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Book Review

The Legacy of the Barmen Declaration: Politics and the Kingdom. Edited by Fred Dallmayr. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019. 140pp. \$85.00.

The Barmen Declaration was a group of confessional principles composed in 1934 by a group of German Protestant theologians led by Karl Barth in opposition to the spread of Nazism. The contributors to this volume on the Barmen Declaration review not just its implications vis-à-vis Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich but for reimagining Christian notions of confession, resistance, and political engagement. These insights are a timely critique of the current temptation to conflate church and state in right-wing populism, especially in terms of conservative Catholicism in Hungary and Poland and evangelicalism in the United States.

In 1934, Barth and his consociates were targeting and responding to the rise of the German Christian movement that too cozily accommodated itself to the totalitarian norms and practices of the Third Reich. The initial two entries in the volume are the long and short forms of the Barmen Declaration. Although the Declaration's principles do not specifically address Hitler, their underlying implications, as Wolf Krötke shares in his essay, were that Hitler was not a revelation of God, that the state is not the all-encompassing "order of human life," and the Church of Jesus Christ cannot be subsumed under the "Fuhrer principle" (pp. 41-42). As Krötke adds, the Barmen gathering challenges the German Christian theological justification for violating human rights, undermining the rule of law, and persecuting Jews.

As captured in the contributions by Eberhard Busch and Wolfgang Huber, the path of resistance emerging from Barmen is not clear cut. Busch stresses that Barmen manifests not only the importance of proclaiming confessions to the Protestant articulation of church but especially the need to live with these confessions. Huber, in a fascinating comparison of Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, argues that whereas a program for resisting the state is not clearly stated in Barmen, Bonhoeffer's thought and action captures the responsibility of both individual believers and the church community to resist the state when the latter violates human rights. Indeed,

Bonhoeffer's entry in this volume emphasizes that Christians should love both God and earth, for "God's kingdom is the *kingdom of resurrection* on Earth" (Italics in original; p. 106). Busch adds, Bonhoeffer's integration of spiritual and bodily rights leads to a freedom not focused on the self but "life in relation to others" (p. 86).

In turn, both the contributions by Derek Alan Woodard-Lehman and Krötke elicit the Barmen Declaration's implications for democracy and interfaith relations. Woodard-Lehman contends that Barth's conception of confession as a community in "disputation and deliberation" is manifested in Barmen (p. 52). Therefore, not only does the Declaration stand against the totalitarian state but provides, according to Woodard-Lehman, an "affirmation of democracy" (p. 50). If the Huber/Bonhoeffer essays stress resistance, Woodard-Lehman offers a Christian democratic vision of politics. Krötke even goes further when he suggests that we need to go "beyond Barmen" to grasp how the Word of God manifests itself in other religions (p. 43).

Finally, the larger theological and philosophical insights of Barmen are presented at length by Fred Dallmayr in the introduction, the conclusion, and his essay on Martin Buber. Whereas Buber distinguishes between the primordial nation found in the "early period of Israel" and that of the community chosen by individuals in early Christianity, Dallmayr argues that Jesus, as the suffering servant, enters "the core of faith to unlock a deeper meaning" that cannot be captured by a particular nation (p. 94). Buber, in a sense, unwittingly contributes to any reduction of faith to a particular state, be it by the Nazis or, in our own times, by religious nationalisms in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, India, or the United States. Instead, Dallmayr captures how religious discipleship and democratic citizenship, prayerful reflection and political action, and ultimately, immanence and transcendence can neither be completely separated from nor reduced to each other. Both complete spiritual withdrawal from the world or, conversely, the attempts of radical secularism or religious nationalism to capture the spiritual solely in this life are perilous.

This volume captures exceptionally well the tensions between God and earth, transcendence and immanence, the confessing church vs. Hitler's German Christians, and spiritual retreat from the world vs. spiritual accommodation to the world. The shortcomings of the text are: (1) not addressing the potential for mob rule in democratic systems; (2) insufficient consideration of social science examinations of totalitarian systems and behavior; (3) no examination of how Barmen connects to the notion of civil religion; and (4) especially how fear of "the other" plays very strongly into religious

accommodation of authoritarian rule. Nevertheless, given the pivotal U.S. election of 2020, this volume provokes Christians and other people of good will to be inspired by the example of those who gathered in Barmen to counter all-too-comfortable religious accommodations to dictatorship.

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