

The talents

(Matthew 25:14-30)

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then

at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The message of this parable can perhaps be understood better if it is seen as applying not to three individuals but to each individual and his threefold task. In this light it is not concerned with three different men — one having to trade with five talents, another with two, and a third with one — but with every man in his own individual way ("according to his several ability") having to use the five talents, the two talents, and the one talent given to him by Principle. Each one of us has the ability to deal with them in his own special way and therefore needs only to alert himself to the simple but profound requirements symbolized here by Jesus. The fact of the matter is that every single one of us can fulfil them and is bound to do so. The meaning of the parable will be universally fulfilled in this individual way.

A right understanding of what Jesus is teaching gives us all the work and all the joy essential to our manhood. He said, "I do always those things that please Him [Principle]," and this is our necessity too; through accepting all that is implied here by the five, the two, and the one we can attain to measures of demonstration and joy which the Master showed that he had and which are possible for us. The parable sets out the whole standard for man's activity, the whole requirement of Christian Science. The one thing which makes Principle go into "a far country" from us is ignoring its threefold demand through the "five," the "two," and the "one." The demand is at our door. Principle gives us these talents, these valuable abilities, to enable us to come up close to it and live as its expression — in fact, so that Principle is no longer in "a far country" as far as we are concerned. The closeness of Principle is only in the ratio that we activate the talents which Principle has given us. If we fail to use those talents, Principle is in a far country.

The five talents represent the senses of Soul, with which we can

dispute the claims of the five so-called material senses. The two talents stand for the instinctive sense that God is Father and man is son, which enables us to dismiss the belief of duality. The one talent stands for the ability to understand God, instead of giving up all attempt at comprehension.

Every man has been given the five talents of Soul-sense with which to see, hear, feel, taste, and smell spiritually. As Mrs Eddy puts it, "Even though you aver that the material senses are indispensable to man's existence or entity, you must change the human concept of life, and must at length know yourself spiritually and scientifically" (S&H 359:11-14). In proportion as we faithfully use or trade with the senses of Soul to challenge and reject the false claims of the five physical senses, we arrive individually at dominion over their testimony and gain increasing understanding of the purpose and use of Soul-sense. We enter into the joy of Principle's own knowing, for by reflection we become part and parcel of that knowing. It is one thing to know in theory the nothingness of the testimony of the material senses, but it is only by actually trading with or using the senses of Soul that anyone becomes convinced for himself that they are true "in earth, as ... in heaven," and in that way they become "other five."

To take the five talents in turn: we all have the faculty of true seeing, of spiritual discernment. "Jesus beheld in Science the perfect man, who appeared to him where sinning mortal man appears to mortals" (S&H 476:32-2); in other words, his true seeing was so true that it obliterated the seeing of sinning mortal man, but we have to recognize that sinning mortal man would have appeared to Jesus unless there had been the correction supplied by his true seeing through the lens of Science. He traded with true vision to exchange "the objects of sense for the ideas of Soul" (S&H 269:15-16), and the result was that "this correct view of man healed the sick" (S&H 477:3-4). We see people in our mind's eye even when we are not seeing them before our eyes, and so if we want our vision to be always happyfied and satisfied, and never saddened and dismayed, we are wise to call the true character of man into our vision and see him as God's own likeness if mortal reasoning is trying to present a

different picture. When the beloved disciple John saw a new heaven and new earth, his vision did not come through "the material visual organs for seeing" (S&H 572:27), but through the "consciousness which God bestows" (S&H 573:7-8) and in proportion as we let this consciousness be bestowed on us we have the reward of seeing this new heaven and earth right here. To take just one example: Mrs Eddy says, "One marvels that a friend can ever seem less than beautiful" (S&H 248:4-5), and she must be referring to our ability to be ruled by Soul in looking for the true character of that friend, for then we see definitions of its beauty far beyond our ordinary capacity if we measure by human standards of morality and goodness. Divinity takes over from humanity and we have a divine experience. Thus we "enter into the joy" of Principle's seeing of its own idea.

