

THE SOCIAL PARASITES

REPRESENT HEARERS NOT DOERS IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

PREACHER'S AROUSING CALL

"Getting Right With God" the Hardest of Accomplishment But the Better Plan of Salvation—All Men Broadly Divided Into Two Classes, the Workers and the Idlers—Choose Now Which Path You Will Tread.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1904, by William Bailey, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Nov. 13.—To that class of nominal Christians who are hearers, but not doers, and who pin their faith upon their religious ancestry or their favorable environment, instead of "getting right with God" personally, this sermon will come as an arousing call. The text is Matthew xxv., 8, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out."

All men may be broadly divided into two classes. There are some on the border line, belonging not altogether to the one class or the other, having characteristics of each, but the great mass may be separated into two groups—the workers and the idlers. The one class includes the toilers, the pullers, the diggers, the grinders, the climbers. They are striving to succeed in a noble, honest way. They do not mean to be social parasites. They want a share of the good things of life, but they do not expect to receive them as a gift, but to pay for them by honest work. They hope for promotion, and they strive to merit it by seeking to make themselves worthy of it. They study and toil to develop themselves, so that when the opportunity comes they will be ready to take advantage of it. Though they may be in obscure positions they do their work well, and when the call comes to go higher they are prepared by long years of hard work to perform the duties of the higher position.

The second class is comprised of men who want to win success by a minimum of labor. They hate drudgery, they hope to succeed by some lucky scheme. These are the men who, going on a foreign tour, expect to learn French or German in five weeks; they hope to marry a rich wife and have an easy time living on the savings of their wife's father; they prepare to conduct the business of their fathers, not by beginning as he did at the lowest rung of the ladder, but by taking a six months' course in a business college or by becoming their father's nominal private secretaries. During their easy apprenticeship they would spend three days out of every week playing golf and at least five nights out of every seven in a ballroom, at theatre party or in clubhouse dissipation. The little time they play at business is when they are not working at play. These people represent failure. For as an old writer once said, "People who never do any more work than they are paid for, never get paid for any more than they do." These people always want to succeed with a minimum of work.

Drones there are in the busy beehives of temporal life. Drones there are in the busy beehives of spiritual life. We know them well. They have existed in every age. Men who hope to enter heaven, but are not willing to deny themselves, nor to resist temptation, nor to strive to enter through the straight gate. It was to warn people of the futility of such lives that Christ spoke the parable of the ten virgins. Five of them, he said, were foolish, self-indulgent and heedless of the obligations of the spiritual life. He is not here denouncing criminals or vicious people. These virgins were nominally Christians, not the murderers and robbers who infested the lonely roads of Palestine, ready to waylay the traveler; not the openly immoral, like the Magdalene or the woman of Samaria, but the people who, as an old commentator has said, make a "profession of the gospel and act in such a manner as to give real Christians a favorable impression of them and so gain admittance into their midst. He is alluding to Christians in name

only, who outwardly appear all right and yet have not the true inward consecration of heart and who expect therefore to go to heaven upon borrowed spiritual capital.

These spiritual mendicants of my text are, in the first place, the men and women indifferent to the commandments of Jesus Christ, who expect to ultimately reach heaven on account of the consecration of Christian ancestry. They are not bad men as the world looks upon bad men. They have been reared in Christian nurseries and Christian Sunday schools. During their boyhood days they have knelt at Christian altars and sat in Christian pews. But as far as their own lives have been concerned they have never openly confessed Jesus Christ as their Saviour. They have never done anything to show their devotion to God as consecrated disciples of Christ. And yet if you should ask these men to-day if they expected to reach heaven they would instantly answer: "Of course, of course, of course! The home of my youth was a Christian home. I am a child of the covenant. My father was a good Christian man. My mother prayed over me from the time I was born until she died. Why should I not go where they are?"

