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PHILIPPIANS

The Epistle to the Philippians, by Karl Barth (S.C.M., 128 pp., 13s. 6d.)

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IN the welter of controversy which greeted Barth's epoch-making commentary on *Romans*, this much slighter work—originally given in 1927 as a series of University Lectures—on *Philippians*, has attracted less attention than it deserves. For it is a most stimulating and penetrating exposition of the Apostle's thought, and the S.C.M. Press are to be congratulated for making it available for the first time in English. Unfortunately, like many of their books, it is very expensive for its size.

The approach in this work is quite different from that adopted in *Romans*. It is designed for the Greekless and the non-theologian, though, of course, it makes constant reference to the meaning of the Greek original, and is a highly theological commentary. However, it is not written for the professional theologian.

Scant notice is paid to the views of other scholars (with the curious exception of Dibelius), footnotes are abjured, and the variety of interpretations so dear to the scholarly mind—and so baffling to the general reader—are studiously avoided.

Barth tells us authoritatively what he thinks it means and how it is relevant and significant to our situation. He is not interested in introductions, background, indexes and so on; so he simply does not bother with them. If you want answers to such problems as Caesar's household (4.22), the praetorian guard (1.13) and the remarkable phrase in 3.1, you must look for them elsewhere. Dr. Barth is just not interested in that sort of problem. He

comments on what interests him, and that is the theology of the letter; he wants to make Paul's thought come alive to us, and he does it brilliantly.

As a sample of its quality, here is his comment on 1.21, *to me to live is Christ and to die is gain*. "The life of Paul has been checkmated, so to speak (although it is still there on the board) by another life. This other life is Christ Himself."

Despite the fact that this is a young man's book, and suffers from a profuse and most trying use of italics, it is a book which will open new horizons of spiritual perception for those who have read no Barth, while those who have will not want to miss this fresh addition to his translated works.

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