

Angela Dienhart Hancock. *Karl Barth's Emergency Homiletic 1932-1933: A Summons to Prophetic Witness at the Dawn of the Third Reich*. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013. 372 pages. \$30.24.

Angela Dienhart Hancock, a graduate of the Princeton Theological Seminary, currently serves as assistant professor of homiletics and worship at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. This notable volume is her first publication of a vast investigation on Karl Barth's theology, particularly his homiletic. In the introduction, she queries, "What does a theologian [Barth] say to young preachers [in the class] on the dawn of the Third Reich?" (xv). In this respect, she intends to explore Barth's emergency homiletic by primarily researching his unpublished lecture notes, *Übungen in der Predigtvorbereitung* (Exercises in Sermon Preparation) of 1932-1933. For appropriate interpretation of Barth's homiletic, she attempts an intricate description of the multilayered socio-political context of the theologian.

With a rich understanding of Barth's lectures of 1932-1933 on the subject of "sermon exercises," the first and second chapters trace his theological development and examine the way in which he theologically reaffirmed the Goodness of God and God's eschatological power in Germany's historical crisis. The same chapters show Barth's attention to the church's proclamation as a way to resist nationalism as well as how he decided on adding practical theology, namely preaching, in his classes of 1932-1933. Chapters three and four offer some suggested reasons why Barth rejected the German homiletic tradition as practiced by his contemporaries. The author points out that the church's language about God itself was being infiltrated by the propaganda rhetoric and ideological pathos of national politics (118). This went against Barth's theology since he believed that the church must only preach the Word of God freed from national pathos. Chapters five and six chronologically present Barth's *Predigtvorbereitung*. These two chapters distinctly focus on Barth's lectures on preaching; his emphasis on biblical homiletics, the preacher as the servant of the Word of God, preaching as witness, Jesus Christ as Christian hope, faithful obedience to the witness of the Bible, and the virtues of a preacher. The two chapters show that contrary to the common understanding of Barth, he was in actuality greatly concerned with the local congregation and their serious political situation in preaching. In this volume, thus, Hancock subverts the common notion that Barth's theology was so abstract and otherworldly that it disregarded public issues and the socio-political situation.

A great contribution of the book to the homiletic guild comes from the fact that the author illuminates Barth as a practical theologian (although technically he was not a practical theologian himself). Hancock describes Barth's emergent decision on teaching homiletics as his theoretical *and* practical engagement in the human context. She regards Barth's preaching class as the praxis of preaching itself (17). Her exploration of Barth therefore rediscovers him as a practical theologian who not only responded to the historical emergency, but also himself practiced theology by teaching and preaching. Another interesting point of the book is that Hancock challenges the common criticism on Barth's homiletic. In contrast to the dominant criticism on Barth, Hancock finds that the theologian firmly claimed preaching the gospel based on or for *contextual reality* and *real people*. For Barth, preaching the gospel as the church's practice was to affirm the Goodness of God in reality and to function as a way of resistance against German nationalism.

Of course, there are a few details that the intrigued reader might want the author to include in the book. Other than the historical rediscovery of Barth's emergency homiletic, the reader might expect to read more about the author's own definition of and critical comments on the same, particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century American context. Moreover, several questions

that come to the reader's mind at the end remain possible research areas, "Is there any emergency call from God to today's church and preaching?" "What contribution will the new discovery of Barth's preaching make to contemporary homiletics?" "If any, what is the author's own opinion on American political rhetoric and the language of God in today's pulpit?" "Is today's American pulpit free from any ideological captivity?"

Obviously, Hancock's work sparks sharp arguments for concerned homiletic scholars, especially regarding the difference between Barth's published work, *Homiletic*, and the unpublished artifacts of the *Predigtvorbereitung*. Hence, this volume would be quite useful in advanced courses in homiletics at the seminary or graduate school level. Finally, Hancock's vast research on the multilayered context of Barth's theology and detailed description is also a very helpful resource for other theological areas, such as constructive theology and historical theology.

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