

VIEWES FROM THE WATCH TOWER

PRACTICAL RESULTS OF THE CHURCH FEDERATION MOVEMENT

The following, clipped from a pamphlet entitled "Liberty," we esteem worthy of presentation in these columns.

"No movement inaugurated during recent years is probably of greater significance than the Inter-Church Federation movement. It is one which cannot fail to be attended with tremendous consequences, and, if followed to its logical outcome, will terminate in results which ought to cause every thoughtful person to shudder in advance.

"The outcome of this federation movement has been plainly outlined in the 'sure work of prophecy.' History also illustrates, by similar movements, its meaning.

"Concerning its importance, the chairman of the Inter-Church Federation Conference, recently held in New York City, said: 'This is one of the most notable assemblies of believers in Jesus Christ that has ever been seen. John Calvin wrote to Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, and declared he would cross any sea to make such a union effective. The dream of the great reformer and the great archbishop has met with realization in these latter days.'

A BIBLE PROHIBITION OF CONFEDERACY

"Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.' (Isa. 8:12.) It is evident, from the context of this passage, that God's professed people inaugurated this federation movement against which he warned them, because they had departed from him, and 'refused the waters of Shiloh that go softly,' and 'vexed his holy Spirit.'

"The rejection of the holy Spirit lies at the foundation of every church federation which has blighted the prosperity of the church during her history. The only union the true church has ever sought is a union with Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church; and when such a union has been maintained, mighty power has attended it. As evidence of this, one has but to revert to apostolic times, when the church went forth 'fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.'

"Years ago much power attended revival efforts, conducted by such men as Professor Finney, President of Oberlin College, and later, Mr. Moody and others. These old-time revivals were attended with a harvest of souls; but they are largely now things of the past. Many ministers deplore the absence of spiritual power which prevails to such an alarming extent at the present time. Realizing keenly the weakness and lack of spiritual life which characterized the once Spirit-filled church with a power which brought conviction to sin-sick souls, churchmen are seeking for some remedy by which the church may regain her former power.

"The means by which this restoration of former power is sought is a gigantic church federation movement, through which the church may secure the power of the State to institute moral reforms and enforce her decrees. To many, at first thought, this may seem an innocent, harmless, and desirable thing. For this reason we desire to submit a few of the inevitable practical results of such a union.

"One of the results of this movement was outlined by a prominent delegate at the conference, as follows:

"I trust that one of the practical results of this conference will be the organization of a force that lawbreakers and lawmakers will respect and heed when great questions of morals are involved. Our Gospel is the fulfilment of the law. It is our province, in the name of our Supreme King, and seeking the good of mankind, to ask rulers to respect the code of our kingdom. Rulers may ignore sects, but they will respect the church. This federation will compel an audience, and it will speak with power if it will put aside its differences and make its agreement its argument.'

"When the end has been attained for which they have been seeking, we will have a parallel to that which existed in the fourth century, when the bishops of Rome were united in compelling the Emperor Constantine and others to yield to their demands concerning the settlement of 'grave moral questions,' among which was chiefly the enforcement of Sunday observance by law.

A CHURCH TRUST

"Another result of the evil principles underlying this proposed Federation will be a veritable church union, or trust; and the same tactics will doubtless be employed by it as are common to other unions. Freedom to preach the gospel will be denied. Any denomination not conforming to the creed, rules, and regulations of this religious trust, will be regarded as an unlawful rival. This was indicated by one speaker at the recent conference, who said:

"No community in which any denomination has any legitimate claim, should be entered by any other denomination through its official agencies without conference with the denomination or denominations having said claims. A feeble church should be revived, if possible, rather than a new one established to become its rival.'

"This is an age of unions and confederacies. Every department of the commercial world is being bound together. The power which is being wielded by these unions in securing their desired ends has exerted an influence which the church, in its worldly condition, has been unable to resist. On this point a prominent speaker at the recent Inter-Church Federation Conference said: 'The two words which express the principles that rule today in the business world are coöperation and economy. Apply these two thoughts to the work of the church. Our sects and denominations have often been sources of rivalry and competition, and they have left the church as a whole weakened and shorn of its power. We have not presented a united front against a common enemy, but have too often fired into one another's camps. . . Coöperation through a closer federation is the need of the hour.'

"It will readily be seen from this proposal that any denomination which does not belong to the union, would at once be considered a 'rival,' or, in a more characteristic term familiar to all unions, a 'scab.' This would at once arouse endless animosities and controversies between the unions and the sects which are not connected with the federation, or union. Such a course would result only in the federation churches bringing pressure to bear upon those who refuse to yield to their demands, which would be nothing short of religious persecution. Again it will be seen that the only safe union for the church, the only true union, is a union with Christ."

TO PURIFY THE SONS OF LEVI

"Who shall abide the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he inspects? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, and they shall offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—Mal. 3:2, 3.

Blessings have come to us through an appreciation of the teaching of the Scripture respecting the great day of trouble coming upon the whole world of mankind—especially upon Christendom. Truly the Scriptures teach a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation, because of which even now, as our Lord prophesied, "Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things coming upon the earth." We do well that we rejoice that this day of trouble coming upon the world as a thief and a snare has not so come upon us, but that we already by faith see many of its details and the glorious outcome, the establishment of the kingdom of God under the whole heavens. We fear, however, that this great trouble upon the world, which in some sense we hope to be "accounted worthy to escape," has so filled the mental horizon of some of the Lord's people that it has hidden from their attention another kind of trial which is especially for the church, and which must reach us and test us and prove us be-

fore the world's day of trouble is ushered in. It is this day of trial upon the church, this special testing of the elect, that is referred to in our text.

PRIESTS AND LEVITES

The house of Levi, the priestly tribe, typified the household of faith of this Gospel age. As the priests constituted the highest order or class amongst the Levites, so the royal priesthood, the Lord's consecrated, the saints of this Gospel age, constitute the highest class amongst the spiritual Levites, the household of faith. When, therefore, the Lord through the Prophet declares the testing and purging of the house of Levi it includes all of the "household of faith," the "little flock" and the "great company." The end of this age is the time for the Lord's inspection of the entire household of faith, and properly enough the inspection begins at the top of the house, begins with the saints, but will extend to every consecrated one. The two classes subjected to the fiery trials of the Re-

finer are represented by the gold and the silver. The gold represents those whose loyalty to the Lord will specially demonstrate itself in their love and zeal to lay down their lives for him, for the truth, for the brethren. These are the gold class, whose portion as the bride class shall be joint-heirship with the great King of kings and Lord of lords in his universal empire for the blessing of all the families of the earth. The other class, represented in our text as the silver, will be the class less precious in his sight, the great company of Revelation 7, also spoken of in Psalm 45 as "the virgins, her companions, that follow" the bride into the presence of the King of glory.

If the words, "Who shall stand when he inspects?" bring to our hearts an anxious throb, relief comes to us again with the thought that although the inspection will be most critical, most searching—although the trying in the fire will separate the dross completely and purify both the gold and the silver—nevertheless he who thus inspects, who thus tries, who thus purifies, who thus refines, is our Lord and Master, who bought us with his precious blood, who has assured us of his love and sympathy, and has promised with the Apostle that he will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also provide a way of escape; and he has assured us that all things are working together for our good, because we love God and have been called according to his purpose.—1 Cor. 10:13; Rom. 8:28.