Mrs Eddy points out the path of true hearing in her lines, "I will listen for Thy voice, Lest my footsteps stray" (Mis.398:1-2). By trading with or using our God-given talent to listen for and hear the voice of Truth we avoid the straying footsteps which are a result of not listening for that voice and listening instead to confusing arguments. We need the determination expressed in those lines to be guided by ideas given us through the utilization of spiritual understanding. Jesus was fully aware of the voices of sense-testimony; for instance, we are told that on several occasions he knew the thoughts of his disciples and others, and being aware of them he corrected them with the true voices of reason and spiritual understanding. We need to cultivate the ability to annihilate through spiritual reasoning the many voices of false witness which constantly try to register as real.

When Jesus heard on one occasion a voice (and it became articulate to others) saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and on another occasion, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," it was his clear spiritual understanding of his position in relation to Principle, his absolute conviction of what he was and why he was, which caused those words to be heard. Again, in Mrs Eddy's article "Voices of Spring" (Mis.329:1-332:11) it is evident that those voices are not just sound-impressions, but mental awarenesses made manifest in the many avenues of spring's

expression of itself through what we term nature. But again it is the spiritual awareness which causes us to be cognizant of these voices and without it they would go unnoticed. The Psalmist sang, "Day unto day uttereth speech . . . There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard," which means that we can spiritually hear the presence of God in all His expressions of Himself. Set against this are the so-called voices of error, epitomized in the symbol of the talking serpent. So we constantly need to use this talent of true hearing to produce the harmonies of spiritual conviction and eliminate "the jarring testimony of the material senses" (S&H 306:25-26), or the discords attendant on suggestions based on belief in matter's reality. The reward is so great, for our whole sense of hearing is transformed as we recognize and use its spiritual nature and enter into the joy of what Spirit is always hearing and saying.

Every one of us also has the Soul-sense of true feeling which we should develop, and we can and should trade with this talent to uproot the suggestions of false feeling which come to thought. For instance, the suggestion may present itself, "I feel rotten today" or "I've got that Monday morning feeling" (which is very much an inward impression trying to register with us but has no real existence). To make nothing of such suggestions we have to send out a stream of positive spiritual feeling based on the answer to the question "What is God feeling?" And therefore we should declare with understanding, "I feel certain, I feel well, I feel the presence of good in everything." We need a constant feeling outward towards good in everyone and everything.

Jesus must have felt the weight of the repulsion aroused by the leper in those who accepted what mortal mind claimed to exist, but he immediately countered it with the feeling of compassion and understanding which led him to touch the man. He felt no repulsion in touching the leper, but sent out a feeling of love and compassion based on absolute purity and certainty, and this brought healing. It was his feeling towards the man which led to the human touch which conveyed that feeling. He was not touching him with the thought, "I can touch you because leprosy can't hurt *me*." His was the touch of

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love towards the object of its affection, and as such was the inevitable human expression of what he felt. (See Mark 1:40-42.)

A clear illustration of the use of the talent of feeling is given in the incident of Jesus walking among the crowds and suddenly asking, "Who touched me?" His disciples misinterpreted this by thinking that he was referring to a physical touch, and so Peter exclaimed, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45). Then a woman came forward out of the crowd to confess that she had touched Jesus and had been healed of "an issue of blood," which had lasted for twelve long years and proved incurable at the hands of physicians. Jesus' consciousness was always aware of the presence of good, and that was the only feeling he entertained towards humanity; this alertness caused him to feel the opposite claim brought about by sensualism, the basic error which had plagued the woman. When he turned and asked who had touched him, "he must have felt the influence of the woman's thought; for it is written that he felt that 'virtue had gone out of him.' His pure consciousness [his constant feeling of the presence of good] was discriminating, and rendered this infallible verdict; but he neither held her error by affinity nor by infirmity, for it was detected and dismissed" (Un.57:10-16). He immediately used this true talent of true feeling towards the woman with such strength and depth that all sensualism was dissipated in her consciousness and she knew it.

Everyone has this talent, this ability to feel so continually the presence of God, good that he not only feels the bliss attendant upon this, but is also alert to anything which would oppose this truth through mortal belief. Sometimes the presence of sensualism comes to him as a shock and then it is wise to remember that question, "But why should we stand aghast at nothingness?" (S&H 563:7) and quickly call on himself to use his developed Soul-sense of the all-presence of good, not holding the error "by affinity nor by infirmity," but dismissing it as a lie. This puts him in touch with Principle, and from this position everything that his thoughts rest upon or touch is benefited accordingly.

