

The Christian's Duty to His Mind

MUCH, but not too much, is said to young Christians about the importance of keeping their hearts right, far less about their duty to their own minds.

A man in middle life, having a family dependent upon him, following an exhausting trade, and finding it impossible to secure another means of livelihood, can only hope to attain that degree of mental culture which he can get while being faithful to his business, the care of his family and his obligations to the Church. Increasing mental culture may modify his lot in life and may enlarge his opportunities of acquiring such culture; but, in order to improve his mind, he must not fail in his duty in the lot in which Providence has placed him. Impaired health also may prevent one from making definite efforts. But every Christian sufficiently enlightened to perceive the possibility of mental culture, is bound to seek it to the full extent compatible with his providential lot.

Both John and Charles Wesley went upon this principle. Charles taught the people the essence of the relation of the whole man to God in these words:

Take my *soul* and *body's* powers ;
Take my *memory, mind* and *will* ;
All my *goods*, and all my *hours* ;
All I *know*, and all I *feel* ;
All I *think*, or *speak*, or *do* ;
Take my *heart*, but make it *new*.

No one is a Christian who does not to the best of his ability and consciousness consecrate himself to Christ. But he who attempts to do this cannot be indifferent to the quality of any part of the gift; for love invariably presents the best attainable. If one pays no attention to the culture of his mind, after a little while its powers diminish. Animal spirits soon decline—especially when uniform labor consumes the daily supply of physical energy and when one has come to recognize his lot in life as fixed. So it often comes to pass that he who at twenty years of age consecrated himself, "his memory, mind and will," to God, had a prompt, precise and retentive memory, sound understanding and a strong power of will, has become at forty-five spiritless and indifferent except in the narrow groove of his occupation; has less mental vigor than when he left the desk of the school boy for the bench of the mechanic, the counter of the merchant, the fields of the farmer, or even for some profession.

When a person is truly converted there is always a blending of aspiration for mental culture with the intense desire for purity of heart. This accounts for the great thrill which stirs the soul of many a humble laborer and many a previously indifferent or dissipated young man, wishing to give all to Christ who had saved him, when there springs up a thirst for knowledge. It is a desire to enlarge his powers that he may know more of God and learn the best methods of working for Him. In the midst of his mighty efforts for the conversion of souls, John Wesley turned aside to write and print grammars of many languages, books of science, history, travel, and treatises on self-culture in every form. He was as busy about this as he was about hymns, sermons, biographies of good people and tracts on doctrine.

Mental culture is one of the best means of grace. It excludes evil thoughts; it establishes new associations, directly opposing evil suggestions at their very source. There is nothing that elevates a Christian so much as the great thoughts that are normal to a religious experience.

Two men born in humble circumstances were spending their days in cutting down trees in forests remote from civilization. One thought of nothing but what he should eat, what he should drink, what he should wear, and how he would spend the little he earned. He chopped away faithfully all his days. Yet naturally he had a good mind.

The other, while chopping, studied the *trees*, learned the value of each kind of wood and the uses to which it was put, saved his money and bought acres upon acres containing wood suited for shipbuilding. The subject of transportation was forced upon him; he comprehended it; erected saw-mills and made himself a master of everything that had to do with wood, and finally became a shipbuilder, his vessels plowing every sea. It was not his strong arm or his faithful work exclusively, but the thoughts which he cherished while he worked, that ennobled him.

The more a man knows and the clearer his mind is, the greater the influence he exerts in the cause of Christ. We admit that the most ignorant man who is truly converted can win more souls to Christ than the wisest man on the earth who is without a religious experience. But when the two are united the greatest influence possible to him is within the reach of the man who has a warm heart, a clear head, an intelligent conscience, and an abundance of knowledge.

At the present time the facilities for acquiring mental culture transcend previous opportunities. Young men called to the ministry should avail themselves of these to secure a thorough preparation. Christian young men who have chosen the legal, medical or educational profession, or the practice of engineering in its different forms should determine to be the best in their kind, never forgetting that the mind and heart must be cultivated together.

The young mechanic or farmer who desires a more complete mental outfit than his parents or employers have given him, and who has saved a little money, by working at his trade or upon farms in the summer vacations, may easily earn sufficient to carry him two or three years in a seminary. And by the end of the second year he may find a school to teach.

The man who has prospered in his business, after he has reached middle life may, if he will, supply the defects of his early training. Such a man at the age of forty years, finding himself elevated by his business prosperity and wealth to a position in social life and before the public which he was unable to fill satisfactorily, sent a check for \$1,000 to a literary friend with the following order: "Select for me the works with which a man in my position should be familiar, and mark the order in which they should be read."

Three years afterward, by having devoted two or three hours per day to reading and reflection, he had come to be known as one of the most thoroughly informed men in the state capital where he resides.

Some ministers and Sunday School superintendents count it a part of their duty to stir up young people to train, strengthen and inform their minds, and they have often found the truth of the inimitable words of Addison: "What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to a human soul. The philosopher, the saint or the hero, the wise, the good or the great man very often lies hid and concealed in a plebeian which a proper education might have disinterred and have brought to light."—*Christian Advocate*.

Who Hath a Book

Who hath a book	Who hath a book
Hath friends at hand ;	May fight, or sing,
And gold and gear	Or ride, or rule,
At his command ;	Or—anything!
And rich estate,	Or he may dwell
If he but look,	In humble hut,
Is held by him	Or palace, ere
Who hath a book.	The book be shut.

Who hath a book
Hath goodly fare,
And happiness
Beyond compare.
Or he may bow
'Neath sorrow's weight,
If but the book
Such things relate.

Who hath a book	Who hath a book
Hath but to read,	Should thank the Lord
And he may be	Because he may
A king, indeed.	A book afford.
His kingdom is	And in his prayer
His ingenkoo—	This clause is due :
All this is his	"Lord, bless the men
Who hath a book.	Who write books, too."

—W. D. Nesbit, in *Epworth Herald*.