TRIALS FROM UNEXPECTED QUARTERS

If we knew in advance just how each trial of faith and love and devotion to principle and loyalty to the Lord and to the brethren would come we might be prepared to meet it, and correspondingly it would be less severe, and our humility, patience and love be correspondingly less tested. But the Lord wishes to test us along these very lines, and hence our trials usually come from unexpected quarters. This makes the trial more severe and proves the better the real sentiments of our hearts. The Lord desires to purge out of us everything in the nature of dross—self-will, personal ambition, pride: he wishes to cultivate in us loyalty to himself and the principles of righteousness, represented in his character, and exhorts us through his Word.

Looking out at Christendom in general we hear the Prophet's declaration that "a thousand shall fall at thy side"—at the side of the body of Christ, the church. And we see that falling in progress, falling from faith in Christ as the Redeemer, falling into Evolution, Higher Criticism, Christian Science, etc. But now we are looking closer at home to the members of the body, to see which of these will be able to stand the tests of our day—"Who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:17) inquires the Apostle. "Who shall stand when he inspects?" is the inquiry of the Prophet in our text. The intimation evidently is that the inspection will be so crucial as to test all of the saints.

Because the WATCH TOWER, by the Lord's gracious arrangement, has such an outlook over the harvest field, such contact with all the little flock of the Lord's people through the mail, through the pilgrims, through the colporteurs, we perhaps better than others can discern that the great Refiner's fires are already burning and that the gold and silver are being tried. And O, what sorrow it gives us at times to behold some not standing well the testing of this hour. We love all of the Lord's dear ones who are now in the furnace of trial; we are sure that the Lord himself, the Refiner, loves them still more. If these have pain and sorrow, as we discern tendencies of weakness, disloyalty to the cause, ambition for name and fame or position, desire to be greatest, tendencies to lord it over God's heritage—if we are pained by these things, grieved, disappointed in some, shall we suppose that the great Refiner is indifferent? Nay, verily! It is written of him that having loved his own, he loved them to the end; and we see from the narrative that he was very patient and slow to cut off the self-seeking, ambitious, truth-selling and Lord-selling Judas. And the more we attain to the Master's character and likeness the more sympathy we will have with all who are out of the way, and who, unless recovered, will be surely cut off from membership in the body, as our Lord indicates—even though, as the Apostle declares, they may be saved so as by fire, as members of the "great company."—1 Cor. 3:15.

"REBUKE WITH LONG-SUFFERING AND PATIENCE"

It is impossible for us to write to all who seem to be in danger, for two reasons: (1) Time would not suffice; there are other duties of the hour; (2) If they will not hearken to the Word of the Lord, if they will not hear Jesus and the apostles and Moses and the prophets we need not expect that they would hearken to us. Hence the most proper course for us seems to be to occasionally give such words of warning as these foregoing, that although they may have a savor of death

unto death to some yet we hope that they may have a savor of life unto life to others.

Strange as it may appear—yet in full accord with all the records of the past—these fiery trials, these siftings, seem to find in many cases the most dross amongst the leaders of the flock. Perhaps it is merely because they are more conspicuous, perhaps just as many who are not in so great prominence will really fall, be consumed, "suffer loss," and be "saved so as by fire." The Lord alone is able to read the heart and to discern the thoughts and intents, and it is his will that now every member of the household of Levi, the household of faith, should be purged, purified, refined; and the fiery trials of our day are his own arrangements, his own fannings, that he may accomplish the work in harmony with the divine arrangement.

DAWN, Vol. VI. we believe, like the other volumes of the series, came out in its due season, and no doubt the Lord is using it to some extent as the earthly bellows wherewith to kindle the refining fires of this time. In that volume as in the others we endeavored to set forth not our own thoughts but the teachings of the Word, and this in some instances seemed to arouse a spirit of anger and resentment in the hearts of some of the leaders where there should be only love out of pure hearts and appreciation of the glorious liberties of the church. We did nothing more than our duty in calling the attention of the brethren to the fact that the leaders are not the lords of the flock, and that any leader who assumes a lordly position endangers his own standing in Christ as well as hinders the progress of the flock in the liberty wherewith Christ made us free. And any of the Lord's flock who coöperate with such ambitious leaders are doing them injury as well as rendering an unauthorized subserviency injurious to themselves and the others associated with them in the study of the Word.

"TO ERR IS HUMAN, TO FORGIVE IS DIVINE"

It is written, "To err is human," and we know that though begotten of the Spirit we all have the treasure of the new nature in earthen vessels, therefore are liable to err. Realizing this we should not deal harshly, unkindly, toward leaders who are inclined to usurp to themselves leadership in the church of God without appointment by the church; or inclined to override the right of others after they have been regularly chosen. Nevertheless, kindly, gently, firmly, the congregation should hold control of all of its affairs, and see that the leaders recognize that the voice of the congregation is the voice of the consecrated. This will be to the advantage of all: it will assist the leader in keeping humble, in remembering that he is merely a member of the church, which is the body of Christ, and that in the Lord's providence he serves the church because they desire him to do so and consider such to be the will of the Lord. This will help to keep the leader from being puffed up, haughty, from speaking arrogantly of the congregation as "my people," "my church," "my class," "my work." It will help him to recognize that it is the "Lord's people," the "Lord's church," the "Lord's class," the "Lord's work," and that it is a favor, an honor, to be its servant and not at all within his province to be its ruler, its "boss."

This course benefits the congregation also, teaching them their responsibility to the Lord and to his cause to be in proportion as they uphold and give approval to the one who as leader or servant of the congregation is their representative. Whatever the leader does that is wrong is the fault of the majority of that congregation, and the realization of their responsibility means the strengthening of their characters, the broadening of their minds and in general their preparation for the Lord's service here and hereafter. It should even grate upon our ears to hear an elder in a discourse address the congregation in the second person saying for instance, "You ought not to do this." It should be considered by all elders, all recognized teachers in the church, the leaders in any sense, that they do not speak of the congregation as of a different class from themselves, as in the nominal church there is the usual style of recognizing the clergy as one class, the laity as another. On the contrary the better form, the humbler form, would be for the leader to address the congregation as including himself in the exhortation, as for instance to say, "We should not do" thus and so.

"LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW"

If the spirit of love were largely developed in all of our hearts it would require no discussion of this subject from either standpoint, but we are only partially developed in the fruits of the Spirit: hence our difficulty, and hence also the great importance of helping one another, so that our relationship together as fellow-members of the one body may be as helpful as possible to all. And when any feeling of criticism is aroused in our hearts in respect to the course of a leader, it would be the proper, loving course to say to ourselves—Well, perhaps if I were just in the leader's place I might do no bet-

ter than he does in the matter of keeping my body under—in the matter of walking humbly with the Lord and with the brethren—in the matter of exemplifying the perfection of love, which seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, is not puffed up, thinketh no evil.—1 Cor. 13:5.