We all have the instinct also to "taste and see that the Lord is

good," to become increasingly conscious of the true flavour inherent in everything, and this gives us the ability to trade with that talent to get rid of every bad taste, everything that leaves "a bad taste in the mouth," until finally we can no longer taste anything but the good. Our initial sense of this instinct of taste is that it enables us to distinguish what is palatable to us from what is not and to reject the latter. But through the work of rejecting as untrue whatever is unlike God, good, we find that we are learning all the time to taste truly and so eventually we are able to taste only that which is good. The reason for this is that there is no evil. So we go beyond tasting to see whether the flavour of an individuality or an incident strikes our palate pleasantly or otherwise and find that we can taste only the spiritual flavour, the truth, which is good alone.

A "nasty taste" is not a real thing which has to be overcome; it exists only in the imagination of the physical senses or the mentality influenced by those so-called senses. For instance, we may not like the flavour of a man's character as it strikes us, but if we proceed to challenge this and to see why his character cannot be undesirable or repulsive, because there is only one source of character, and we bring ourselves to taste the true flavour of that Soul-created character, we eliminate the so-called ability to taste the lie; we taste only what is good, because that is all there is.

The "governor of the feast" at the wedding at Cana in Galilee was impressed by the taste of the wine which had been produced by Jesus' demonstration, in comparison with the wine which the guests had previously drunk (John 2:9,10). In other words, the flavour of the inspiration generated by the wedding of two good people coming together with the normal expectations of what such unity would bring was outdistanced and surpassed in flavour by the realization which Jesus brought to that wedding feast — that instead of two individuals needing to come together for completeness, they were in fact two individual natures complete in themselves in their expression of all that is covered by the terms "male" and "female" and so were coming together in a higher unity of two individual completenesses co-operating for the purposes of good. What the "governor of the

feast" tasted was the spiritual outflow from the Master's consciousness. He tasted in humanly tangible form the effect of that scientific thinking, just as naturally as a child tastes the effect of mathematical thinking in the sum written on the blackboard and enjoys drinking in the intelligent flow of mathematical thinking. Wine was used as a symbol of celebration and rejoicing and so Jesus' higher realization inevitably produced a wine of the finest taste and bouquet as symbolic of this higher sense of the true purpose of marriage. Everyone present tasted the influence of the Christ consciousness which Jesus brought and which gave "to human life an inspiration by which man's spiritual and eternal existence [might] be discerned" (S&H 65: 4-6). This points to the fact that any one of us can utilize this talent of spiritual taste so that we increasingly relish the spiritual taste of thoughts truly inspirational.

Finally, we all have the Soul-faculty of smelling, or becoming aware of the aroma — the pleasantness, the grace, the attractiveness — of Spirit and spiritual things. When we are in the presence of someone who radiates a pure spirituality, we are conscious of a sweetness and freshness intangible by the physical senses. Smelling is very much to do with our response to our environment, to the mental atmosphere surrounding us. And so if we develop the spiritual sense of smell and we enter an atmosphere offensive to spiritual sense — and sometimes there is a subtle overlay of the artificial scents of materiality, masking the impurity which would otherwise be immediately apparent — we are wise to realize that if we breathe it in as real, it may confuse our thinking, but it cannot affect us if we quickly introduce that which produces the pure aroma of Spirit, for this dispels belief in an opposite to this. By developing a consciousness devoted to purity of thinking and expression an aroma is always diffused which is attractive and cleansing to the mental atmosphere. In the ratio that we live in the unpolluted atmosphere of Spirit and spiritual thinking there is conveyed to all who come within the vicinity of this consciousness the sweetness and fragrance of Soul's presence.

Jesus did not need Martha to tell him that the claim would be that Lazarus was in a state of decay and decomposition causing the un-

wanted smell graphically described by Martha in the words, "by this time he stinketh" (John 11:39). The Master had already dealt with any possible claim of decomposition through recognizing that although it might be a *claim*, in contrast to it was the everlasting freshness of newness; and so he called out of the grave a Lazarus as fresh in the sweetness of bodily aroma as the Lazarus they had reverently buried four days before in the winding-sheets of their limited affection. We need to practise the constant reminder of youthfulness and the expectancy associated with it so that we entertain no thoughts subject to decay or decomposition, but only those springing into fresh inspiration and therefore radiating the aroma of Spirit to our consciousness and thus to our experience.