Oh, yes, my friend, you would certainly go to heaven upon the borrowed capital of your father's and mother's lifelong consecration if they had any power to take you there. But the difficulty is that your father's and mother's spiritual power is limited. From the time you were born your parents lived entirely for you and your brothers and sisters. Every pleasure and every indulgence they had they shared with you. If they were ever given or ever bought a box of candy they never ate it alone. They always brought it home and divided it with their children. But there is one blessing your mother and father have that they cannot divide with their children. They cannot divide with you their oil of spiritual life. They could lead you to the rock of Calvary, where, in the blood of Jesus, you might see how your sins might be cleansed, but you must yourself seek an interest in his atoning merit. They could tell you of the Holy Spirit, whose illumination could scatter your spiritual darkness, but the oil of his divine influence you must implore for yourself. They could compel you as a child to go and sit in the church pew, but they could not compel you to receive Christ as your Saviour. That is a matter simply between you and Jesus. They could introduce Christ to you as their very best friend, but they could not force you to make their friend Jesus your friend. They could tell you of part of your life unless you yourself open to him the holy of holies of your heart to let him in. Neither will Christ receive you as one of his own unless you truly come to him with the countersign of the cross.

And yet many people expect ultimately to reach heaven on account of the borrowed spiritual oil of a consecrated Christian ancestry. "Oh," said a minister's daughter to me some time ago, "I know I am not living as I ought, but I am all right. I have no fear about the future. I have made my husband promise to bury me at the foot of my father's grave. When the archangel's trumpet sounds and we all come up I am going to cling to my father's hand. I know Christ will let me in if I am by his side. I know it, because my father was such a good man. I know Christ would not refuse my father anything." She said this half in jest and half in earnest. Many of us have the same hope and say the same things, not half in jest, but in earnest. No, my friends, when the bridegroom cometh on that great day of resurrection your father and mother will have no spiritual oil to spare. Then we cannot follow the divine bridegroom with our parents' spiritual light. We must have our own lighted oil to become part of the wedding procession of the redeemed or forever stay out of Christ's banquet hall, enveloped by the impenetrable and crushing darkness of the eternal night.

These five foolish virgins represent another class. They represent the nominal church members. They represent the men and women who look upon church membership as a kind of fetish. Some people who are nominal church members seem to think that they can lie and steal and cheat and commit all the forbidden sins of the decalogue if they are only church

members in good standing. They seem to think that the crucial essential of Christianity is a perfection of creed for the head and not absolute consecration for the heart. They seem to think that they can walk hand in hand with sin and continue to so walk if they can only repeat this sentence as they go: "I believe in Jesus. I believe in Jesus. Yes, I believe in Jesus." Now, Christ, by the parable of my text, says that a mere mental faith in him, unaccompanied by a surrender of the heart and life, is not faith at all. The faith that saves is a faith that transforms the life, a faith that takes complete control of a man. The nominal church members must have consecration of heart and pure life as well as a perfect gospel creed. I believe that Christ's fuller teachings affirm that he is more willing to forgive the sins of an out and out enemy who once blasphemed him, but repents of his sin, than he is to forgive a Judas, who never denied him publicly, but who in private life betrays him with a kiss.

How about Peter? Did not Christ gladly forgive him his three denials when Peter repented after the cock crowed? The most powerful pulpit description of any Bible scene I ever read or heard was that delivered by Joseph Parker of "Peter's Three Denials." In the first place, the great preacher described the scene of Judas, hypocritical Judas, stealthily approaching Christ and planting a betraying kiss upon the Saviour's cheek. Then came the tramp of the Roman soldiers. Then the lines were formed as the prisoner is being marched back to the capital. In olden times, as now, when a man is arrested the crowds of curiosity seekers were augmented step by step. Peter, when he saw the multitude, became very much frightened. Instead of walking side by side with Christ, as he ought to have done, he followed afar off. When they approached the home of Caiaphas, the high priest, Peter came into the house and sat down by a fire and began to warm himself as though he had never been with Christ or seen Christ in his life. While he sat there by the fire a young Jewish maiden came up and eyed him sharply. Then she tapped him upon the shoulder and said: "Are you not a friend of Jesus? Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." But Peter merely shrugged his shoulders and answered: "I know not what thou sayest." Peter then gets up and leaves the room and goes out upon the porch. When he has gone out another Jewish maiden touches him upon the shoulder and says, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Then old Joseph Parker shook his lionine head and let out a growl as he said, "I do not know the man." For the Bible says, "He denied him with an oath." When the people began to crowd about him Peter still more vehemently began to protest his ignorance with oaths and curses. He denied Christ. He denied him once, twice, thrice. He denied him in the meanest, the most contemptible and cowardly way. Yet when Peter repented of his sin Christ forgave him and restored him to his apostleship. Christ is magnanimous. He will save the worst sinner if he comes to him in sincere penitence, grieving for his sins and entreating pardon. But for the man who confesses him with his lips, but denies him by his life he has no word but, "Woe, woe unto you hypocrites!"