When we realize that ambition was the cause of Satan's fall, that it was the cause of mother Eve's disobedience, that it has been the cause of the stumbling of many of the noblest ones of God's people in the past, the lesson should not be lost upon us, whatever our station. It should give us sympathy for the leaders and the greater trials and temptations to which they are exposed, and to the leaders it should give greater alertness, care, watchfulness, lest they should be in any measure overcome by this fault, which has harmed so many in the past and which evidently is so grievous a one in the sight of the Lord, for the Lord resisteth the proud but grants his favors to the humble.—Jas. 4:6.

Another point, we must never forget that as the will of the leader should not be taken as the mind of the congregation unless it has so expressed itself, so likewise we should not for a moment suppose that the will or judgment of any other member should be taken as the judgment of the entire congregation. If then any brother conscientiously esteems that the leader of a meeting is not following the wisest or best Scriptural course, he may indeed go to the leader privately, kindly, lovingly, and give him his opinion, but it does not follow that the leader must follow this opinion. He might say, "This is the opinion of one, and my own is the opinion of another no less worthy of credit," and he might properly enough hold to his own opinion or modify it slightly. It is the voice of the congregation as a whole that should be sought on any subject, and which should decide every subject in the church according to the understanding of the consecrated ones respecting the divine will as heard from the Word of God.

A DANGER FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Neither should any one too hastily conclude that his view of matters is sounder or better than that of the leader. On the contrary, the fact that the leader has been chosen by the congregation as the one best fitted of its number to look after its interests should have weight, and the brother or sister who thinks he or she has reason for difference of judgment respecting certain matters should hesitate a little, reconsider the matter, weigh it carefully, try to see it from the standpoint of the leader, if he or she can so find it in the Scriptures. If after all he or she feels certain, it is not his or her duty nor his or her privilege to harass the whole company by trying to impress his or her views suddenly, hastily, vehemently. His or her moderation should be manifested, as the Apostle says, "Let your moderation be known to all men." (Phil. 4:5.) He or she should approve what could be approved of the leader, and in objecting to certain features of his course it should be done in all kindness, moderation and brotherly love, and surely with meekness.

The public acts of a public servant are subject to the examination and criticism of the public, and likewise the open teachings and open conduct of the leaders of the church are open to criticism by their brethren, but the spirit of love and sympathy should always prevail, and nothing should be done through strife or vain glory, and any one criticising an elder with the evident view of supplanting him should be viewed the more critically himself, and all should recognize that the selfish, self-seeking spirit is a dangerous one, inimical both to the interests of the individual and the interests of the congregation. The brother who is in the right condition of heart to be a leader amongst the Lord's humble followers should manifest humility in word and manner—in everything. Others need not be frowned upon nor openly rebuked, but they should not be encouraged—they should not be put into places of influence in the church lest it injure them and others who would come under their influence.

'LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK'

Do not be too hasty in acting in connection with the church's interests. Be sure first that your own motives are good, pure, loving toward the one you criticise; be sure that you have no sympathy with evil speaking; be sure that you are seeking merely the liberties of the church which the Lord proposed—that you are seeking merely the welfare of the church in respect to the times, places and character of meetings and leaders; and be sure that you are as anxious that others should have liberty to express their sentiments as you are solicitous that your own liberties of expression be not overridden or ignored.

It is rarely advantageous to have one leader or elder only in a congregation for a number of years in succession, unless it be very small or otherwise unavoidable. Some who begin

humbly enough with a desire to be servants of the church and with feelings and expressions of their own unworthiness of the privilege and incompetency for the service, if continued in the position year after year come thereby into sore trial and testing, and are in danger by and by of coming to feel that they own the position, and that the selection of any one else for the service would be an insult. This of course is entirely wrong, yet we have an illustration in Scriptures along this line. We read, "Now Moses was the meekest man in all the earth." Doubtless this had to do with the Lord's choice of Moses as a leader for his people. For forty years the nation of Israel looked to him in every emergency, and it should not surprise us at all that at the close of that forty years the meekest man in all the earth was too arrogant to be allowed to go into the land of Canaan. Moses was deprived of the privilege of entering Canaan because he was not sufficiently meek—because, having lost so considerably of his original meekness, he smote the rock in the wilderness, saying, "Ye rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?"

A LESSON FOR ALL LEADERS

If the meekest man in all the earth and one of the greatest men in the world's history was thus overcome by the circumstances of his position amongst the people, it should not surprise us if we find that in Spiritual Israel some who start out meek and humble become more or less arrogant, too, and talk about what they do and must do, and assume that the others are dependent upon them for the water of life. Whenever we look at this picture of Moses it should say to us all, especially to all leaders, "My soul, be on thy guard!" Only a frequent looking to the Lord and a realization of this danger and a continual strife against it can keep us safe at our Redeemer's side—at the side of him who was meek and lowly of heart—the great Teacher who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself (Heb. 12:3), and with such meekness—laying down his life in immersion, in loving service—seeking not his own welfare and honor, but humbling himself even unto death, even the death of the cross. The Apostle showing this exclaims, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Exaltation, influence, place, power, authority in the church, now bring extra trials and extra sacrifices as well as extra dangers. The higher one is up the more careful he must be lest he miss his footing and fall.

Sometimes a congregation may have its patience sorely tried by an elder who, possessing good traits, good qualities, persists in "running" the church according to his own conceptions and ignores the desires of the church. If the objection to the elder, leader, be along the lines of immorality, or along the lines of false doctrine as respects fundamentals laid down in the divine Word—for instance, the ransom—then steps should be promptly taken, as a congregation is responsible before God and men on these points. Laxity on these lines cannot be brooked; the matter should be firmly dealt with by the congregation. But if doctrinally, or at least on the fundamentals, the leader be found loyal to the Lord and his Word and to the harvest message, and if he be above reproach in the eyes of those of the congregation who know him most intimately, and if the difference merely be along the lines of his unwillingness to conduct services of a character or at a time or at places which the majority have requested, it might in the interest of peace be the wisest course to continue such an elder until the expiration of the term for which he was elected.

Then at that election, without becoming too personal or saying an unkind word to him, the congregation owe it to themselves, to the Lord and to the truth not to elect him again to any such place of absolute control. This would not mean that the brother should be dropped from leadership entirely, but that the particular meetings he desired to lead and the character of the meetings should be understood, and his election should be along those lines, so that there could be no misunderstanding in the future, and others possessing some qualifications for service in the company should be sought with the expectation that the Lord, who has the entire situation in his eye, probably has others in preparation to fill the breach.

'BE YE KINDLY AFFECTIONED'

If this kindly and gentle reproof of the brother's course leave him still self-willed and arrogant and indisposed to serve the congregation according to their ideas, it would be wise to drop him entirely from leadership for a time. But let nothing be done through strife or vain glory—let not an unkind word be expressed. Rather remember the services of the past; he should be esteemed for those services. Do not be afraid that matters will all go to wreck without some one human being having control. While esteeming every brother and servant in the Lord very highly and in proportion to their works as well

as their characters, we should ever remember that the Lord himself is our Shepherd, our Bishop, our Pastor, our Leader, and that we are his sheep. If the congregation feels such a dependence upon any one person for its spiritual comfort and refreshment and edification there is something wrong, and the sooner matters in such a case come to a crisis the better it would probably be for all. Those who have gotten started in the truth can build one another up in the most holy faith, edifying one another and assisting one another in various kinds of Berean Scripture studies, and they would probably make much more progress in so doing than if they continued to allow leaders to lord it over God's heritage and to manage the church contrary to the wishes of the majority.