Through illustrations such as these we glimpse something of the way the Master dismissed the lying suggestions of sense-testimony and then enlivened for himself the presence and reality of the true impressions of Soul through Soul's own senses. In order to follow him and experience the sort of life he lived we need to do the same.

We should be consistent in our utilization of these senses of Soul, which are ours to enjoy, because the attempt of the physical so-called senses to influence our mentality is strong and persistent. Mrs Eddy puts the issue very crisply when she says, "The five physical senses are the avenues and instruments of human error" (S&H 293:32-1). That is why it is essential to exercise our five talents actively and faithfully.

Education has taught every single one of us how to deny the testimony of the senses through accepting the truth of the situation in such instances as the sun appearing to rise and set through its own movement, and we find no difficulty in this. Therefore the overcoming of belief in the evidence of the five physical senses must be accomplished by the acceptance of the truth in opposition to it, and this truth can only be seen and then accepted through the cultivation of spiritual sense, or the detailed awareness of God's allness. There is no doubt that Jesus was conscious of the prime necessity of dealing with sense-testimony. He "stooped not to human consciousness, nor to the evidence of the senses. He heeded not the taunt, 'That withered

hand looks very real and feels very real;” — note the words “looks” and “feels” — “but he cut off this vain boasting and destroyed human pride by taking away the material evidence” (Un.11:14-19).

When we trade with the senses of Soul by dispensing with the claims of their opposites, we not only enter that realm of dominion and increase symbolized by being made “ruler over many things,” but also enter into the joy of Soul’s own awareness. We enter a realm where we are unable to be conscious of anything but what the spiritual senses report to us and so we feel a multiplication of their capacity in the infinitude of good. We experience for ourselves that “Soul has infinite resources with which to bless mankind” (S&H 60:29). The utilization of Soul-sense results in transforming in detail our whole conscious being, supplying it with riches far beyond anything which acceptance of sense-testimony could ever confer. Although we speak of using the senses of Soul, all we really do is allow ourselves to be used by them without resistance.

Through trading with the five talents in this way we become conscious of a tremendous sense of unity with Principle. This leads to the realization of the “two talents” which everyone has been given. They stand for every man’s instinctive awareness that there is a Father and that he is a son. Every Christian, every follower of the Master, knows that there is a God who is his Father and that he is a son. Those who are too interested in other things to look at it in this light are in the ratio of their use of intelligent thinking aware nonetheless that they are subject to basic principles of reasoning and conduct; they are conscious that they must conform in a spirit of true sonship to that which they may not wish to call God, but which is derived from the one Mind which has ultimately to be identified as the source of intelligent thinking. In other words, the two talents belong to all who express intelligence, no matter how they choose to define the relationship of man to his Principle.

When we trade with these two talents, with this sense of relationship to God, we find that it entails dispensing with a false sense of “two” — namely, duality, or the belief in matter and Mind as equally real. We realize that the Principle of which we are conscious must

be of the nature of Mind alone, with no admixture of matter. When we are left purely with Mind, we recognize that it is the only intelligent, creative, sustaining, caring factor; and because in human experience the paramount symbol of this is the parental set-up of father and mother in combination, it is logical to call this Mind Father-Mother, the parent Mind. "Father-Mother is the name for Deity, which indicates His tender relationship to His spiritual creation" (S&H 332:4-5).

The two talents become "other two" for us when we accept that because God is Father-Mother, the parent Mind, we reflect that Father-Mother individually. A study of Jesus' life shows that in everything he said and did and in all his dealings with mankind he demonstrated the parental outlook perfectly in a blending of fatherhood and motherhood, strength and tenderness. Statements such as "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" reveal his consciousness of God as Father, whereas such declarations as "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" point to his constant awareness of God as Mother, although he did not directly employ the word itself because of the prevailing mental climate.

It should be borne in mind that in the first chapter of Genesis God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." We should note the words "us" and "our" and accept that they establish the pre-eminent need to understand the truly dual nature of Being. And then the sense of "Our Father-Mother God, all-harmonious" (S&H 16:27) carries with it the further implication that we ourselves reflect a combination of those qualities which we associate with the masculine and the feminine. Thus we come to the true sense of "two" as "no longer two wedded individuals, but as two individual natures in one; and this compounded spiritual individuality reflects God as Father-Mother, not as a corporeal being. In this divinely united spiritual consciousness, there is no impediment to eternal bliss, — to the perfectibility of God's creation" (S&H 577:5-11).

