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Full Gospel, Fractured Minds?
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The Heart and the Head: What the Bible Teaches about the Mind

The Protestant clergy were filled with “head knowledge”; they were not taught of the Spirit and were therefore ignorant, even “anti-intellectual” because God’s wisdom can never be acquired by the mere “human” mind.

EARLY PENTECOSTAL LEADER, 1915

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

JESUS CHRIST

Carnal and proud minds are contented with self; they like to remain at home; when they hear of mysteries, they have no curiosity to go and see the great sight, though it be ever so little out of their way; and when it actually falls in their path, they stumble at it.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Christina was a twenty-seven-year-old mother of two who was diligently pressing her way through life. She was active in sports, loved poetry, and worked as an enterprising computer programmer. Life was good to her, but a nightmare-come-true would soon dash her hopes and ambitions.

A day before a scheduled gallstone surgery, Christina had an unnerving dream that the members of her body refused to follow the commands of her mind. Oddly and tragically, within twenty-four hours her nocturnal vision came true. She could not stand, her hands wandered, she couldn’t feed herself, her posture slumped, and even her voice was erratic. “Something awful has happened,” she cried out. “I feel disembodied.” Christina’s body members were refusing to include her mind while performing their duties. In essence, her mouth, hands, and feet were in rebellion against her mind!

The above account isn’t fiction; it is documented in Oliver Sacks’ national bestseller *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. In the prime of life, Christina was permanently handicapped by a rare disorder in which the parietal lobes of the brain failed to receive communication from other parts of the body. Christina’s lobes were in excellent working order, but, as Dr. Sacks puts it, “they had nothing to work with.” As a result, the patient had no tendon or joint sense at all, and her movements were clumsy. Though her emotions and feelings were very sensitive, she realized that her body was “blind and deaf to its mind.”¹

By accident, Christina had brought on her own “body blindness.” In an attempt to strengthen her health, she had consumed sizeable amounts of vitamin B – 6. In moderation B – 6 is a good thing; however, she had overdosed on it.

Approximately two hundred years before Christina encountered her frightening disorder, another body began to experience similar symptoms. The condition of this other body was also self-induced. She too overdosed on good things; she gorged herself on emotion, intuition, and experience. Her name wasn’t Christina, but Christian. And the wreckage was not to be found in a physical body but in a spiritual body — the body and bride of Christ.

WHEN THE MIND BECAME SUSPECT

Beginning about 1800, much of the church in America began to undergo a radical mutation. For various reasons (dealt with throughout this book), it started to separate the heart from the head, faith from reason, experience from logic, believing from thinking, and intellect from emotion. In a nutshell, the *mind* and the *spirit* were set up against each other as archenemies. Thus, just as Christina’s physical body had refused to hear the commands of her head, so also the body of Christ failed to listen to its Head. Though Jesus has clearly commanded his followers to love God with all their minds (Matt. 22:37), and though the great apostle Paul challenged the body of Christ with the words “in your thinking be adults” (1 Cor. 14:20), teaching on the importance of using one’s brains for God’s glory began to fade. What had been a relatively rare teaching throughout church history began to spread like a plague during the nineteenth century.

During the formative stages of “revival religion” in the new republic of America (1800 – 1850), many among the Christian masses slated science as an adversary of faith and of the Bible. The healthy art of critical thinking was relabeled as “negative thought” and was placed in the same category with atheistic criticism of the Scriptures. God-given reason was inaccurately lumped together with the “goddess of reason” and was thus redefined as an enemy of belief. Furthermore, many believers began to confuse an education in the liberal arts with the secularization of education through *liberalism*. The spiritually revitalized but intellectually passive multitude of the nineteenth-century evangelical revival reclassified faith as an urge or a feeling and mistakenly separated reason and emotion — the Siamese-twins of the soul.

Instead of pointing out that non-Christians were twisting the definitions of science and maligning the origins and proper use of reason, the intellect, and logic, many nineteenth-century believers simply exited from these arenas of contention. Rather than responding with an offensive strategy and defending the faith once for all delivered to the saints, they simply retreated from study in such areas. Thus, human reason (or, as we say, “the head”) came to represent the fallen faculty of worldly creatures — the part of a human being that cannot help but get one into trouble, especially in matters of faith. By contrast, emotion (or, as we say, “the heart”) was appointed as the ruling monarch of the spiritual life.

When the church separates the head from the heart and reason from revelation, she becomes guilty of driving an artificial wedge into God's unified reality. It is true, of course, that this is the same mistake that was made by those outside of God's kingdom. Religion was for the private world of feeling; the mind was for dealing with the problems of life. Thus, it shouldn't surprise us to witness within the church a general confusion about life when she attempted to carve up God's reality as the world did. In some respects, therefore, in forfeiting the honorable origins, definitions, and place of human intellectual faculties, nineteenth-century evangelicalism (along with fundamentalism and Pentecostalism later) seems to have actually helped foster the fragmented worldview that is so prominent today.

