

118A 6997

Oct - Dec 1959

X

## BARTH'S "ROMANS"

A SHORTER COMMENTARY ON ROMANS. By KARL BARTH. S.C.M. 15s.

THIS is a translation by D. H. van Daalen from the German *Kurze Erklärung des Römerbriefes* published in 1956 but which originated as the manuscript for a course of extra-mural lectures given at Basle in 1940/41. In his preface Dr Barth describes it as "a smaller and younger . . . brother of the 'Epistle to the Romans' of 1918 and 1921" but later adds that "it will be seen at first glance that this is not an extract from the older exposition". The book therefore offers to those who know of Dr Barth and his writings only by hearsay an independent opportunity of direct encounter with a completed work of exposition by him, while to the convinced readers of Dr Barth who cannot read him in his own language there is given the chance of considering his further thoughts on this master epistle of which he is an acknowledged master expositor. Even if—or, perhaps, all the more if—one is not an habitual and devoted reader of Dr Barth and even if one cannot accept as so self-evident as to need no proof the belief that the Epistle to the Romans is the heart, summary, and definitive norm of the New Testament and of the Gospel to which the New Testament bears witness—even so, this is surely a book to read and wrestle with to one's profit. Much of it seems unnecessarily turgid and diffuse (and sometimes the translator fails in his admittedly difficult task and even three or four readings of a sentence do not make sense of it), at points one would feel compelled to argue that the exegesis is perverse or too ingenious but every so often one encounters a discussion which can only be described as shatteringly illuminating so that one can see once again not only why there are "Barthians" but, much more importantly, why Dr Barth is to so many an acknowledged minister of the Word of God.

D. E. JENKINS 164