The impulse to do anything — in the home, in business, in every sphere of life — is always accompanied by the creative, purposeful sense of the male, the father aspect, and by the attention and care

fostered by the female outlook, the mother aspect. As soon as we wake up in the morning, we begin to think what we want to achieve during the day — that is the creative sense of the male at work — and as this develops, the female sense comes into play with a realization of the care and attention required to attain the desired end in the best possible way. It all goes on in thought, and matter is not a factor at all. To take further our simple example: it is not the body which gets us out of bed in the morning but the sense of purpose which animates our conscious being and calls forth our love and responsiveness. At every moment of our day this interplay of manhood and womanhood goes on, and what and where is matter as this interplay continues without a break? It plays no part, for there is no part left for it to play. That is why there is “no impediment to eternal bliss.”

There is no doubt that Jesus knew that neither matter nor mortal mind can bring to man either creativity or care. It is the parent Mind's expression of itself which brings us these qualities and that is why they cannot be lost or frustrated. It was because of Jesus' continual responsiveness to his relationship to God as Father, expressed in the words, “neither came I of myself, but He sent me,” that he had an unflinching and inspired sense of purpose. And it was because of his alertness to his relationship to God as Mother that he brought to fulfilment every job he was given to do; he knew that the same Mind which had imbued him with the purpose brought that purpose to fruition in immediate experience through qualities of patience, watchfulness, and unselfed love derived from that same parent Mind.

Unless these two character-expressions are balanced in purpose, we can lose out in the fulfilled demonstration of what we are here for. Thus to feel the creative or male sense and push that purpose without a proper recognition of the need to tend it with the female sense of care and attention can lead to a fading away of the original inspiration or to an aggressive attitude and activity which will culminate in ultimate frustration. On the other hand, to have only what may be termed the female side and wait almost inertly for someone else to provide a creative purpose is equally undesirable. Mrs Eddy tells us that “scientific growth manifests no weakness, no emascu-

tion, no illusive vision, no dreamy absentness, no insubordination to the laws that be, no loss nor lack of what constitutes true manhood" (Mis.206:13-16). Therefore it is clear that we should cultivate a balance of these two wonderful aspects which go to make completeness.

Mrs Eddy shows us practically how to let "the 'male and female' of God's creating appear" when she follows those words by stating, "Let us feel the divine energy of Spirit, bringing us into newness of life and recognizing no mortal nor material power as able to destroy" — surely a definition of true manhood. "Let us rejoice that we are subject to the divine 'powers that be' " — a definition of true womanhood. "Such is the true Science of being" (S&H 249:5-10). The realization in practice of individual man-woman completeness takes away the aches and pains and longings, the strains and the frictions associated with the sense of incompleteness which will otherwise present themselves. The claim that man lacks something without which he is not complete and that he must strive to attain what in fact he already has is a lie of the senses, of mortal belief, a lie standing in opposition to the strength and joy available to everyone who deepens his understanding and practice of this twofold nature and purpose of being.

Trading with or using these two talents must convince anyone that the whole activity is in the mind of the individual and has no relationship at all with his physical make-up, be it male or female; and from this he will move on to the realization that not only this, but everything else to do with him is in the realm of mind and that as far as his true nature is concerned matter does not exist. Thus again he will be blessed in the use of these two talents in that they will make him absolutely sure that there are not two factors to existence, matter and Mind, but one alone, and that he must base all his thinking not just on the onliness of Mind, but on the consequential nothingness of matter as a factor in his life other than as an illusion which has to be dealt with.

Mrs Eddy puts as follows the whole sequence of reasoning embraced in the "two talents" and the rewards of happiness which flow

from understanding and practising what they represent: "God being infinite Mind, He is the all-wise, all-knowing, all-loving Father-Mother, for God made man in His own image and likeness, and made them male and female as the Scriptures declare; then does not our heavenly Parent — the divine Mind — include within this Mind the thoughts that express the different mentalities of man and woman, whereby we may consistently say, 'Our Father-Mother God'? And does not this heavenly Parent know and supply the differing needs of the individual mind even as the Scriptures declare He will?" (Message 1901, 7:8-17) There is no doubt that we enter abundantly into the joy of the Lord when we reject the duality of matter and Mind and give ourselves wholly to the true and harmonious sense of "two," namely, the dual nature of God as Father-Mother and of man as the complete individual man-woman expression of that Father-Mother.

