

Dr. Hogg, a student of and collaborator with Professor Kenneth Scott Latourette, has produced in this book another landmark in the series of volumes devoted to the expansion of Christianity. It should have the widest possible reading.

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PRAYER

KARL BARTH

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Translated by Sara F. Terrien

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This little volume contains the stenographic reports of three seminars given by Karl Barth of Basel, at Neuchâtel, Switzerland, in January, 1947, January, 1948, and September, 1949. Those responsible for setting down these gems of Barth's wisdom on prayer as interpreted by the catechisms of the Reformation have tried to preserve the original character of his presentations as well as the naturalness, spontaneity, and imaginativeness of his expression.

These lectures represent both a study of prayer itself, and of the invocation, petitions, and doxology of the Lord's Prayer. The sentences are so freighted with meaning that it is difficult to quote them out of context. Barth notes that the Reformers prayed; they were of one mind concerning the importance and significance of prayer. They made little distinction between personal and corporate prayer. Prayer, they said, must be from the heart although it must be disciplined. They made no distinction between explicit (exteriorized) and implicit (interior attitude) prayer. Luther believed it a duty to pray, and that prayer was a defense against the devil. Barth inquires, "If men can pray together why should they not also be able to take Communion together?" For those who can pray together, doctrinal differences are of secondary importance.

The Reformers faced no "liturgical question" since they drew no distinction between prayer at home and in church. After all, it is Christians who pray, and they are in the Church. As for using liturgical prayers, Barth finds that the Reformers believed that prayer

should be made from the heart but that it should also be disciplined. Calvin "did not permit himself disorderly effusions." Affection there must be in prayer, but this must not be a "pretext for vagabondage." Language is not always necessary, for prayer is at once word, thought, and life.

The Reformers regarded prayer as the "encounter" with God that they faced as they stood before him with all their desires, thoughts, and misery and asked themselves, "How can I really live with God?" Facing life with all its difficulties, they regarded prayer as the first necessity of man. God answers prayer; he grants us our requests; prayer exerts an influence upon God's action and existence. Answer to prayer is more certain than our awareness of the things we request. All prayer is really through Christ, who is our advocate with the Father as well as our humanity with God. God cannot fail to answer since it is Jesus Christ who prays. Prayer is a kind of "breathing necessary to life." Prayer is an essential act of the Christian that must come by itself and through grace.

If we are to pray aright, it is necessary to accept God's guidance. The formula of the Lord's Prayer serves for our apprenticeship. Prayer is to be uttered, too, in language we can understand. And prayer is an act of man; through it we participate and collaborate with God.

Barth's interpretations of the various phrases of the Lord's Prayer are refreshing and illuminating. While he takes some liberties with the Reformers' interpretations, he packs into his remarks some of the profoundest theological insights. Every Christian who ponders the sections on "Hallowed be thy name"; "Thy kingdom come"; "Deliver us from the Evil One," will receive a rich benediction.

It is Jesus Christ who associates us with himself in the Lord's Prayer even as he leads us in prayer. "Jesus Christ is the donor and the warrant of the divine Fatherhood and our filiality."

To read this book is to think through the deepest reality of the Christian faith with one who is not only expert in the theology of the Reformers, but whose spirit is steeped in their piety. This reviewer has been brought to a renewed understanding of and faith in the marvelous gift of prayer by meditating upon these lectures. And he predicts that this may become one of the classics on prayer. It could very well be recommended to the laity.

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