We emphasize the word majority because so frequently minorities attempt to rule. Our thought is that the loving consideration of the different members of the body for each other should so exercise their sympathies and loving coöperation that the majority would be quite willing to agree to some recognition of the desires and preferences of the minorities—with individuals even. In other words, majorities are not to be selfish, and to determine that because a majority gives the authority therefore it would be proper to exercise that power to the ignoring of their brethren of somewhat different views. Union of heart means that each and all will ignore some of his or their own natural tastes and preferences wherever principles of the Word of God are not involved.

We need not tell you, Beloved, that every word of this article is written with a heart full of brotherly love and a desire for the edification of the Lord's dear people, and without any personal animosity or other evil impetus or desire. We seek your good. We are in touch with the entire field, and know the sifting and testing that is going on, and desire to lend a helping hand to the injury of none and the blessing of many. Consider these things and note our further suggestions along the same lines in the sixth volume of the DAWN STUDIES.

Recurring to our text we remark that the very thought that we are in the presence of the great Refiner, the very thought that he is supervising the fiery trials through which all of the house of Levi must now pass, should quicken us, energize us, put us on guard. We are under his inspection. The intimation is that this is the final testing, and that those who are refined by present experiences, purged of pride, ambition, selfishness, having meekness of heart, will be received into the kingdom. There the humble will be exalted to glory, honor and immor-

talities. Can we wait for this? Can we not afford to humble ourselves? Do we not desire so to do? Will we not all unite our hearts and minds and prayers and efforts to the intent that this work of humbling may progress in our own hearts, and that thus the spirit of humility may be shed abroad in the whole church, from the humblest to the most prominent of its servants?

"AN OFFERING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS"

The expression of our text, "an offering in righteousness" may be viewed from two different standpoints, both true. (1) We may understand it to signify a right offering, a proper offering, an acceptable offering; or (2) we may also understand it to signify an offering in the interest of righteousness or justice, in the sense that the sin offerings of Israel, the Day of Atonement, were offerings in righteousness or to effect righteousness—to effect cancellation of sin.

Both thoughts are true: we have presented our bodies living sacrifices and God has accepted them in Christ, but with the understanding that we would be conformed to the image of his dear Son, that we would attain to the character likeness of Christ under his instruction and guidance and blessing and assistance. If now we fail to attain this, if pride or ambition or any other thing hinders our development in the likeness of the Lord, our offering will not be acceptable and we will not have a place in the highest glory to which we have been called. Likewise we have seen that the church is filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ; that as the body of Christ whom the Head is guiding in sacrifice we were represented in the Atonement Day offerings by the Lord's goat of sin offering. The offering made by our Lord, of which we are granted a share, by which he justifies the world, shall ultimately bring in everlasting righteousness to all those who will come into accord with him. We are still in the time when we are expected to share in this sacrificing—"If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him," otherwise we shall not. We are very desirous, therefore, that we should be enabled to offer the acceptable sacrifice represented in the type, that we thus might have membership in the body of Christ in glory and in the great work of blessing all the families of the earth. Shall we not all conclude more earnestly than ever before that the matter at stake is of the greatest value? and shall we not all with fresh zeal allow the Lord in his providences and by his Word to purge our hearts from all dross and to fill us instead with his meek and quiet Spirit?

WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

Matthew 25:1-13.—OCTOBER 14.

"Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh."

Probably on the last Sunday of his earthly ministry our Lord foretold the destruction at Jerusalem, the scattering of his followers, a long period of wars, rumors of wars, etc., and finally his second coming, as recorded in Matthew, 25th chapter. This information was most appropriate to the apostles at this very time, for their expectation had run in a different direction—they had been expecting the exaltation of the Lord as the Messiah, and that Jerusalem would be the seat of his empire. They had asked, When shall these things be? and, What shall be the sign of thy presence? and Jesus in his great prophecy of Matthew 24, had explained these matters, indicating to them that his second coming would be in strenuous times, when, if it were possible, the very elect would be deceived—in which, as it was in the days of Noah, so it would then be in the days of the Son of Man, that the multitude of the world would be eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, and be unaware of the storm impending and the consummation of the age preparatory to the beginning of the new age, of his kingdom.

To impress the matter upon their minds, he gave the parable of the ten virgins—five wise and five foolish. The scene of the parable is laid near to the close of the Gospel age, as is indicated by its opening statement, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom." The parable has not been applicable all the way down through the Gospel age, but to our understanding is applicable now, because we are living in the end of the age, at the time when the Bridegroom will be present—at the time when the wise virgins will go in to the wedding and the foolish will be excluded. The understanding of this parable at the present time, therefore, should be meat in due season to all who are the Lord's true followers.

Throughout the Scriptures the church is represented as a bride in preparation for her marriage. The Bridegroom uniformly is the Lord Jesus, to whom belongs the entire inheritance, and the opportunity granted to the Lord's followers in

the present time is that of becoming his bride and joint-heirs. They have no status or relationship to the King eternal except as they obtain it by union with the King's Son. The type of this in the Old Testament is a very beautiful one: Abraham typified the Heavenly Father, very rich; Isaac typified our Lord Jesus, the seed of promise, the heir of all; Abraham's servant, sent to call a wife for Isaac, beautifully typified the holy Spirit, which, during this Gospel age, has been selecting the church, of which the Apostle says, I have espoused you as a chaste virgin unto one husband, which is Christ.—2 Cor. 11:2.

Throughout the Gospel age this church, under the guidance and protection of the holy Spirit has been approaching the Father's house of many mansions, the heavenly kingdom, the glorious conditions promised in joint-heirship with the Bridegroom. If we rightly understand the matter we are now at the end of the journey, and the bride class, typified by Rebecca, is putting on the veil and alighting from the camel and being received by the heavenly Bridegroom. As the entire matter has occupied a long period of nearly nineteen centuries, so the coming features are occupying several years for their accomplishment. Soon the Bride will be with the Bridegroom and in the Sarah tent—joint heirs with him in the Abrahamic Covenant. It is in harmony with this that the Apostle assures us that "if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:29.

Several of the Lord's parables related to this marriage of the King's Son, and his last message to the church tells us of how ultimately the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall shine forth resplendent in the kingdom, and she is symbolized by the New Jerusalem. The announcement is there made, too, of the marriage supper of the Lamb after the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7-9.) John the Baptist as a prophet referred to this relationship between Christ and the church, saying, "He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom when he heareth his voice rejoiceth greatly. This my joy is fulfilled." John

realized that he was neither a member of the bride class nor was he the Bridegroom. He recognized Jesus as the Bridegroom, and was glad to be honored of God as the servant of the Bridegroom and bride to give the introduction. The high position John will occupy in the future, as one of the faithful prophets of whom our Lord said there was none greater, is assured; but we have the Lord's assurance that the least one, the humblest one in the bride class of this Gospel age, the least one in this kingdom class, will be greater than John the Baptist, because these are to be joint-heirs in the kingdom, partakers of the glory, honor, immortality, while John and the faithful of the past will be upon the earth plane as representatives and princes of the kingdom amongst men.—Matt. 11:11; Heb. 11:39, 40; Psa. 45:16.