Through valuing and using the two talents we are led on again, this time to the one talent, the ability bestowed on each one of us to understand that there is only one Being. But now our sense of that one Being is not of a vague, mystical, unknown and unknowable deity; it now embraces everything that we have discovered through utilizing the senses of Soul (the "five") and realizing the closeness of relationship which this gives us as son to the Father-Mother, reflecting that Father-Mother in an individual blending of masculine and feminine qualities, as symbolized by the two talents.

Through actively using the "five talents" of Soul-sense we see analyzed, uncovered, and annihilated in our own experience belief in the reality of the testimony of the physical senses. This prepares us to use the "two talents" of the understanding of the Father-Mother God to get rid of a dual sense of man being both material and spiritual, and we do this through seeing that we cannot help but reflect the Father-Mother God in the constant interplay of manhood and womanhood in our consciousness and experience. We are then in a position to appreciate that all that is ever going on is the oneness of Principle and idea.

If we bury the living God in the ground of ignorance, in a lazy sense that He is incomprehensible and that man's relationship to God

is obscure and distant, we go right down into the ground with our false concept of God; and as long as we believe in this false concept there is taken from us that which is ours — our true being as Principle's expression of itself. The acme of Christian Science is the giving up of the mortal concept that "man has a mind of his own, distinct from God, the *all* Mind" (S&H 204:27-29). Only as we *use* this "one talent" of the understanding of the oneness of Principle and idea do we experience its truth. If we recognize Principle and obey it, we then find that we are at one with it and prove for ourselves that Principle and its idea is one. We prove the ultimate of oneness, embraced in Jesus' statement, "I and my Father are one." It is in *being* Principled that we learn that God is Principle and is All.

At this point in the parable Jesus shows through the story of the man who buried the one talent that without developing the "five" and the "two" humanity has a God hard to understand, hard to accept. This man stands for those who do nothing except admit that there is a God and through that inertness deify a ruthless and incomprehensible Being. The general teaching of false theology is that we should love God but do nothing about understanding Him. That is tantamount to burying God, and this emptiness has emptied the churches. The influence of this misconception is what causes a man to say, "I know there is a God, and that is good enough for me. We should not tamper with the name of God — it is sacrilegious to do so. We must not take the name of the Lord in vain." But that is exactly what he is doing — taking the name or nature of God in vain through an inactive conception of it, which offers no challenge to reason and wins no gift of inspiration. He ignores the one great challenge to man — the question "What is God?" which Mrs Eddy answered so magnificently. Note that the question is not "Who is God?" but "What is God?" Mrs Eddy roused thought out of a personal and deadened sense of God by breaking up the name into a sevenfold picture and a fourfold operation: "God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love" (S&H 465:9-10).

It is abundantly clear in the Gospels — both in what Jesus said and what he did — that he was aware of all that was revealed to Mrs

Eddy in this statement. The man in the parable symbolizes thought which buries its God-given ability to ask and answer that question "What is God?" and so never grows in understanding.

The Master was exposing the blindness of worshipping a "dead" God. Once someone treats God as an idol, he sees God as a person to be feared rather than understood and loved, a God of incomprehensible whims who brings evil as well as good, and he has to resign himself to whatever comes along. Anyone who worships God as God without understanding Him casts himself into "outer darkness." If anything goes wrong, he says, "It's God's will. I can't argue with Him. He's a hard man. He even strikes down the child at prayer, but there you are — the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, and that is that. I'm not going to try to understand Him."