Like the victim of the neurological defect described at the beginning of this chapter, the voice of the church has been weakened in the world. Its abilities to stand intellectually, to hold a strong moral posture, and to offer its helping hands have been affected greatly. Moreover, like Christina, so many within the twenty-first-century American body of Christ struggle to feed themselves, are without tone, and lack flexibility in their "intellectual sinews." While in mental convalescence, Christina's emotions, though vibrant, were out of touch with her body. In much the same way, hosts of Full Gospel believers excel in the devotional, emotional, and experiential aspects of their faith, but they leave much to be desired in the sphere of the life of the mind.

Only through ongoing, rigorous, mental exercises did our young, ailing pilgrim make progress, training the *physical* members of her body to once again follow the commands of her *mind*. And it will only be through the same type of painstaking effort that the Pentecostal – Charismatic movement can recover from her comfortable but flawed approach to issues concerning the intellect.

HEAD AND HEART

It is surprising (at least, to this writer) that in light of the generous amount of teaching in the Scriptures on "the mind," so little has been written about this subject, especially by authors who identify themselves as "Full Gospel." Moreover, in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, I have detected a notable scarcity of preaching on this and other related topics. Though subjects like "baptism with the Holy Spirit," "spiritual gifts," "spiritual warfare," "the Lord's Supper," and "tongues" are mentioned only a few times in sixty-six books of God's inspired revelation, they are referred to relatively often in our churches. The Bible refers many times, however, to issues concerning the intellect, yet seldom do we hear teaching on such themes. To brush aside either at the expense of the other is negligent. Yet it appears as if we have given little thought to our neglect of such an important and central biblical topic.

It is important for us to keep in mind that the "Full Gospel" believer is one who passionately pursues *all* of God's counsel. But we are just as guilty of being piecemeal Christians as any other group. We call ourselves "Full Gospel" as compared to Christians who

purposefully leave out the *charismatic* aspects of New Testament faith, yet we downplay the *intellectual* aspects of New Testament faith. In the final analysis, which of the following is worse? To neglect the relatively elusive charismatic gifts that visit us only at God's discretion (1 Cor. 12:11), or to fail to actively civilize and fervently exercise our God-given intellectual endowments that follow us every moment of our existence? I suggest neither is worse. When cold reason rejects the fire of God's manifest presence, disillusionment and injury rise to the surface. Likewise, when the *charismata* are not tethered to good thinking, the same confusion and injury surely follow.

Our fear of getting what we call "the head" (intellect) involved in "heart" (spiritual) issues has blinded us to the Bible's directives on loving God with our minds. The first step, then, in clearing up these myths is to go to God's Word and examine what the mind of our Maker says on the matter. In light of this, we will begin by seeking to determine how the terms "head" and "heart" are used by the One who created them both.

THE VENERABLE HEAD

The idea that our heads are, *by nature*, a hindrance to the spiritual life (heart activity) is *totally* foreign to the text of God's Word. Biblically, the head is *not* viewed as the home of godless reason, *set in opposition* to the heart or spirit, where devotional communion takes place. Rather, the head is described as a symbol of *prestige* and *respect*. The Old Testament word *ro,sh* denotes the place of *gesture*. The head was shaven in times of grief (Ezek. 7:18) and during the time of a vow (Num. 6:5), and it was covered with ashes as a sign of penitence (2 Sam. 13:19). In addition, the Old Testament believer saw the head as the *source of one's life* or likened it to the headwaters of a stream or river (Gen. 2:10; Isa. 1:6). Lastly, *ro,sh* signified one who occupies a position of *superiority* (Judg. 10:18).² It doesn't appear that Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, or any other Old Testament saints ever thought of the head as a mere necessary body part that is full of mischief.

In New Testament Greek, the head (*kephale*) is recognized as a place of *honor* and *dignity* (Rev. 4:4; 19:12). As with *ro,sh* in the Old Testament, the New Testament refers to the *kephale* as the part of the human being that represents an *individual as a whole* (Acts 18:1, 4, 6). In references such as 1 Corinthians 11:2 – 15, where Paul discusses headship, the term "head" denotes the *source, origin*, or, even *ruler* of another. In close relationship with this last nuance, Paul uses the word in Ephesians 4:15 – 16 to emphasize the *nurturing* and *guiding* aspects of the Christian's dependence on Jesus as the Head. Finally, Christ as the *Head* over every power demonstrates his supreme *authority* as well as his *life-giving* capacity (Col. 2:10).

The word "head" occurs approximately 360 times in the Bible, but nowhere does it appear to have the negative overtones that many modern-day believers pin on it. The head is not a logical reasoning device that merely transmits and stores information. As a matter of fact, as far as God's Word is concerned, the head isn't even referred to as the place where reasoning occurs.