TWO CLASSES OF VIRGINS

Having the parable then located before our minds as belonging somewhere about the present time, we note the fact that it refers only to virgins—pure ones. The parable does not refer to the world at all, nor even to nominal church people. Both of its classes represent Christians, the kingdom of heaven class, believers, consecrated believers, believers who have heard the Gospel of the kingdom, who are expecting the King at his second advent and who have lamps, and who get from their lamps light, information and instruction. These two classes of pure ones, separate from the world, informed respecting the Bridegroom's coming and kingdom and waiting for them, represent the two classes of the consecrated—the "little flock" and the "great company," the "more than conquerors" and the conquerors "through great tribulation." (Rom. 8:37; Rev. 7:14.) These are the same two classes that are represented in the Tabernacle type by the two goats, one of which became the Lord's goat for sacrifice and the other the scape-goat, only that in the Tabernacle type the goats represented the two classes all the way down through the Gospel age as well as particularly at its close, while the two classes in the parable under consideration represent the church only in the present time in the end of this age.

Evidently the Lord's object in giving the parable was twofold: first, to give a salutary lesson to the apostles and the entire church of this Gospel age on the necessity for alertness, watching and praying, anticipating and preparing for the coming King and his kingdom that they might be constantly ready for a share therein. Second, the parable was specially intended for us living in this time, to let us see that it would not be sufficient to be hoping and praying for the kingdom and in a general way expecting the Bridegroom, but that we must be so alert and so full of enthusiasm for the event that it would lead us to make the wisest possible preparation for it, that we might not be disappointed at the final moment.

SECOND ADVENTISTS IN THE PARABLE

True to the picture of the parable, a movement took place amongst the Lord's people of all denominations in the last century, which culminated in what was known as the Second Advent movement. The virgins, the pure ones amongst Christians all over the world, were aroused with the thought that the coming of the Bridegroom was near, and a general lamp trimming, a general investigation of the Bible especially on that subject resulted. True to the parable, the expectation of those dear people was disappointed—"the Bridegroom tarried," and while he tarried "they all slumbered and slept." The lamps were measurably neglected and a general stupor fell upon this class. Indeed we may properly enough agree that many of the virgins not only slept but dreamed most peculiar, fantastic and unreasonable things. But by and by came the midnight announcement, "Behold the Bridegroom!"

This cry has been going forth ever since A. D. 1874, and in response to it all of the virgin class everywhere are awakening and a fresh examination of the divine Word is in progress, the lamps are being trimmed. Amongst those who hear the announcement are some who insist that it is a false cry: they have become so drowsy, so overcharged with the cares of this life, so comfortably nestled, that although they love the Bridegroom and desire above all things to be ready to receive him, they are unprepared, refuse to investigate, and merely murmur to themselves, "Yes, we love the Bridegroom, we will surely be ready to receive him, we have long been waiting for him, but not yet, not yet. Soul, take thine ease; no one knows anything about the matter; those who are announcing the Bridegroom are surely in error."

As days and weeks and years roll by more and more of the virgins awaken, and as they do so the investigation begins, the trimming of the lamps. Then it is discovered that some, who thought they were ready to enter into the joys of their Lord, find that they are deficient in the all-important oil, which represents the holy Spirit, and from which alone comes their enlightenment. The delay of the Bridegroom thus serves as a test to

the virgins invited to go in with him to the marriage—the delay serves to prove who are the wise and who are the foolish. A certain amount of oil, a certain amount of consecration, a certain amount of the holy Spirit, was necessary to be counted in with the virgins at any stage; but a larger measure is necessary now in the time of the actual presence of the Bridegroom, in the time of actual joining in the procession—more truth, more light, are now due, and must be possessed by those who would go in to the wedding.

The virgins merely represent the Lord's people in general at this time, so that many are now amongst them who had nothing to do with the Adventist movement of 1844. However, the general spirit must be the same, love for the Bridegroom, expectancy of his presence in the kingdom and a desire above all things to be prepared to enter in with him before the door is shut. The question now then is, Who has a sufficiency of oil, of light, of the holy Spirit, from which this illumination proceeds, to be able to stand in the procession of the virgins who will enter in with the Bridegroom before the door closes? It is an important question, and one which appeals to every one who has his lamp burning. How necessary that we see to it that we have a good supply of the Spirit of the Lord—the spirit of meekness, patience, gentleness, long suffering, brotherly kindness, love. We may be sure that unless we have a good supply of these our lamps will go out.

"GIVE US OF YOUR OIL"

To illustrate this holy Spirit, this spirit of consecration which all of the wise virgins must have in full measure in order to maintain their light and their place in the Bridegroom's favor and to gain an entrance to the marriage, the Lord in the parable represents the foolish virgins as asking the wise for some of their oil, and then shows the impossibility of its being thus obtained from one another. The fruits and graces of the holy Spirit cannot be had for the asking; they must be bought in the market of experience—they are of gradual growth and cost painstaking care of words and thoughts and doings. It is because these fruits of the Spirit are so difficult of attainment and cost such a price of self-sacrifice and sacrifice of worldly interests that they are valuable in the Lord's sight.

None can get too much of this holy Spirit, none can secure an over supply for his own use so that he could supply others from his abundance. The Bridegroom has made in advance abundant provision by which all those who are invited to go in with him to the marriage may be properly equipped, not only with robes and lamps, but also with the oil; and if any are careless in the procurement of the oil, they thus indicate their unfitness to be of the class who are to enter with the Bridegroom before the door is shut. This is the essence of the Lord's instruction by this parable—that those who hope to enter into the kingdom and share its glories with him must expect to make preparation in advance. If they wait until the moment for the door to close, however willing they may be, however anxious, they will not be prepared—the preparation requires time, patience, care.

We meet continually those who give evidence of being true Christians, "virgins," pure of heart, of intention, who are considerably interested in the heavenly Bridegroom, in the gathering for the marriage supper, but who have little light upon these interesting subjects. They sometimes say to us, "Give us of your light, tell us how you know these things, why you feel so sure about them while others are asleep. We are awake enough, but our lamps give no light." We answer that it is impossible to give them faith in these things by proxy; that there is only one way to obtain the light, and that is through a patient, persevering study of the divine Word under the guidance of the holy Spirit. We inform them that patient perseverance in well doing, in Scriptural study, in cultivating the fruits and graces of the Spirit, is necessary in order to have this oil and its light. They express regret, for they are so overcharged with the cares of this life or the deceitfulness of riches, or family pride, or what not, that they have not the time to give to their spiritual development and the study of the Word. We are sorry and disappointed at such; we would that they could enjoy with us the blessings of a good supply of oil and the clear light of our lamps as they are now shining. We can do no more than tell them how and where the oil, the light, must be obtained. We must go on in our personal preparation and in our hastening to hold up our lights in our salutation of the Bridegroom, and expressions of joy in connection with his presence and the anticipated entrance with him to the marriage.

"AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT"

To our understanding the wise virgins have been entering into the marriage since the autumn of 1878, A. D., and are still entering in—passing beyond the veil, changed in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. 15:52.) Soon

the entire first resurrection will be complete, the last member being changed. Then and there the door will be shut and no more will be permitted to enter. Thank God that this does not signify so dreadful a condition as some of the Lord's dear people think. It does not mean the close of the door of hope, and that all outside, the foolish virgins as well as the world, will go down to hopeless despair in the second death. It does mean, however, the close of the great and grand opportunity which will never open again—it signifies the completion of the kingdom class, the bride class, the close of the narrow way to glory, honor, immortality and joint-heirship with Christ.

The foolish virgins go and buy the precious oil and get their lamps trimmed and burning, but too late for the marriage, too late to be of those who will be the bride, the Lamb's wife. And thus in the parable it is represented that when they knock the Bridegroom will say, "I do not recognize you as being members of the bride class; you must not come in." Instead of entering into the joys of the Lord with the others they will be permitted for a time at least to have their portion in the great time of trouble which will then prevail throughout the world; weeping and gnashing of teeth, sorrow, disappointment, chagrin, will be the portion not only of the foolish virgins but of all the families of the earth in that time. We are glad to know that that great day of trouble will prepare the world of mankind for the glorious conditions of the Millennial kingdom, which will then shortly be ushered in. The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in its beams, and many people shall go and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord's house; he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths. For the law shall go forth from Mount Zion [the glorified kingdom, the heavenly kingdom], and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem [from the earthly representatives of the heavenly kingdom]."—Mal. 4:2; Isa. 2:3.

How inconsistent the thought that the folly of these virgins should not only exclude them from the kingdom blessings, but that even after they get the oil of the holy Spirit later on they should be consigned to an eternity of torture or loss! How unreasonable! how inconsistent! On the contrary, how much in harmony with the general divine character and program is this parable as we have here pictured its fulfillment. We can sympathize with the foolish virgins while we cannot commend them, but must reprove them. We can look forward to the time when they, as the great company of Revelation 7, shall wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and be ushered into the presence of the Lord and the bride and become, as represented in Psalm 45, the virgins, the bride's companions and co-laborers in the kingdom work—servants before the throne, where they might have been, by proper love and zeal and knowledge in the present time, members of the bride class, in the throne.

"NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR"

Our Lord concludes the parable with the words, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." The revised version omits from verse 13 the words, "wherein the Son of man cometh," because these are not found in any of

the old Greek MSS. The thought, however, is practically the same—Watch, because ye know neither the day nor the hour in which this parable will be fulfilled. The watching, no doubt, has been beneficial to the Lord's people all through the Gospel age, and is still more profitable to the wise virgin class of the present day, because it explains to these their circumstances, conditions, etc. All of the wise virgin class should be in the attitude commanded in this parable; they should have a knowledge of the fact that the Bridegroom is coming; they should have lamps and a full supply of oil. Those living in this ready condition will be neither alarmed nor surprised at the message when they hear it as it is now going forth, "Behold the Bridegroom is present." We are living in the *parousia* (presence) of the Son of Man—the wise virgins are already falling into line in the procession and entering in to the marriage; the full number will soon be found and the door will be shut. All in this watching attitude of heart, with the full measure of the Spirit of the Lord in their hearts will be very quickly attracted by the first intimation that the Bridegroom is present. These, trimming their lamps, examining the Scriptures, will quickly discern the truthfulness of the announcement, and speedily prepare and take their places with the wise virgins. The announcement, the truth upon this subject, is indeed a testing, proving which of the professed virgins of the Lord have the oil in their vessels, the right spirit of humility, patience, love, devotion, interest in the things of the Bridegroom. Such and such only are desired by the Bridegroom or will be permitted to enter.

In view of this it is evident that our work in the present time is not only to proclaim the Bridegroom's presence but to assist those who have the oil in their vessels to trim their lamps. If it is not already too late to go to buy the oil it soon will be, and hence our special care should be in respect to those who have the oil of the Lord's Spirit but who are still asleep or drowsy and need to have an announcement of his presence brought kindly, patiently, perseveringly to their attention.

It is not the supposition of the parable that when the time comes that the Bridegroom's presence is announced the virgins will not know of it. How could they trim their lamps and go out to meet him and go in with him without assurance of his presence? The watching suggested therefore by our Lord refers to the time *prior* to the presence. Those virgins who realize that the Bridegroom has come, those who have trimmed their lamps, those who have joined his procession, are not watching for his *coming*, but know of his *presence*, because that day and hour has come and has not found them unprepared, without sufficient oil.

Let us praise God for the blessings and mercies already ours, and go on faithfully rejoicing in the light of our lamps and in the anticipation of the glorious nuptial feast and the later glorious work, with the Bridegroom, of blessing all the families of the earth. He that hath this knowledge will by it be separated more and more from the world and its spirit, and be gradually more and more transformed from glory to glory in the likeness of the Bridegroom.

BEFORE CHRIST'S JUDGMENT SEAT

Matthew 25:14-30.—OCTOBER 21.

Golden Text: "A faithful man shall abound with blessings."—Prov. 28:20.

The parable of the pounds was uttered on the way to Jerusalem, the parable of the talents about five days later, on the Tuesday preceding our Lord's crucifixion, if Matthew's account is in consecutive order. The two parables, although similar in many respects, are different. One pound was given to each servant by a nobleman going into a far country to be invested with his kingly authority, and the servants each increased his trust in varying degrees. The parable of the talents now before us is different in that one received five talents, another two, another one—corresponding to the varying conditions of the Lord's people, mentally, morally, physically, socially, etc. Since one pound apiece was given it follows that the pounds could not represent talents, opportunities, which are very dissimilar. The pound must therefore represent something that is common to all of the Lord's people.

The holy Spirit is common to all of the Lord's people, but not in the same measure, since each must receive it according to his capacity; therefore the holy Spirit could not be represented by the pound. The Word of God is common to all of the Lord's people, but a natural ability to understand the Word of God is not the same in all the consecrated; hence the pound could not represent the Word of God, the divine revelation. One thing, and only one, we be-

lieve, is common to all of the Lord's people in every sense of the word, and that is justification. Justification is a gift of God through faith in the precious blood, and is common to every one accepted of the Lord. It compensates for his weaknesses and blemishes, whether they be few or many; it therefore in the most absolute sense represents the one important blessing of God bestowed upon his people. Upon the use of that "pound," that blessing, that entrusted gift, depends the Master's reward in the end. The proper use of it is an investment of it in the Lord's service in a full, hearty consecration of time, influence and all to the service of the Lord. Any failure to use our justification will signify a complete loss of everything hoped for in respect to the kingdom blessings and privileges of this Gospel age. By *justification* our powers, however humble, are made acceptable to the Lord as though we were perfect. And every service we are able to render has its merit or value in our justification. We are not forgetting that we previously (Dec. 1, 1900) applied these pounds as signifying the holy Spirit, etc., common to all of God's people. We still hold to that application with the *limitation* that the holy Spirit is reckoned to us only on the basis of our *justification*. Thus it is through our *justification* that we are *complete* in him who is the Head of the new creation and partakers of his holiness of spirit.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Our lesson today deals especially with the talents, which undoubtedly represent the opportunities and privileges of those consecrated servants of the Lord who throughout this Gospel age are accepted as followers of Jesus and laborers in the vineyard. It should be noticed that in no way the parable relates to the world, but merely to the church. While the world has certain talents, privileges, opportunities, these are not at the disposal of the household, because the world by wisdom knows not God, is blind to his gracious offer that they may become his servants, co-laborers together with his Son. True, the world should recognize that it is bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, and that it would be a reasonable service to lay down time, talent, energy, influence in the service of the Redeemer. But the world is blind and cannot realize the situation at present. Its opportunity will come by and by, when the darkness shall have rolled away and the Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth to fully illuminate the situation and cause the knowledge of the Lord to fill the earth.