It is the inert Christian who quickly believes in a God who sends evil. He goes to church on Sunday morning and on Sunday afternoon he is saying, "Look at all these earthquakes and floods — oh well, they must be God's will." He certainly has a hard and ruthless God. The only punishment of this outlook is that as long as any man believes in God as good and evil, he takes anything that comes and calls it God's will, whether it is a personal or national disaster, and so persecutes himself with resignation to evil. He does not realize that his own inertia allows the sense of affliction to swamp his thought and thus magnifies and even helps to generate the calamities which he ascribes to God, that is, to his own concept of Deity. He does not see that the picture of apparent misfortune is projected by a lack of awareness of the nature of the divine Principle, Love and the scientific and logical conclusions radiating from it. If he would daily use his God-given talent to acquaint himself with God and the sevenfold nature of infinite Being, he would find in consequence the very principles and ideas which would lead his thought actively out of what had previously appeared as sheer catastrophe, and thus enable him to discern and experience life abundant. Instead of passively accepting the senses' picture of tragedy and laying himself open to the apparent effects of that error, he would strike back at the errors of belief from a position poised in Principle and win the

day not only to his own benefit but also that of all mankind.

Even if we deny that we would ever blame God for disasters and yet we give power in our thought to a mysterious force called evil over which God has little or no control, this is as bad as directly blaming God for sending evil, for all such thinking is based on ignorance of what the term God means and implies.

Mrs Eddy said in her sermon "The People's Idea of God": "Believing that man is the victim of his Maker, we naturally fear God more than we love Him; whereas 'perfect Love casteth out fear'; but when we learn God aright, we love Him, because He is found altogether lovely. Thus it is that a more spiritual and true ideal of Deity improves the race physically and spiritually. God is no longer a mystery to the Christian Scientist, but a divine Principle, understood in part, because the grand realities of Life and Truth are found destroying sin, sickness, and death; and it should no longer be deemed treason to understand God, when the Scriptures enjoin us to 'acquaint now thyself with Him [God], and be at peace;' we should understand something of that great good for which we are to leave all else" (Peo. 6:14-27). That whole sermon shows that the prevailing concept of God affects the entire life of a nation, and that is why this parable brings out a vital truth.

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury."

Jesus was showing that some people believe that God is a hard, unreasonable being who leads them into positions which he has not properly prepared them to meet and in which he offers no help, but nevertheless expects results. They therefore bury any sense of obligation they may have had as regards thinking about God and endeavour

to forget what they term "religion" and its requirements. They feel that if they can thus bury the spiritual, they will be relieved of any necessity to respond to its demands. Naturally their concept of God is completely misguided, for Principle always produces the idea which meets the particular situation in every single instance. "God leadeth us not into temptation, but delivereth us from sin, disease, and death" (S&H 17:10-11). However, such people decide that it is not worth their while to make any effort to use their talent to understand God; they are afraid that if they do, they will come up against problems they are not ready to meet, for they are dealing with an unfair deity and all their best efforts will go unrewarded.

Jesus was saying to such people that instead of stalling because they resist taking the direct path and using their talent to understand God through the spiritual characteristics which define Him, they should look around them and watch those who are actively practising all that the term "God, good" means. They should go to the "ex-changers," the "usurers" or "users" of Principle in business, in art, in human relationships, in the animal world, and in every sphere of life and as they use their talent of understanding to observe the practice of principles derived from the one Principle and see the benefits accruing from this usage, this will give them returns in the form of a fuller and richer understanding of the nature and operation of God. If they study the expressions of intelligence, integrity, and love, for instance, in people around them, it will reveal to them something of the nature of the Principle of those qualities and they will thus find themselves learning of the nature of God and realizing that He is omnipresent in operation. This will yield to them a perception of Principle and its purposes which is outside ordinary religious sentiment and outside what they believe to be the obligatory spiritual channels. The "interest" of understanding which they will thus earn will lift them out of any inclination to think of God as a hard man with totally mysterious ways.

If a man feels that he does not understand that there is one Being and that this one Being governs all and evolves all according to its government and if he feels that he cannot accept spiritual teachings

on this subject, then he should go to the human world, where he would notice that all successful activity derives from obedience to the basic principles of relationship between men, this relationship being built on the fact that all men are created by that one Principle.