Not unto every one that calleth, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," shall the banquet hall of Christ be opened. Not unto the nominal church members shall the invitation be given to come and sup with the divine bridegroom. What became of these five foolish virgins who had no oil in their lamps? All the ten virgins had the same kind of lamps. The creed of man can aptly be symbolized in the lamp which holds the oil. They all believed in the coming of the bridegroom. They all believed in Jesus Christ. But the oil of consecration, the purity and devotion of life were lacking. If belief in Christ would suffice, Judas himself might have been saved. The belief that has no effect on the life is not faith at all and can never bring man into spiritual relation with Christ. Oh, nominal church members, you must have consecration of heart as well as perfection of creed. You must have spiritual oil for your "lamps of faith," else you can never follow the divine bridegroom into the banquet hall of the marriage of the lamb.

The spiritual mendicants of my text represent another class of spiritual beggars. They are the type of men and women who are not loafers, as we call loafers, or mere hangers on. They represent the so-called moral and up-right people who expect to go to heaven on account of the mere temporal good which they have been able to do some of their fellow men. They represent the large class of people who expect to bribe their way into the wedding banquet because they have given to some town a library or endowed some college professorship or builded some hospital or financially helped to support some church or foreign missionary. They do not claim that they have lived for the purpose of honoring Christ and consecrating their lives to his service, but they do say that on account of these things they have been able to do Christ will invite them to join the wedding procession on the night that the bridegroom cometh.

Is this true? Will Christ allow any one to join the wedding procession who comes to him merely with the "lamp of good works" in his hand? Oh, no! For if we are honest with ourselves we know "there is none that doeth good—no, not one." We know that many of the acts for which the world praises us we have done with the most selfish desires and the most corrupt motives. Some of them have been done to win popular applause, some to secure the good opinion of the church and the world. For these we have received our reward, but Christ does not reward them. We know that there is not one of us who would like the

thoughts of our brain and the desires of our heart to be read by the most intimate of our friends as an open book.

I think, however, that the majority of spiritual beggars can be found and always will be found among those who expect some day to consecrate their lives to Jesus Christ, but keep putting off the acceptance week by week and day by day and hour by hour until suddenly the cry is taken up, "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," and they will be called unprepared. I do not believe that all of these foolish virgins deliberately intended to be unprepared for the coming of the bridegroom. They intended to go and get the oil which is the symbol of the spiritual life. But they kept saying to each other, "Oh, we will go to-morrow," or "We will go next week," or "We will go next month. There is plenty of time; do not worry. We will be prepared when Christ comes." And they were called unprepared.

That is the figure of my parable. The duty that was always being postponed was postponed too long. The oil that those foolish virgins should have had was not there when it was needed. While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh!" That means, when the last call for repentance came, it came suddenly. The bridegroom always comes suddenly. Then what happened? Why, the foolish virgins, who in the near future expected to have the spiritual oil prepared, were found without the necessary preparation. Those that were prepared went to the wedding. The door was shut. Those who were not prepared had to stay out. The five foolish virgins became spiritual bankrupts forever. Oh, my friends, are you and I going to make the awful mistake of putting off and putting off and putting off the day necessary for the consecration of our hearts and lives for the coming of the Divine Bridegroom? The coming of the Bridegroom may be expected at any moment. The Bible distinctly says so. When Christ comes as the Bridegroom he will come as unexpectedly as a thief in the night at a place and at an hour when he is least expected. Rev. Dr. Wallace, late American consul to Jerusalem, once told me that nearly all the American Christian residents of the Davidic capital were living there in the belief that when Christ should first appear upon earth he would be seen standing among the Judean hills, and therefore they were waiting to welcome him. But Christ when he comes will appear unto us in America as well as though we were in Europe or Asia or Africa. Therefore, like old Robert McCheyne, I cry: "Prepare! Prepare! Prepare for the coming of the Redeemer, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not!" Will you now prepare for the most momentous cry of the ages: "Behold the bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet him!" Will you be prepared so that at his glorious coming he can greet you and take you into his banquet house and lift over you the banner of love?

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