There are various valuable lessons taught by this parable, and one of these is respecting the character of the church's judgment. It is admitted that those who have become the Lord's bond-servants are possessors of various talents, powers, privileges and opportunities, some more and some less, and it is admitted that these were entrusted to them as the Lord's, and they were made the Lord's stewards after that they had recognized him and accepted him as their Master and consecrated themselves to his service. It should be clearly seen then just where the responsibility begins which will terminate when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

True, whatsoever a man sows he will reap. Every noble desire or effort will bring reward, every wrong course a measure of punishment in the present life, even before we come into the attitude of the Lord's consecrated ones—"bond-servants." This is true not only of the consecrated but of the whole world, but the parable does not take in the world nor the affairs of the church up to the time they became the Lord's servants. It merely deals with them subsequently—as the servants. It shows that in the day of reckoning the Lord will ignore the affairs of our lives which preceded our consecration, and will merely deal with, reckon with, judge us, according to our use or misuse of our consecrated time, influence, talents, etc.

To realize these things clearly and distinctly should mean to every one of us renewed zeal and energy, and carefulness that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, and so far as possible all of life's conduct, might testify to our faithfulness in the use of talents and opportunities entrusted to us, and might bring us the Master's approval when our trial time shall come. As the Apostle declares, "judgment [trial, testing] must begin at the house of God [the church]." (1 Pet. 4:17.) This, the parable before us shows, will be in the end of this Gospel age. This trial of the church at its conclusion will demonstrate who are the Lord's elect, who shall be associated with Jesus in the great work of the future age, the Millennial age, namely, the judging of the world—the giving of the world a trial or test to demonstrate whether or not under favorable conditions and with clear knowledge they would be obedient to the Lord or disobedient—that the obedient might be blessed with everlasting life in perfection and the wilfully disobedient be utterly destroyed from amongst the people.—Acts 3:23.

OUR VARYING TALENTS

We sometimes hear the claim that all men are born free and equal, but there could be no greater mistake than this. Men are indeed born free so far as liberty of thought, will or intention are concerned, the only limitation being their knowledge or lack of it. But they are not born physically free, mentally free nor morally free. There is an incumbrance, a mortgage of sin and death, upon the whole human family which has descended from father Adam. This mortgage is called the curse. Some bear a larger share of it than others by heredity, environment. The original image and likeness of God has thus been marred, measurably effaced. If we assume that Adam as a perfect man had ten talents, it would be quite appropriate to say that not one of his posterity today, after six thousand years of falling, had more than five talents, and the majority much less, two talents and one talent. It is safe to estimate the mass of mankind as one-talented by nature. These talents which we possess by nature were transferred and became the Lord's when we accepted him, gave him our hearts, consecrated our all to his service.

A "talent" represented 3,000 shekels of silver, and the shekels in turn were the great and the small, representing in value in our money one thousand dollars or two thousand

dollars. In the parable the servants are represented as trading with these, that is, working with them, using them. They were left free to exercise their best abilities with merely the general regulation that these were for use, and that their faithfulness would be represented in the results they would secure from using them. So it is with the Lord's consecrated people; we are not specially hampered by directions as to how we shall use our consecrated talents, powers, privileges, opportunities. The Lord has a great work for the future, and is less interested in what results we shall obtain from the use of our present talents than in the demonstration of our loyalty and zeal. The parable admits that our talents at present are inferior, not great in the sight of our Master, and that he seeks to see our diligence, our faithfulness to him and his cause.

TWO VIEWS, BOTH TRUE

We may view these talents and their use from two different standpoints, and both will be true. (1) Our natural talents may be considered, first, as representing wealth, influence, intellectual power, education and public utterance. The person possessed of all of these we might consider to be very richly endowed indeed, a five-talented person; very few are in this class. They possess grand opportunities and proportionately great responsibilities. With the proper zeal in the use of these talents such individuals would be a power for good in the body of Christ, the church. The two talented man might have intellectual power and the gift of public utterance, but be without education, wealth, influence, and correspondingly his ability would be less. Or he might have wealth and influence and lack the other qualities, or possess mental power and education and lack the talent of public utterance, influence and wealth. The one-talented man might have wealth or education or influence, but lacking the other qualities would be more or less handicapped. With the majority of people, however, these matters might be considered slightly different: as, for instance, the one talent might be understood to represent a small degree of wealth, influence, education, mental caliber and public ability; the two-talented man might represent twice as much; the five-talented man five times as much. Viewed from this standpoint the use of our talents in the Lord's service should be increasing daily, and each one of his servants should be able to honor him more and serve his cause better in every sense of the word each day, each year.

(2) These talents may be viewed from the standpoint of our spiritual qualities, meekness, gentleness, patience, brotherly kindness, love. All of the Lord's people come short in these graces of the Spirit because of our fallen inheritance; because we are born in sin, shapen in iniquity; because selfishness in all of its concomitant parts, arrogance, rudeness, unkindness, impatience, have in large measure obliterated the opposite qualities, which are the likeness of God. Hence some that are naturally much impaired and very selfish, in whom the various fruits of the Spirit are naturally much dwarfed, might be considered as those possessing only the one talent of spiritual power and Godlikeness; others, possessing more, would correspond to the man of two talents, and others possessing this quality still more would be five-talented. From this view of the talents, the object of each of the Lord's servants should be to increase these fruits and graces of the Spirit in his own heart and life, and thus, by gaining the victory over selfishness and sin, to be more and more a copy of God's dear Son, and more and more prepared for coöperation with the King in the kingdom for the blessing and instruction of the world.

(3) The Lord has so arranged the matter that our talents, viewed from the two standpoints foregoing, in large measure combine. The person possessing the largest number of talents, abilities, opportunities, should be the person best qualified to rule his own spirit and to bring its every power into submission to the will of God, and to cultivate to the highest degree the fruits and graces of the Spirit. The Lord will doubtless measure us according to both of these standpoints, but we may be sure that eventually the chiefest of all gifts and blessings and talents in the Lord's sight is love—"Love is the principal thing." It will be only in proportion as love of God and for our fellow men shall have guided the use of our talents, whatever they may be, that they will be acceptable in the Lord's sight at all.