Trading thus with a sense of the oneness of being, he would find it multiplying in its oneness until it became allness and was discovered in expression everywhere. The wise man would then immediately say, "That includes me" and would live his statement to the exclusion of all suggestions that good is buried for man out of sight and can only be expected to give its reward at some future time. By allying ourselves to the oneness of Being and its allness through practising good in every avenue of consciousness, this great talent of the infinite One, far from being buried, becomes alive in experience not only through its spiritual interpretation but also through all the "usurers" — that is, all those whose success demonstrates that it has come about through obedience to that One, that Principle from whose infinitude flow all the rules and laws and their expression in the purpose of life. Such "usurers" do not see Principle as "a hard man," but as a necessity for achievement and as a friend. In any successful enterprise the rule is, "Obey the principle and the principle will be your friend and bring prosperity." It will not gather where it has not sown but bring fruitage in the ratio that a man has sown his activity according to its mandate. The greatest friend of mankind is the one infinite Principle, and to those who obey it this fact becomes more and more apparent with each progressive step.

The implication in the parable is that the man would have been enriched if he had taken what he saw of the human practice of Principle and traced it back to its wholly spiritual source. He would then have realized what it means to have one God, one Principle, and that One All-in-all. Instead of God being a blank to him, he would have begun to glimpse the vast picture opened up by the statement, "From the infinite One in Christian Science comes one Principle and its infinite idea, and with this infinitude come spiritual rules, laws, and their demonstration, which, like the great Giver, are 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever'" (S&H 112:16-20).

“Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.” That is, the ability to understand God (the one talent) is lost to us unless we use the five talents of Soul-sense to correct and destroy the false testimony of the physical senses, since it is this false testimony which attempts to hide from us God, that is, the divine Principle in its true meaning and purpose. Not through mere words, but through the utilization of Soul-sense we come alongside Principle through true seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling.

“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” As expressions of Mind we are all gifted with intelligence, and reason “is the most active human faculty” (S&H 327:29). It is a fact of experience that when we accept this truth and use these Mind-faculties, we find that however little understanding we start with, it always multiplies into greater understanding along the lines of intelligence. Conversely, those who do not recognize this truth of their being will find that even what interest they may once have had in the things of the spirit will wane to the point of disappearance; and yet, because all this is against the facts of their true selfhood, they will become disappointed and possibly angry with themselves — and with all others who *are* engaged in using their intellectual capacity profitably. The answer for any such person must be to throw out the suggestions that man, since he is nothing more and nothing less than the expression of Mind itself, is anything but a being of active intelligent reasoning and then without further ado vigorously accept the truth of his being, thereby reaping the Soul-filled satisfaction of utilizing it.

And so this is the story of the “five,” the “two,” and the “one,” pointing out the main lines of our activity in life for the greatest happiness and progress. The development of the five talents of Soul-sense flows into the realization of the true and only relationship between the Father and His son, and thence to a consciousness of the magnitude and omni-action of the infinite One. Jesus from his earliest

days was about the Father's business through these very talents. And therefore he shows the essentials for the demonstration of "Life in and of Spirit; this Life being the sole reality of existence" (Mis.24:17-18). First, we must use our talents of spiritual sense to reject the testimony of the five senses and let Soul-sense rule in our lives; since "Soul has infinite resources with which to bless mankind," this is bound to bring a divine and satisfying experience. Second, we must hourly cherish a sense of unity with God as His expression or son and see that this makes every single one of us the individual male-female reflection of the Father-Mother. This cuts out the existence of matter, and as we acknowledge that fact in our lives we have the joy of a sense of completeness which cannot be taken from us but ever unfolds from its inexhaustible Principle. Third, this leads us to accept that in order to understand properly the oneness and onliness of the one Being we must cultivate the understanding of how this unity of good operates through all the different channels of consciousness. Every one of these channels is covered by the seven names set out in "Science and Health" to depict the sevenfold nature of the one Being. Just as we recognize that the numerals in mathematics, the notes in music, and the colours of the spectrum define the unity of purpose or the oneness of the Being expressing itself in each of these Principle-based activities, so we should recognize clearly the value and necessity of what Christian Science has given us in the definition of God, the definition which Mrs Eddy gathered from the Bible, from the teachings of the great Master, and from her own individual revelation. The mental inactivity which leaves the understanding of the term God in the realm of mysticism and superstition without any attempt at scientific elucidation and reasoning is and always has been the greatest of mistakes, and being a mistake will always require rectification.

Everyone should therefore ask himself, "Am I fulfilling the requirements set out in this marvellous parable?" and should continually rouse himself to answer. As Mrs Eddy once wrote, "Answer at once and practically, and answer aright!" (Mis.177:19-20)