

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Tuesday, October 1, 2024



From The Barmen Declaration:

Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the Church also exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace. [It fulfills this task] by means of the threat and exercise of force, according to the measure of human judgment and human ability. The Church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

The Barmen Declaration is a confession or creedal statement of our denomination. It originated in the specific situation of Protestant Germans responding to the rising fascist claims of National Socialism during the years just prior to World War II. The primary author of the statement was Karl Barth, famed Reformed theologian who had been forced to flee Germany due to his opposition to Hitler's demands upon Christians and intellectuals alike.

Walter Brueggemann, retired Reformed theologian, writes convincingly of Barmen's contemporary power to inform us:

So let the local congregation ponder the Lordship of Christ, not the Lordship of 'this world,' and the Lordship of some remote alternative, but the Lordship of Christ that is breaking out in the 'fruits of the spirit' everywhere every day. It turns out that 'the Lordship of Christ' is not a sentimental mantra, but rather a serious public claim that de-absolutizes every other claim ... The Barmen Declaration is a good place from which to think about the Lordship of Christ in terms of social specificity. Engaged in such reflective study, the church might recover for itself some of the great hymns of the church that bespeak the rule of God that have been shelved in the interest of privatized sentimentality. As the gospel writers came to see, confrontation with the coercive power of the state is no dress rehearsal or practice session. It is the real thing. It is the real thing to be able to say our 'only comfort' is that we belong 'body and soul' to our faithful savior.

I don't think that I dare add anything else to both Barth's and Brueggemann's wisdom ...

Prayer for the Day: (From *Fifty Prayers* by Karl Barth)

Lord, our God, we ask that you would remain with your church, both here and everywhere. Amen.

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