

## The Man of One Idea

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WERE I to take a text suggestive of this topic, and I think perhaps I should, it would be a part of the thirteenth verse of the third chapter of Philippians—"One thing I do." That short sentence I shall make the basis of this article.

The author, who is supposed to be the apostle Paul, has been called a man of one idea; and, since idea may denote an object of desire, as well as an object of thought, he might appropriately be so designated. If, then, by one idea we understand an object of desire at which we aim and for which we strive, the description suits him admirably, because he was pre-eminently a man of one idea, in the sense of having a serious purpose and a steady aim. In seriousness of purpose and steadiness of aim, no person, ancient or modern, has surpassed him.

Loosely speaking, to be a man of one idea is to seek some one thing in life persistently and strenuously. As popularly understood, indeed, the phrase means aiming at some object, such as honor or learning or wealth, and making everything bend to the attainment of it. The

a similar way, Napoleon Bonaparte might likewise be so styled when he conceived the campaign which resulted in his banishment and undertook to conquer the nations of Europe. But, though steady of aim and resolute of temper, neither of them was a man of one idea such as the text suggests.

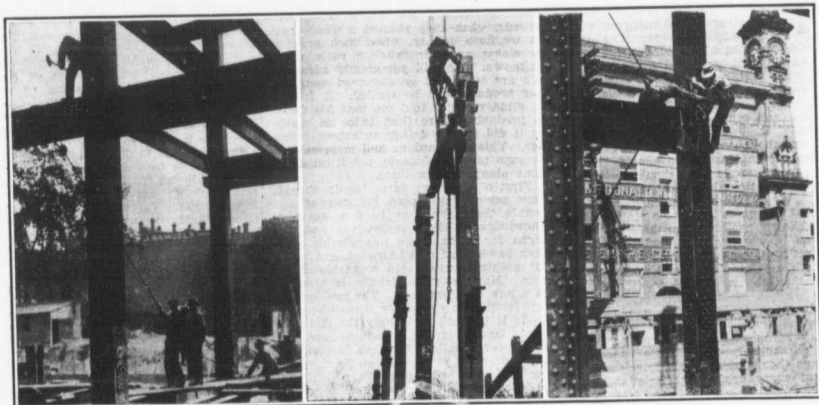
Strictly speaking, to be a man of one idea is to seek something proper with a single purpose; and, as a single purpose denotes a lofty moral purpose, the phrase means oneness of effort towards a worthy object. We are men of one idea in seeking anything that is worthy, if we strive for it with a single purpose, or with a sanctified determination to do our utmost and be our best. Tested by that standard, Napoleon did not seek a proper object and Columbus did not have a single purpose, for the object of the former was conquest and of the latter glory; and no devotee of glory or conquest should be called a man of one idea, in the full sense of the phrase.

The object the apostle sought was Christ, and the purpose he had was to live to Him and become like Him. "For me

servient to that end. In proof thereof, he tells us in First Corinthians 2: 2 that, when he came to Corinth with his spiritual message, he did not determine to know anything among the people of that city but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. While laboring there he would require to know much else, of course; but that was the single, definite thing which he was bent on knowing, and anything else was known in connection with it or in relation to it.

Furthermore, he sought only one great object, not for his own sake merely, but for the sake of mankind. He wished to be like Christ partly for himself and partly for humanity. Hence the possession of his spirit and the advancement of his cause was the mark he kept constantly before him. The sole aim of his being was complete conformity to Christ in all things and for all men, and to that end he devoted every power with which he was endowed. In short, his supreme object in life, the object underlying and comprehending every other, was to glorify Christ by representing Him, first through becoming like Him, and then through bringing others to Him.

Seeking the object Paul sought, John Wesley was a man of one idea when he founded the Holy Club and devoted himself to the work of evangelization, and so



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more highly the object is prized or the more strongly it is desired, the more strenuous is the endeavor to attain it. All who have made their mark on the world and have left their names on humanity have been men of one idea to that extent.

Such characters are sometimes a blessing and sometimes a bane. While they may be useful inventors or earnest reformers, in which case they are public benefactors, they may also be ambitious self-seekers or unscrupulous adventurers, in which case they are dangerous members of society. An old proverb bids us beware of the man of one book, because he is a force with which to reckon in discussion or debate. As ideas may be adequate or inadequate, right or wrong, we should be still more wary of the man of one idea, because he is a power for good or evil, according to the idea he forms and the plan of action he pursues.

Regarded in a loose way, Christopher Columbus might be styled a man of one idea when he qualified himself for his arduous enterprise and started forth in search of a new continent; regarded in

to live is Christ," he says in the first chapter of this epistle, and in the present chapter he declares, "I press on towards the goal unto the prize," the goal being likeness to Christ, and the prize the result of attaining it. Hence he sought only one thing in life, but it was something so comprehensive that it embraced everything, and he sought it with a single, unifying purpose. As Jesus strove continually to do the will of the Father, so the apostle strove continually to become like Christ. Thus the object of a man of one idea, in the sense in which Paul was, is moral likeness to Christ, or full conformity to the will of God.

Though Paul sought only one great object after becoming an apostle, he had numerous others at the same time, as we all have; for, as we may rightly purpose many things, so we may lawfully seek many objects. Like the Lord Jesus, he was sensible of interests and inclinations peculiar to himself; but conformity to Christ, or the will of God, was his fundamental object, so that whatever he might seek besides, was sought with that in mind. Everything he did was made sub-

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The reader will now see that, in the strict sense, to be a man of one idea is to have a single, all-embracing purpose and seek a single, all-embracing object. Hence having a single purpose and being a man of one idea are closely connected characteristics, since they are mentally related as the purpose to the object. In case the object and the purpose are equally com-