

do not see that in Rom. vi 15-23 St Paul recognizes three conceivable states; I can only admit two. The Apostle does ask, 'Are we to sin, because we are not under the Law, but under grace?' (vi 15). But this only presents two states, that under the Law, followed by that under grace; and this sharp division seems to be maintained throughout the paragraph. Prof. Burkitt writes that 'the state after conversion only begins to be considered in verse 22 (νυνὶ δέ)'. But 'sin' is one side of the antithesis all the way through, and it is freedom from sin that is mentioned both in vi 18 and vi 22. It is surely very difficult to understand these verses of totally different 'freeings'. In the same way it is no less difficult to distinguish the 'sanctification' of vi 19 from that of vi 22. In fact, I do not see what sense the Professor gives to the imperative *παραστήσατε* in vi 19, which is surely addressed to present Christians.

I prefer, therefore, to take *ὑπηκούσατε* κτλ. as the condition of Law and sin from which the *ἐλευθερωθέντες* of vi 18 is a deliverance. In this way the argument naturally leads up to the question in vii 7, 'Is the Law sin'. To me it seems inconceivable that St Paul should find matter for thankfulness in any one coming under the Mosaic law: 'without the Law sin is dead . . . when the commandment came, sin sprang into life, and I died' (vii 8-10).

I shall not insist further on any points which I have worked out in my previous note; but it may be as well to refer to my fuller attempt to follow the sequence of the Apostle's thought in the edition of this epistle in the *Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures* (Longmans). In conclusion, let me say once more that while I indicate my reasons for maintaining my original position, I gladly recognize that in what is, perhaps, the most vital point, Prof. Burkitt has made it his own.

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## THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

I HAVE but lately seen Dr Burkitt's article in the April number of the JOURNAL. May I offer some remarks about it?

The first is this. The interpreter of St Matthew is primarily concerned with the meaning of the parable as the evangelist understands it. The story may have been told in more ways than one, even by the Lord Himself, and the longer reading in Matt. xxv 1 belong to one form of it. It may even have been transformed, consciously or unconsciously, in view of the beliefs of a later day. But the primary

questions are these : What does the parable mean in its present context, and what was the reading of the evangelist himself ?

Now two things must be borne in mind. 'Matthew' arranges his materials with care, and he writes rather late in the first century, when both the teaching and the symbolism of the Church were becoming fixed. Both points are important for the interpretation of the parable.

(a) Matt. xxiv and xxv form one great eschatological discourse, and it must be interpreted as a whole. 'The Virgins' and 'the Talents' form one of Matthew's pairs of parables, and deal with judgement upon the members of the Church ; while 'the Sheep and the Goats' is concerned with judgement upon the world. The world is judged, as in the O.T., primarily by its attitude to the Israel of God, in this case the Lord's 'brethren' who represent Him (cf. x 40-42). Thus we find the background of the Virgins in xxiv 3, 6, 27, 42-44 ; that of the Talents in the mission of the disciples which the discourse presupposes, specially in xxiv 45-51 ; and that of the Sheep and the Goats in xxiv 14 and 30.

(b) The symbolism is that of the O.T. as transformed by the Apostolic Church. The conception of the Church as the bride of Christ is not specially Pauline ; it goes back to the O.T. doctrine that Israel is the wife of Jehovah. Our Lord, Jehovah Incarnate, is the husband of the new Israel. But in the N.T. the use of this symbol is not always the same. Just because both the kingdom of God and the eternal life which belongs to it are in one aspect present realities, and in another lie still in the future, the Church is in one aspect already the wife of the Lord (Rom. vi 4 ; Eph. v 22 ff), and in another His promised bride, 'a pure virgin' to be presented to Him either by His apostles (2 Cor. xi 2) or by Himself (Eph. v 27). In the N.T., and especially in 'Matthew', the eschatological view predominates ; and throughout the N.T. the symbols of the bridegroom and the bride probably, though not certainly, always look forward to the final consummation (Matt. ix 15 ; John iii 29 ; Rev. xxi 2, 9 ; xxii 17). Thus it is that virginity acquires a special value for the individual Christian. It symbolizes spiritual virginity, and facilitates uninterrupted devotion to the Lord (Matt. xix 10-12 ; 1 Cor. vii 7, 32-35 ; Rev. xiv 4 ; cf. Acts xxi 9).

In view of all this, the parable presents no difficulty. The virgins are not 'little girls', but the adult and self-devoted followers of the Lord. Let us hope that little girls are not often allowed out in the streets at midnight, let alone with lighted lamps and supplies of inflammable oil. Happily the JOURNAL is not a nursery magazine, or they might be found claiming scripture authority for these dangerous practices. I should not myself describe the virgins either as 'brides-

maids' or as 'maids of honour', though we naturally think of them as such. The parable is as silent about the bride as it is about those companions of the bridegroom to whom Dr Burkitt refers. To introduce the bride would tend to confuse the interpretation, since, as Dr Montefiore sees, the virgins are in one aspect themselves the bride. Equally mistaken is Dr Burkitt's argument that, because the careless virgins are told to go away, they are ordinary inhabitants of the city. On the contrary, the loss of the kingdom is the characteristic punishment of unfaithfulness; while to be 'dichotomized' is not—as Dr Burkitt will see, if he looks again at the passages he has misread—the punishment for 'unready slaves', but for those guilty of much more serious offences. The virgins have been invited to the wedding of the bridegroom, like the guests of Matt. xxii 1-3, but they are not 'known' to him in the Biblical sense of knowledge (cf. Matt. vii 22, 23; 1 Cor. viii 3).

Now so it is with all the symbolism. It must be interpreted by the usage of the Bible as a whole. Thus the lamps recall Matt. v 16; Phil. ii 15; 1 Pet. ii 12, &c.; the meeting with the bridegroom is that of 1 Thess. iv 17, and the cry that of 1 Thess. iv 16. The oil is the Spirit, as in Zech. iv 1-6 and frequently. Similarly, in the companion parable, the talents are the gifts of the Spirit, the Master's own property distributed in accordance with the natural gifts or 'several ability' of each servant. It may seem fanciful to suggest that the oil-sellers are the ministers of the Church. But the detail is probably significant, since the closing of shops at night makes it an awkward addition to the story. Moreover, Matthew's interests are peculiarly 'ecclesiastical', and Matt. xxiv 45 is still remembered.

It follows from the exposition given above that the longer reading in Matt. xxv 1 should be rejected. It is 'interesting', like Dr Burkitt's view of the parable, but as wanting in suitability to the context as in external attestation.

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## SCHLEIERMACHER

THE first edition of Schleiermacher's *Die Christliche Glaube* appeared in 1821-1822, and the second, which is now translated into English, in 1830-1831.<sup>1</sup> Since then a century has passed, during which time it has influenced deeply English as well as German thinking. The only

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Faith*, by Dr F. Schleiermacher: English Translation from the second German Edition, edited by Professor H. R. Mackintosh, D.Phil., D.D., and the Rev. J. S. Stewart, M.A., B.D. Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1928.