RECKONING WITH THE SERVANTS

In this parable the Lord clearly taught his disciples not to expect the end of the Gospel age very soon, for the statement is, "After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." It was doubtless best every way that the exact time for the ending of the Gospel age and the beginning of the Millennial age should not be made known until now that we are in this reckoning time. In the verse just pre-

ceding this lesson our Lord had cautioned his disciples to be faithful and to remember that they would not know the exact time of his return. But surely all of the servants will know of the Master's return at the time mentioned in this parable, after he has arrived and has begun to reckon with them. To our understanding this period of time was reached in A. D. 1878, and all of these servants of the Gospel age have been rendering their accounts since. First were the apostles and they who fell asleep in Christ throughout the Gospel age, because it is written that we which are alive and remain should not hinder, prevent, or take precedence of them that had fallen asleep. From our standpoint, then, the apostles and others of the church have already passed the inspection that is here described, or rather the judgment of the church is in progress and the decisions and rewards will not be given until the last members shall have passed beyond the veil to render their accounts; and this we understand will be accomplished some time before October, 1914—quite possibly sooner.

We are not to understand from the parable that all who have five talents will use them wisely, effectively, and hear the "Well done," nor that this will be the case with all who have two talents, nor that the greater number who possess but the one talent will all fail to use it. On the contrary, the parable is so arranged as to emphasize the responsibility of even those of the Lord's servants who have the smallest natural ability, whose consecrated powers are the most insignificant. If the one-talented man misusing his was disapproved, it goes without saying that the two-talented or five-talented would be even more reprehensible in the sight of their Lord. It goes without saying also that if the five-talented man succeeded and received a blessing and commendation and reward, the one-talented man succeeding would receive an equal blessing of approval and a proportionate share of the good things provided by the Master for the faithful.

FAITHFULNESS DOUBLY REWARDED

The parable shows the Master beginning with the more influential and rewarding faithfulness (1) with a share in his favor, the "joys of the Lord," and (2) with a rulership or control of larger blessings and opportunities and talents. This statement briefly outlines what is elsewhere more elaborately set forth, namely, that the chief blessing upon the church will be the manifesting to them of divine favor and love as represented in the glory, honor and immortality with which they would be clothed upon when received into the divine presence as participators in the first resurrection. If this were all the blessing how rich it would be! How wonderful the thought that for faithfulness for a few short years in so reasonable a service—the service of him who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood—we should be counted worthy of such great dignity, honor and blessing everlastingly! The second or additional blessing is the honor of the kingdom, the dominion, the privilege and opportunity of being participators with our Lord Jesus in the glorious work of uplifting the world of mankind out of present sin-and-death conditions. How forceful is the statement, "Faithful over a few things, ruler over many things." How abundantly the Lord does reward all of our little efforts in the service of truth and righteousness—in his service—whatever our talents, few or many.

HID TALENT IN THE EARTH

The one-talent man of the parable is represented as being strictly honest; he had not wasted the talent, he had not used it in ministering to the flesh, in riotous living of any kind. He had kept it safe, and seemed to feel that his Lord would commend him and say, While you have not brought me any return I appreciate the fact that you exercised great care with the talent entrusted to you, and hid it and kept it safely, and that now you are able to return it. But not so. The Master was angry with him and said, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." The point of this reproof lies in the fact that these servants represented only the consecrated and not the world—in the fact that every consecrated child of God in his consecration vow has agreed to spend and to be spent in the Master's service, whatever his talents, whatever his power.

This man was admitted to the Lord's family, made partaker of the holy Spirit and granted a relationship in the body of Christ only because of this consecration to do and to serve, to use, to spend, to be spent. Hence conduct that would not be reprehensible on the part of the world is a violation of his covenant on the part of this servant. Correspondingly a punishment is meted out to him—his talent, his opportunity, his privilege, whatever it was, shall be utterly taken from him, and he shall be permitted to go into the time of trouble with which this age will end—"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"—there will be sorrow, disappointment, chagrin, in every sense of the word. The parable does not carry the matter further to show us the result of this time of trouble

upon this class of servants, unfaithful to their vows of consecration, but other Scriptures show us that this is a numerous class, "a great company," who in the time of trouble will be awakened from their dreamy stupor to realize that they have been seriously at fault, and to earnestly, tearfully, painfully, repent and obtain divine forgiveness and ultimately "come up out of great tribulation, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7.) They will be before the throne, whereas the faithful servants will be in the throne; they will have palm branches because ultimately victorious, but those in the throne, the more faithful, will wear the crowns.

It will be noticed that there are two grades of faithfulness: the servant who hid his Lord's talent in the earth was faithful in that he did not waste or squander it riotously, sinfully, viciously. He did not repudiate his Master either, for he still acknowledged himself as his servant and the talent as not his own. The higher faithfulness that in the parable was rewarded went beyond this and represented earnest, self-sacrificing zeal in the Master's cause. These in the parable are the same that are represented by the Lord through the Prophet, saying, "Gather together my saints unto me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Psa. 50:5.) "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I come to make up my jewels." (Mal. 3:17.) This jewel class must all be sacrificers. This is their covenant with the Lord—that they will sacrifice, that they will use their talents, opportunities, privileges, favors, zealously in his service, in the service of his household, in the service of his cause, to the honor of his name.

After entering into this covenant with him any other course of conduct would be properly, as in the parable, designated wicked and slothful. From this viewpoint it is to be feared that the class represented by this unfaithful servant is a large one, a great company. While still our term for rendering our accounts is future, while still the opportunity for using our time and influence and all in the Lord's service is with us, how it behooves every one who has made the covenant by sacrifice to be vigilant, energetic, that he may ultimately hear the Master's precious words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord. Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

A father illustrated this principle to his child at the seashore by laying a silver dollar upon the beach within reach of the incoming waves. Soon the sands were covering it and it was out of sight: then before he allowed the child to dig it up he said, "Everything valuable that we allow to lie unused is soon buried by the tide of life as this dollar has been by the tide of the ocean." This is a good illustration: It is not necessary that we dig into the earth to bury the talent; if we simply allow it to lie unused it will soon be out of sight.

RECEIVE THINE OWN WITH INTEREST

The words interest and usury once had the same meaning, but in our day this has changed, and interest is that payment for the use of money which is deemed just and reasonable, while usury signifies an unjust and extortionate charge of interest, the result of taking advantage of some one's trouble or necessity. Usury, therefore, in our present use of the term, implies extortion, and is everywhere reprehensible. The Lord's people are everywhere warned that they shall not be extortioners or unjust. The loaning of money upon a reasonable rate of interest may at times be of advantage both to borrower and lender. Nevertheless the Lord's injunction to his people is along the lines of lending rather than borrowing—especially in opposition to borrowing where no security of value is given.

The Lord uses this illustration of interest, increase, usufruct, to represent the increase which would under his providential guidance naturally and reasonably result from our proper exercise of the talents consecrated to his service. We may be sure that his arrangements are wise, and that whoever is not slothful in business but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, will find his talents increasing to his own pleasure and profit and to the Master's honor.

ONE TALENT FAITHFULLY USED

When we remember that the large majority of the Lord's people are of necessity one-talented, we feel especial interest in a little verse by John L. Shorey, which illustrates a faithful one-talented person. We quote it as follows:—

"He couldn't sing and he couldn't play,
He couldn't speak, and he couldn't pray,
He'd try to read, but break right down,
Then sadly grieve at smile or frown.
While some with talents five began,
He started out with only one.
'With this,' he said, 'I'll do my best,