

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[1st page of article]

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.

H. L. GOUDGE.

SCHLEIERMACHER

THE first edition of Schleiermacher's *Die Christliche Glaube* appeared in 1821-1822, and the second, which is now translated into English, in 1830-1831.¹ Since then a century has passed, during which time it has influenced deeply English as well as German thinking. The only

¹ *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.

other work of Schleiermacher which has had equal and, more recently, greater influence, was his early book, which in order to emphasize his belief that, if religion cannot be expressed in poetry, it must be in rhetoric, he called 'Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers'. But this also needed to wait for a century to be translated, though the task was nothing like so great an enterprise as the translation of this large systematic treatise. Possibly there might be gain in the work of one mind, but it would have been a very formidable undertaking: and the translation is the work of several competent persons. Professors H. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay have already collaborated in the translation of the third volume of Ritschl's *Justification and Reconciliation*: and it would be an impertinence to praise their work. Mr Stewart, who is Dr Mackintosh's fellow-editor, has done his part equally well: and the others, though perhaps not quite so fully equipped, have done theirs in a way which deserves gratitude from the reader. As the book is not easy German, and bears many marks of its period, a thorough understanding of it requires a very wide knowledge of the thought of the time as well as of its language: and none of the translators fails.

In spite of the German custom of forming schools and of classifying people in schools, sometimes on rather slender grounds, there never was a school of Schleiermacher, as there was, for example, of Ritschl and is to-day of Barth; nor was any one ever assigned to it except Alexander Schweitzer. At the same time Kattenbusch is right in maintaining, in his book *From Schleiermacher to Ritschl*, that all subsequent German theology works on Schleiermacher's empirical principles, and that, in this matter, Ritschl himself, in spite of his criticism of Schleiermacher as mystical, pantheistic, and unethical, always builds on his foundation. Nor was Ritschl unaware of his debt, because he says that the two examples of systematic study of theology every theological student ought to know are Calvin's *Institutes* and Schleiermacher's *Christian Faith*.

But Schleiermacher was the incarnation of Romanticism, and for the best part of a generation this has been a fading influence. Its defects were many, and it certainly shewed no deference to the Age of Rationalism, which went before it, and would entitle it to reverence for its old age from its successor. But it is plain enough now that a great deal was missed by the Romantic Age precisely because of its high-sniffing superiority to what went immediately before. Nothing was greater in its influence than the interest it turned to history, but it was incapable of even a historical view of the previous century, the problems of which we have had to take up afresh, and we ought to take them up still more seriously. The lesson of this quite obviously is, not that we should follow our predecessors, but that we should be

warned by their error. One of the greatest and most difficult labours is to carry on the work of our predecessors without being burdened by it, and to inherit it without being fettered.

The recent outcome of the work of Schleiermacher is a good example both of what is being done and of what should be done in this matter. For about twenty years the volume of criticism has been growing. The weaknesses are not difficult to see, because they are the usual weaknesses of Romanticism ; but there is a great deal of sheer misunderstanding and even misrepresentation even by learned people, Germans as well as English. One might gather that there is nothing objective about his theology, and that by feeling he meant sentiment, and by absolute dependence mere mystical self-surrender, none of which goes with his persistent and well-grounded claim to be empiricist throughout.

Yet it is this empiricism which has now become his chief offence, for it is regarded as making religion anthropocentric. For the best part of a generation, voices have been raised in loud appeal for a theocentric religion. This has culminated in the Barthian school. It used to be said that Schleiermacher deserved his name, which means veil-maker, but Barth and his disciples deal in thicker and still more opaque material. Much of the criticism of the school is true, and they have done a great deal to clear the ground. I am not very learned in their works and cannot claim to know all that is maintained, but the effect so far seems to leave more of a quagmire than before. Schleiermacher is denounced as a high-priest of error. Ever since his day Protestant theology has wandered in the quagmires of pious emotion and not found objective God-given truth. This is preached with prophetic fire. But when we come to ask what is God-given truth, what is *Das Wort Gottes* which is the supreme truth, and how do we know it is God's word ; so far as I have read, the writers clothe themselves in vagueness and become abusive. One thing at least Schleiermacher has to his credit, and that is a much more Christian temper. The war may be some justification, but in that case Schleiermacher's light shines the clearer, for he went through a time of greater disaster, misery, and poverty for Germany than the last war.

Anyhow the worth of Schleiermacher's theology can be estimated now by this work in the English tongue, and whatever it may prove to be in the end as a theology of abiding value, it will still remain very important for the history of religious thinking. Yet, in spite of all criticism, nothing has been done to challenge his general conception that religion is an experience of a reality which is known to us, as other reality is, by the intercourse of feeling as intuition, and that history has abiding significance for religion because it is the record of this experience.

In some way man is the measure of the universe, and even if he only has to measure such a measure as an infallible scripture or an infallible papacy, it still has to be human measure. But this seems to me just where Barth and his followers hang in the air. They deny that they accept the scriptures as an infallible word of God. They claim not to be obscurantist, nor to question the rights of criticism. Therefore, it would seem an unavoidable conclusion that we must somewhere find our knowledge anthropocentric, and that the question must arise of how it can be anthropocentric in such a way as to be objective knowledge. But apparently we go after strange Gods with Schleiermacher when we make the attempt. Vaguely they are after something both right and valuable. Schleiermacher never did escape from the merely artistic outlook of Romanticism. But if he is to be corrected, it will have to be by beginning more seriously with what he has done and facing more thoroughly the questions he tried to answer.

As long ago as 1911 Dr Otto Lempp published a careful study in the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, which discusses the whole question of how far Schleiermacher won any real objective view of God. He argues that Schleiermacher meant one thing by intuition of the universe, and another by an absolute feeling of dependence, and that, as it suited his argument, he argued from one to the other. In this way there would be a difference of standpoint between the *Speeches* and *The Christian Faith*. As the third edition of the *Speeches*, from which the translation into English was made, was altered in accord with the teaching in the later treatise, and the notes especially are largely summaries from the treatise, there has been much insistence that the true and inspiring Schleiermacher is only to be discovered in the first edition of the *Speeches*. This edition undoubtedly has a lucidity and ease none of his later work achieves; and as it was difficult to pass from this outlook to a religion which needed to be expressed both in creed and conduct, he does not always find his way directly or successfully. At the same time the idea of riding two-horse as convenient springs from a misunderstanding of what he meant by feeling, which is neither sensation nor emotion, but the contact with reality, which, while it precedes clear intuition, is not a mere cause of it but passes into it. Thus religion and perception are both contacts with reality and united at their source. As this feeling at once divides into thought and action, when experience by it raises objective knowledge, so religion as a feeling of absolute dependence, which is just direct relation to a universe we can trust, passes also into thought and action, and so develops theology and morals. In his eagerness to keep all theology in touch with this experience, he does constantly seem to be sunk in it, without coming to the surface to shew how and what it

experiences. But this does not mean that we can escape all effort to be empirical in religion and take a flying leap to the word of God. Wherefore, in spite of its many defects, possibly because of them, this translation is not yet belated, and it may possibly stir the English mind to more serious efforts to think the religious situation through. Perhaps even the example of so great a systematic effort may help to encourage some to take more than the usual week-end excursion into this territory.

JOHN OMAN.