into question our methodologies that are poor and distracting substitutes for the Word of God we are to hear and proclaim.

I'm reading *The Great Passion*, and *Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, under the guidance of one of Barth's students, Dr. Harry Beverly. As we are discovering, what makes this work superior is how it brings us closer to the man Barth and not just his theology, because understanding better the man helps us understand better his theology. It should be noted that the author, Eberhard Busch, knew Barth well, and it shows in this excellent work!

This is a marvelous introduction to Karl Barth. Busch has done us all a favor by sharing his lifetime of reflection on Barth's work. A must read by all who want to know Barth and his theological work better.

I tried to force my way through this book, but I couldn't do it. Perhaps this work lost something vital in translation, but I found it dry and academic, lacking flow...the sort of thing about which Solomon said, "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh." I don't give up easily, but when I asked myself "What does this paragraph mean? What is he trying to say?" for the 50th time, the answer was "I DON'T CARE ANYMORE!" Maybe I'll try again later, but life is short... The one thing I did get out of this book: Barth also gave up on the so-called "theology" of his age and did what all of us ought to do: GO BACK TO THE BIBLE.

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